

Midterm Review

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Agenda

1. Cobb-Douglas EV, CV Example (won't cover in section)
2. 2010 Midterm Question 1
3. 2006 Midterm Question 3 (won't cover in section)
4. 2005 Midterm Question 4
5. 2004 Midterm Question 1
6. 2005 Midterm Question 1 (won't cover in section)

Some Midterm Tips

1. Since this is open book, make a cheat sheet with the important equations and bring a calculator.
2. Try not to get stuck on one question. You need to pace yourself. Try to get to all of the questions.
3. Read the questions carefully and make sure that you're actually answering each of the questions. A lot of people didn't fully answer questions on the problem sets.
4. If you get stuck on the math, describe the process and what the answer might look like. Show Chris what you know. Also, take a step back and really look at the functions/equations that you are being asked to analyze. Some interesting intuition might leap out at you.

2010 Midterm Question 1 (30 points)

See solutions posted on course website.

2006 Midterm Question 3 (20 points)

Based on empirical analysis, you have the following information about a typical poor consumer's demand for heating oil:

Own price elasticity of demand	-2
Wealth elasticity of demand	10
Current price	10
Current consumption	120
Current wealth	12,000

For the coming heating season, the government is expecting an increase in the price of heating oil to 12. It is interested in determining how much to increase public assistance so that the poor people can maintain their current standard of living after the increase in the price of heating oil.

Question 3a) According to economic theory, how should the government determine the required increase in public assistance? Briefly explain your answer. Be sure to relate it to the concepts studied in class.

Question 3b) Using the data provided above, estimate how much public assistance should be increased in order to maintain the poor consumers' standard of living.

[Parts c-e have been added for the purposes of section; they were not on the original exam]

Question 3c) Now assume that the price increase was due to a tax. Calculate the deadweight loss of the tax using the concept from b).

Question 3d) Calculate the Laspeyres Index for the price change. If we used the Laspeyres Index to compensate the consumer, how much would we increase public assistance? Explain the intuition behind the relationship between this value and the value you found in part b).

Question 3e) Estimate the Paasche Index for the price change. If we used the Paasche Index to compensate the consumer, how much would we increase public assistance?

Solutions

Note that the information given to us is in terms of elasticities. Therefore, one step that we'll probably have to consider is turning these elasticities into the

derivatives we've seen in section and in our problem sets.

Question 3a) The correct concept is CV, which is equal to the change in wealth necessary for the consumer to achieve the same utility as before the price change after the price change has occurred. Thus, CV is the increase in wealth needed for the consumer, or the amount of wealth that a social planner has to give to the consumer (hence the minus sign for price increases), so that he or she is able to maintain the same utility level. Formally, CV is calculated as follows:

$$CV = e(p^1, u^1) - e(p^1, u^0) = e(p^0, u^0) - e(p^1, u^0) = w - e(p^1, u^0).$$

Question 3b) We use a linear approximation of the Hicksian demand curve.¹ Whenever we approximate a non-linear function, the first-step is to determine the point around which we want to approximate. Where is it going to be for this question?

$$\epsilon_{oil}^p = -2 = \frac{dx}{dp} \cdot \frac{p}{x} = \frac{dx}{dp} \cdot \frac{10}{120} \Rightarrow \frac{dx}{dp} = -24 \quad (1)$$

$$\epsilon_{oil}^w = 10 = \frac{dx}{dw} \cdot \frac{w}{x} = \frac{dx}{dw} \cdot \frac{12,000}{120} \Rightarrow \frac{dx}{dw} = 0.1 \quad (2)$$

Now we use the Slutsky Equation and plug the results from equations 1 and 2 to approximate the slope of the Hicksian at the *old* price-wealth vector.

$$\frac{dh}{dp} = \frac{dx}{dp} + \frac{dx}{dw} \cdot x = -24 + 0.1 \cdot 120 = -12 \quad (3)$$

The approximate change in the Hicksian demand is:

$$\Delta h = \frac{dh}{dp} \cdot \Delta p = -12 \cdot 2 = -24 \quad (4)$$

$$h(p = 12, \bar{p}^0, u^0) \approx h(10) + \frac{dh}{dp} \cdot \Delta p = 120 - 24 = 96 \quad (5)$$

Therefore,

$$CV = -\frac{1}{2} \cdot 2 \cdot (96 + 120) = -216.$$

Question 3c) To calculate the DWL, we use the following equation, where T is equal to the total tax revenue:

$$DWL = |CV| - T = 216 - 2 \cdot 96 = 24.$$

It may be easier for you to draw a picture.

¹See Section Note 4.

Question 3d) Assume that the non-oil goods are a composite commodity y with price $q = 1$.² Then we can calculate the Laspeyres index as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} PI_{Laspeyres} &= \frac{p'x^0 + q'y^0}{px^0 + qy^0} \\ &= \frac{12 \cdot 120 + 10,800}{10 \cdot 120 + 10,800} = 1.02 \\ &\quad (\because p^0x^0 + q^0y^0 = w \rightarrow 10 \cdot 120 + 1 \cdot y^0 = 12,000 \rightarrow y^0 = 10,800) \end{aligned}$$

$$Compensation = |PI_{Laspeyres} - 1| \cdot w = 240 > |CV|$$

Recall that the Laspeyres Index generally results in over-compensation, since it does not take into account that the consumer facing a price increase on good x can re-optimize.

Question 3e)

$$\begin{aligned} PI_{Paasche} &= \frac{p'x' + q'y'}{px' + qy'} \\ &= \frac{12 \cdot 72 + 11,136}{10 \cdot 72 + 11,136} \approx 1.0121 \\ &\quad (\because p'x' + q'y' = w \rightarrow 12 \cdot 72 + 1 \cdot y' = 12,000 \rightarrow y' = 11,136) \end{aligned}$$

$$Compensation = |PI_{Paasche} - 1| \cdot w \approx 145.20 < |CV|$$

The Paasche Index generally results in under-compensation.

The Fisher Ideal Index takes the geometric mean of the Laspeyres and Paasche Indices³ to try to balance out the over and under compensation, respectively:

$$PI_{Fisher} = \sqrt{PI_{Laspeyres} \cdot PI_{Paasche}} \approx 1.016$$

$$Compensation = |PI_{Fisher} - 1| \cdot w = 192 < |CV|,$$

but this is not generally the case for all price increases.

²If you don't know what a composite commodity is, don't worry. Think about it as a basket of all other goods, aside from heating oil, that a consumer consumes. You'll learn more about this as we do partial equilibrium.

³This is the text book definition of the Fischer Ideal Index.

2005 Midterm Question 4 (20 points)

Solutions

The relevant Bernoulli utility function is:

$$u(x) = cx^\alpha,$$

where $c > 0$ and $\alpha > 0$. We know that agents/consumers are indifferent between the following lotteries over the respective outcomes:

$$\begin{aligned} L_1 &= \left[\frac{1}{10^6}, 1 - \frac{1}{10^6} \right]; x_1 = [\$10^6, 0] \\ L_2 &= \left[\frac{1}{2 \cdot 10^6}, \frac{1}{20,000}, 1 - \frac{1}{2 \cdot 10^6} - \frac{1}{20,000} \right]; x_2 = [\$10^6, 1000, 0] \end{aligned}$$

and

$$L_1 \sim L_2$$

Question a and b) Since agents are indifferent between the two lotteries, it must be the case that $U(L_1) = U(L_2)$. Let's calculate each.

$$U(L_1) = \frac{1}{10^6} \cdot c(10^6)^\alpha + \left(1 - \frac{1}{10^6}\right) \cdot c(0)^\alpha = \frac{1}{10^6} \cdot c \cdot 10^{6\alpha}$$

$$U(L_2) = \frac{1}{2 \cdot 10^6} \cdot c(10^6)^\alpha + \frac{1}{20,000} \cdot c(10^3)^\alpha + \left(1 - \frac{1}{2 \cdot 10^6} - \frac{1}{20,000}\right) \cdot c(0)^\alpha$$

Setting the two equations above equal to each other we see that:

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{1}{10^6} \cdot c \cdot 10^{6\alpha} &= \frac{1}{2 \cdot 10^6} \cdot c \cdot 10^{6\alpha} + \frac{1}{20,000} \cdot c \cdot 10^{3\alpha} \\ \frac{1}{2 \cdot 10^6} \cdot c \cdot 10^{6\alpha} &= \frac{1}{20,000} \cdot c \cdot 10^{3\alpha} \\ 10^{3\alpha} &= \frac{2 \times 10^6}{2 \times 10^4} = 100 \\ \therefore 3\alpha &= 2 \\ \alpha &= \frac{2}{3}. \end{aligned}$$

The important thing to notice is that c is not determined by the indifference between the two lotteries. Recall that positive linear transformations of the expected utility function represent the same preferences over lotteries. Why? Recall our discussion on how the expected utility function was a linear combination of the Bernoulli utility functions.

Question c) Let's solve by using the expected utilities. Define a new lottery $L_3 = [p, 1 - p]$ over the outcome $x_3 = [1000, 0]$. Then we can calculate the following:

$$U(L_3) = p \cdot c \cdot 10^{3\alpha} + (1 - p) \cdot c \cdot 0^{3\alpha} = 100cp \left(\because \alpha = \frac{2}{3} \right).$$

Since $U(L_3) = U(L_1)$,

$$\begin{aligned} 100cp &= \frac{1}{10^6} \cdot c \cdot 10^{6\alpha} \\ p &= \frac{1}{10^4}. \end{aligned}$$

2004 Midterm Question 1 (30 points)

Consider a two-commodity world and a consumer with the following utility function:

$$u(x_1, x_2) = \left(x_1^{\frac{1}{2}} + x_2^{\frac{1}{2}} \right)^2.$$

The prices of goods 1 and 2 are p_1 and p_2 , respectively, and the consumer has initial wealth w .

Question 1a) State the consumer's utility maximization problem (3 points).

Question 1b) Will this consumer's Walrasian demand function satisfy Walras' Law? Explain your answer (3 points).

Question 1c) Derive the consumer's Walrasian demand function and indirect utility functions (12 points).

Question 1d) Suppose that the consumer has wealth $w = 260$. Initially, prices are $(p_1, p_2) = (6, 8)$. Suppose prices change to $(p'_1, p'_2) = (5, 12)$. What is the (exact) EV of this price change (12 points)?

Solutions

Question 1a)

$$\begin{aligned} \max_{x_1, x_2} & \left(x_1^{\frac{1}{2}} + x_2^{\frac{1}{2}} \right)^2 \\ \text{s.t.} & \vec{p} \cdot \vec{x} \leq w \end{aligned}$$

Question 1b) Yes. The utility function above is strongly monotone (more is better), which implies Walras' Law. More formally, notice that:

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial x_1} > 0, \frac{\partial u}{\partial x_2} > 0.$$

Question 1c) We need to set up the Lagrangian and solve, but before that is there anything we can do to make the function above more tractable? If you don't do this during the exam, you'd be stuck on this question for quite a while.

$$\mathcal{L}(x_1, x_2, \lambda) = x_1^{\frac{1}{2}} + x_2^{\frac{1}{2}} - \lambda(p_1 x_1 + p_2 x_2 - w) \quad (6)$$

We get the following first order conditions (if we assume an interior solution, which is a pretty good assumption given the fact that the objective function is concave):

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}(x_1^*, x_2^*, \lambda^*)}{\partial x_1} &= \frac{1}{2\sqrt{x_1^*}} - \lambda^* p_1 = 0 \\ \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}(x_1^*, x_2^*, \lambda^*)}{\partial x_2} &= \frac{1}{2\sqrt{x_2^*}} - \lambda^* p_2 = 0 \\ \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}(x_1^*, x_2^*, \lambda^*)}{\partial \lambda} &= p_1 x_1 + p_2 x_2 - w = 0. \end{aligned}$$

Solving the three equations for the three unknowns, we get the following (use the symmetry):

$$\begin{aligned} x_1^*(\vec{p}, w) &= \frac{w}{\left(p_1 + \frac{p_1^2}{p_2}\right)} \\ x_2^*(\vec{p}, w) &= \frac{w}{\left(p_2 + \frac{p_2^2}{p_1}\right)}. \end{aligned}$$

Both of which are homogeneous of degree 0 in the price-wealth vector.

Now we're asked to solve for the indirect utility function, which is an identity which takes prices and wealth as its arguments:

$$v(\vec{p}, w) = \left(\sqrt{x_1^*} + \sqrt{x_2^*}\right)^2 = \left(\sqrt{\frac{w}{\left(p_1 + \frac{p_1^2}{p_2}\right)}} + \sqrt{\frac{w}{\left(p_2 + \frac{p_2^2}{p_1}\right)}}\right)^2 = \frac{w(p_1 + p_2)}{p_1 p_2}$$

Question 1d) Note that there are many ways to calculate the EV. However, why do you think that the problems above asked you to solve for the indirect utility function and why do you think it asks for the "exact" EV? We don't want to use approximation using the Slutsky equation here. What we want to use is:

$$\begin{aligned} v(\vec{p}^0, w + EV) &= v(\vec{p}^1, w) \\ \frac{(260 + EV)(6 + 8)}{6 \cdot 8} &= \frac{260 \cdot (5 + 12)}{5 \cdot 12} \\ \therefore EV &\approx -7.4286 \end{aligned}$$

2005 Midterm Question 1 (20 points)

A consumer has utility function $u(x_1, x_2) = v(x_1) + v(x_2)$, where $v(\cdot)$ is a strictly increasing, strictly concave function with $v'(0) = \infty$. The positive prices of the two goods are p_1, p_2 , respectively, and the consumer has positive initial wealth equal to w .

Question 1a) Write down the consumer's utility maximization problem.

Question 1b) Let x_1^* and x_2^* denote the consumer's optimal choices of x_1 and x_2 . Derive the conditions that characterize x_1^* and x_2^* .

Question 1c) Under what conditions on the exogenous variables will x_1^* be strictly greater than x_2^* ?

Question 1d) Derive an expression relating $\frac{dx_1^*}{dw}$ and $\frac{dx_2^*}{dw}$ to the shape of the function $v(\cdot)$.

Solutions

Question 1a)

$$\begin{aligned} & \max_{x_1, x_2} v(x_1) + v(x_2) \\ \text{s.t.} \quad & \vec{p} \cdot \vec{x} \leq w \end{aligned}$$

Question 1b) We need to set up a Lagrangian. However, is there anything we can do to simplify the maximization? No.

$$\mathcal{L}(x_1, x_2, \lambda) = v(x_1) + v(x_2) - \lambda(p_1 x_1 + p_2 x_2 - w)$$

We get the following first order conditions (Note that we know that there will be an interior solution here. Why? It is because of (one of) the Inada condition above, $v'(0) = \infty$):

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}(x_1^*, x_2^*, \lambda^*)}{\partial x_1} &= v'(x_1^*) - \lambda^* p_1 = 0 \\ \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}(x_1^*, x_2^*, \lambda^*)}{\partial x_2} &= v'(x_2^*) - \lambda^* p_2 = 0 \\ \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}(x_1^*, x_2^*, \lambda^*)}{\partial \lambda} &= p_1 x_1 + p_2 x_2 - w = 0 \end{aligned}$$

Solving for these equations to the extent possible, we have the following equations:

$$\frac{v'(x_1^*)}{v'(x_2^*)} = \frac{p_1}{p_2} \tag{7}$$

$$p_1x_1^* + p_2x_2^* = w.$$

Question 1c) Since $v(\cdot)$ is strictly concave, $x_1^* > x_2^*$ iff $v'(x_1^*) < v'(x_2^*)$, which occurs iff $\frac{p_1}{p_2} < 1$ or $p_1 < p_2$.

Question 1d) I included this because it uses the Implicit Function Theorem.

Using equation 7, which is a first order condition, we can define the following identity:

$$v'(x_1^*) \equiv \frac{p_1}{p_2} v'(x_2^*),$$

differentiating both sides of the identity with regards to w we get:

$$v''(x_1^*) \cdot \frac{dx_1^*}{dw} \equiv \frac{p_1}{p_2} v''(x_2^*) \cdot \frac{dx_2^*}{dw}.$$