

Date: March 1, 2017

To: Sangeeta Pratap, Associate Professor

From: Lisa George, Associate Professor



Re: Teaching Observation of Richard Nugent

You requested that I observe the teaching of adjunct instructor Richard Nugent. I attended a session of ECO301, Intermediate Microeconomics, on Tuesday, February 28. Overall, I found Prof. Nugent's class to be well organized, informative and clear. Prof. Nugent was well prepared, with mastery of the material and thoughtful presentation. I found the language, notation and graphs all very precise and clear. In some cases, additional intuition for the calculus might be useful, as some student questions suggested less than full understanding of the analysis. But overall, I thought the level was appropriate to the course and well done. I hope the following comments are useful:

Content

The class started with recap of the consumer choice problem, then proceeded to derivation of the demand curve under varying preference assumptions including Cobb-Douglas, perfect substitutes and perfect complements. Professor Nugent plotted indifference curves and budget constraints, then described the optimal solution at the tangency point. He reviewed the technique of LaGrange multipliers used to solve constrained maximization problems. Consumer theory is a central topic in intermediate microeconomics and the teaching was at the right analytical level for the course.

Approach

Throughout the lecture, Prof. Nugent outlined and solved the consumer problem graphically, with calculus and with intuition. I was impressed by the clear and precise articulation of assumptions and careful notation. I would say that some additional emphasis on the intuition behind the calculus solution technique might have been useful, though the overall balance was about right.

Student Engagement

The class proceeded at a rather quick pace during the review period, then more slowly with new material. The majority of students were paying attention, with many fully absorbed in detailed notetaking. We know from experience that calculus-based microeconomics is a challenge for Hunter students, so it might be worthwhile to gauge student understanding with additional direct questions during class. However, the overall flow of the class was good. One student asked about the interpretation of the zero condition in solving the constrained optimization problem. This was nicely answered, but I suspected that some additional focus for the whole class on the intuition behind the LaGrange multiplier might have been useful.

In sum, I enjoyed attending Prof. Nugent's class. Please let me know if there are questions on this evaluation.

Copy to:

Partha Deb, Acting Chair and Professor of Economics
Prof. Richard Nugent, Adjunct Professor of Economics