Hybrid course
This course is a hybrid course (technically, a “hyflex” course). All sessions will be offered in-person, but students can attend online and sessions will be recorded.

Click here for latest syllabus version: latest version

Econ 2a: A Survey of Economics (hybrid)

Should you take Econ 2a or Econ 10a?
Econ 2a (“A Survey of Economics”) is designed for non-majors and students who are curious about economics, but have no previous economics education and limited facility with algebra. It includes fewer microeconomic topics, along with several macroeconomic topics. Econ 2a focuses on gaining familiarity with economic concepts at a visual level. A graphing and algebra review is part of the first week of class.

Econ 10a (“Introduction to Microeconomics”) is designed for students who are considering a career using economic skills and knowledge, whether in industry, academia, law school, or elsewhere. Econ 10a focuses on economic concepts at not only a visual, but also at an algebraic and proof-based level. More comfort with algebra and mathematical proofs is recommended. An algebra and proof review is part of the first week of class.

Course zoom link and teaching staff

Zoom link
https://brandeis.zoom.us/j/95576463647

Instructor
Geoff Clarke
Pronouns: he/him/his
How I like to be addressed: Geoff or Dr. Clarke
Email: geoffclarke@brandeis.edu
WeChat: nycgeoff
WhatsApp: 2126710062

Course assistants

Justin Sohn
Pronouns: he/him/his
Email: justinsohn@brandeis.edu
LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/justinssohn/
Also speaks: Hebrew

Teaching assistants
Course ethics

This class facilitates learning by providing a respectful and equitable environment for all, while also supporting the Brandeis Principles of Free Speech and Free Expression. Harassment, discrimination, disrespect, or other violations of this ethic will not be tolerated.

Course goals

Version 1.0, 8/29/2021
By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Predict the effects of changes in a market and develop economic intuition using the supply and demand model
- Assess the impact of government policies (like taxes and price controls) on the supply and demand model
- List the necessary conditions for a market of perfect competition
- Argue the advantages and disadvantages of using a market to allocate resources
- Analyze the effects on the market in the presence of market failures and/or market power
- Define gross domestic product and describe its importance in macroeconomics
- Account for inflation and understand why inflation is an important consideration for future decisions and economic stability
- Describe how the Federal Reserve and individual banks work together to implement monetary policies

**Class format (how we’ll achieve these goals)**

This class is a hyflex class. Students can complete this class without attending any in-person sessions, but in-person sessions are available.

Each week, your work consists of:

1. **Attending/watching classes (Monday and Wednesday)**
   Our first class session of each week will consist of reviewing feedback from the previous week (see below) and asking framing questions about the material we’re covering. We will also answer questions and engage in other activities. These sessions will be recorded.

2. **Watching concept videos (Tuesdays)**
   The teaching staff and I will present the material from the textbook in a series of concept videos (around 5-10 minutes in length). Each week, you will have 3-12 concept videos to watch to familiarize yourself with the material. These videos will be posted to LATTE, YouTube, and bilibili.com.

3. **Attend recitations (optional) (Tuesdays)**
   Attend recitations to complete assessments on material and learn from teaching assistants

4. **Making yourself known (All week)**
   We want to make sure that you are doing well in the class and in life. Take a moment to either participate in class, contribute on Slack, or contact a member of the teaching staff.

5. **Understanding the textbook (Thursdays)**
   You will have a chapter (occasionally 2 chapters) to read in our textbook, “Introduction to Microeconomics,” by Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers. Access to an ebook rental of the textbook is included with the Macmillan Learning Achieve digital platform.
6. Working on your own (due Thursdays at 8pm)
   After reading the textbook, you will have both an adaptive quiz, to reinforce the textbook material, and some homework questions. Both of these will also be on the digital platform. Homework questions allow infinite attempts to get the correct answers.

7. Submitting feedback (due Fridays at 3pm)
   You will submit answers to 3-5 feedback questions each week. These feedback questions will be reviewed during the following week’s kickoff meeting.

Learning strategies (The structure for achieving your learning goals)

We will accomplish the learning and knowledge goals using the following strategies:

- **Flexible learning**
  You can attend classes in-person, attend classes remotely, or watch recorded class sessions.

- **Learn when you are at your best**
  Some students study best at night. Fewer students (like me) study best in the early morning. This class allows you to learn when you are most likely to absorb and recall the material.

- **Instant feedback**
  Macmillan Learning Achieve, our digital homework platform, allows for instant feedback, as well as effective reinforcement of the textbook material.

- **Extensive guidance and assistance**
  This class provides interaction with the instructor twice per week, as well as frequent interaction with a knowledge expert (Teaching assistant, course assistant, instructor). This ensures much more small-group feedback than the average student encounters in a non-online class.

- **Repeatable concepts**
  Concept videos and feedback sessions are recorded, so students can re-watch concepts that they are learning.

Meeting times and policies

**Scheduled class times**
Monday and Wednesday, 12:00 - 1:30pm (all times are Eastern Daylight Time, UTC-4, until November 7. Afterwards, times are Eastern Standard Time, UTC-5).

Recitations are held on Tuesdays 6:30 - 8:00pm

There will be no class on September 6, September 8, and November 24.

Recitations
This class has a scheduled recitation. Assessments will be given during this recitation, but alternative ways to earn points will be provided.

**Religious or family obligations**
If I have scheduled an activity during a religious or family obligation of yours, please let me know. I will work with you to find an alternative solution.

**Learning during these times**
Many of us are in situations that are less stable than they ideally would be to maximize learning. Moreover, many of us need to make class achievement secondary to other priorities in our lives. I will be happy to work with you to accommodate your needs during these times.

**Class preparation time**
I expect students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of time each week outside of class. Students that budget this amount of time at the beginning of the semester are more likely to earn the grade they desire in the class.

If you find yourself spending more than 9 hours per week on this class, let me know.

If you find it difficult to access adequate equipment or resources to study this course for 9+ hours/week, let me know.

**Illness**
If you are not feeling well, let me know. I will be happy to work with you to make up any assignments or group work you miss due to your or your family member’s illness.

**This class fulfills requirements**
Earning a grade of C or higher fulfills a requirement for students majoring or minoring in economics or business.

**Course responsibilities**

**Academic Integrity**
Students are expected to protect the academic integrity of Brandeis University, as mentioned in the Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities [https://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/srsc/index.html](https://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/srsc/index.html)

Some relevant highlights of student responsibilities:
- Student submitted work must be the product of that student's own thought or study with proper attribution and citation.
- Students may only collaborate on assignments with permission from the instructor.
- Students may not share, sell, or use materials from a previous class to satisfy an assignment in a present course (ex: Turning in a friend’s lab report from last semester).
- Students must obtain permission from both instructors if they wish to submit the same work in more than one course.
Since I have dedicated my life to academia and acting ethically, I will report every violation of academic integrity.

**Learning resources (Helping you accomplishing your class goals)**

**Accommodations**

Brandeis seeks to welcome and include all students. If you are a student who needs accommodations as outlined in an accommodations letter, I want to support you. In order to provide test accommodations, I need the letter more than 48 hours in advance. I want to provide your accommodations, but cannot do so retroactively. If you have questions about documenting a disability of requesting accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Support (SAS https://www.brandeis.edu/accessibility/) at 781.736.3470 or access@brandeis.edu.

**ebook/homework package ($99)**

Our ebook is “Principles of Microeconomics” by Stevenson and Wolfers. I assign this textbook because I believe the book's explanations and structure are superior to other textbooks I have reviewed.

The digital platform is Macmillan Learning’s Achieve platform. Instructions for ordering the textbook and digital platform are here.

** If you are having difficulty purchasing course materials, please make an appointment with your Student Financial Services or Academic Services advisor to discuss possible funding options and/or textbook alternatives.

**Reference textbook (free)**

I recommend having a permanent introductory textbook for your reference, for two reasons:

1. It’s often useful to get a different textbook explanation of difficult concepts
2. The ebook, by its nature, is a rental. However, you will be using microeconomic concepts for the rest of your time as a social scientist. It’s good to have an introductory text to refer to, as online resources are sometimes too remedial (Khan Academy) or too complex (Wikipedia) to be useful

Almost every economics textbook covers the same material, so you can search for one that you like best. I recommend this open source textbook by Rittenberg and Tregarthen, which you can access by going to https://www.saylor.org/books/#soc and clicking on “Principles of Microeconomics (2.0).”

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I do not recommend using the free textbook from the CORE project as your reference, as that book takes a much different approach to introductory material (to be clear, it is a valid approach and the goals of the CORE project are admirable).
Laptop/desktop (price varies)
It will be difficult to complete this class on a smartphone. Brandeis has resources available to you if you need financial or technical assistance with purchasing a computer for your academic use.

Internet connection (price varies)
Likewise, it will not be possible to complete this class without some sort of internet connection. If your connection is slow to LATTE or other resources let me know.

Web camera (price varies)
A web camera will be very useful for communicating with the teaching staff and your fellow students. If it is at all possible, a web camera turned on for meetings is a very useful tool.

Slack (free)
We will be using Slack as another communication tool. It will be useful outside of class, during class, and possibly for group use (see below). More information soon.

LATTE
LATTE is the Brandeis learning management system: http://latte.brandeis.edu. Login using your UNET ID and password.

Office hours
Office hours are times when students may see the instructor, course assistant, or teaching assistant without any prior appointment. Students often come to office hours to get help on an assignment, an in-class example, or an upcoming exam. I also welcome students who want to talk about other concerns or interests either inside or outside the classroom.

Our class-wide link for student hours is https://brandeis.zoom.us/j/97633991948

Course assistants
Course assistants are graduate students who assist you in achieving your learning goals. They are available during their student hours for consultation. Their contact information is at the top of this document.

Teaching assistants
Teaching assistants are undergraduate students who have taken this course or covered this material previously and provide assistance and wisdom that are helpful in achieving your learning goals. They are available during their student hours for consultation. Their contact information is at the top of this document.

BUGS (Brandeis Undergraduate Group Study) tutors
BUGS tutors are undergraduate students with an extensive background in economics. They have student hours when you can talk with them. The BUGS tutors are typically announced in the first two weeks of classes.
Quantitative Skills Center
The Quantitative Skills Center (QSC) is dedicated to helping undergraduate students master the math and statistics they need to succeed in science and social science.

Email quant@brandeis.edu to schedule an appointment with a tutor at the QSC.

Privacy
This class requires the use of tools that may disclose your coursework and identity to parties outside the class. To protect your privacy, you may choose to use a pseudonym/alias rather than your name in submitting such work. You must share the pseudonym/alias with me and any course and teaching assistants as needed.

Student Support
Brandeis University is committed to supporting all our students so they can thrive. The following resources are available to help with the many academic and non-academic factors that contribute to student success (finances, health, food supply, housing, mental health counseling, academic advising, physical and social activities, etc.). Please explore the many links on this Support at Brandeis page (https://www.brandeis.edu/support/undergraduate-students/browse.html) to find out more about the resources that Brandeis provides to help you and your classmates to achieve success.

Assessment

Your performance in this course will be evaluated using the following criteria. These do add to more than 100%:

**Assignments (30% of the grade you earn)**
Individual assignments will be posted on the Macmillan Learning Achieve digital platform, https://achieve.macmillanlearning.com/start

Assignments are due each week on Thursday at 8pm Eastern US time.*

15% of the overall grade that you earn will be from the LearningCurve assignments, which assess your knowledge of the textbook material through a series of questions. While you have an infinite number of attempts to earn a high score, too many incorrect answers will lock you out of the assignment for a period of time so you can review the textbook.

Another 15% will be from the remainder of the assignments on Macmillan learning. Assignments will be graded on the number of correct answers you provide. These assignments can be attempted an infinite number of times.

* Please note that the US will change from Eastern Daylight time to Eastern Standard time on Sunday, November 7. The submission time in your time zone may differ after that date.
Weekly feedback (10%)
At the end of each week, you will answer 3-5 questions on the work you have done during that week. Submitting this feedback by Friday at 5pm Eastern US time* will earn you 0.33 points towards your final grade.

Over the weekend, the teaching staff and I will review the feedback submitted. If your comment is insightful, interesting, or informative, you will earn 0.66 points towards your final grade. Feedbacks submitted after this review are not eligible for these points.

You can earn a maximum of 10 final grade points via feedback.

Contributions (6.5%)
To maintain connection in this online environment, you earn points towards your final grade by doing the following:

- Attending class in-person: 0.2 points
- Attending class online with the camera on: 0.1 points
- Contributing to class: up to 0.3 points
- Contributing to Slack: up to 0.3 points
- Attending office hours: 0.2 points

You can earn a maximum of 0.5 final grade points each week.

Answering and creating questions (10%)

- Correct recitation assessments: 1 point
- Create graph-based questions and answers: 1 point
- Short videos on a topic from class not already covered by a video: 4 points

A maximum of 10 points overall can be earned from answering and creating questions.

Choose your path: exams or projects

Students can choose either to complete exams or projects for 50% of the grade they earn.

Exam option (50%)

- Midterm exam: 15%
- Final exam: 35%

Notes: exams may only be taken in person. In the event of quarantine, exams will be delayed. Exams are given during recitations. If you can not attend recitations, you can not use this option.

Project option (50%)

Version 1.0, 8/29/2021
Students will earn 15% of their overall grade from a practice project submitted in the first half of the semester. Additionally, 10% will be earned by submitting a rough draft on a date to be determined, and 25% of the overall grade will be via the final project.

For the final project, you will choose a public policy proposal that impacts a market, where a market is broadly defined as some part of society that can be ethically analyzed with an economic methodology. Since there are a large number of policy proposals in the world, each student must choose a unique proposal. In the event that two students submit the same policy proposal, the student who submitted the proposal first will continue with that proposal.

You will analyze the proposal using the concepts we discuss in class. The basic rubric is this:
- The project should be formatted as a technical report. The parts of a technical report will be discussed in a concept video.
- The project should be polished, with few grammatical, spelling, and formatting errors.
- Correctly using concepts from class in the analysis will earn points for each separate concept used.
- Data visualizations using concepts from the class will earn additional points.
- Incorrectly using concepts will subtract points.

### Assessment due dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due date</th>
<th>Submission method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital homework</td>
<td>Every Thursday at 8pm Eastern</td>
<td><a href="https://achieve.macmillanlearning.com/start">https://achieve.macmillanlearning.com/start</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly feedback</td>
<td>Every Friday at 3pm Eastern</td>
<td>LATTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm project</td>
<td>October 21</td>
<td>LATTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>October 19</td>
<td>in person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final project topic</td>
<td>November 5</td>
<td>LATTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final project rough draft</td>
<td>December 3</td>
<td>LATTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final project and all class-related work</td>
<td>December 10</td>
<td>LATTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>to be determined</td>
<td>in person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Assessment notes

Version 1.0, 8/29/2021
• I may consult with a student and/or contact a student’s academic advisor if the student is not meeting their desired grade level.

• When extra credit opportunities are offered to the class, students that participate will earn a certain number of points. These points are worth $\frac{1}{6}$ (0.167) of a final grade point. In other words, a student who earns 12 extra credit points will increase their final score by 2 points.

• No individual extra credit is ever assigned (that is, nothing is offered to a student that is not offered to the entire class).

Score to grade translation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter grade</th>
<th>Percentage equivalent</th>
<th>Brandeis numeric GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+ (see note)</td>
<td>97-100</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-96</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>0-59</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** As a final grade, A+ is a mark of distinction in the course. It is awarded to very few students who excel at every part of the course and may not correspond to this numerical translation (that is, earning a grade of 97-100 may result in a final grade of A).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>4 concepts to guide you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor day week</td>
<td>(no class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Demand</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Supply</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Equilibrium &amp; elasticity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Taxes &amp; price controls</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>(midterm project/exam)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Trade &amp; comparative advantage</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Externalities &amp; public goods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Market power</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thanksgiving week</td>
<td>(catch-up class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Banking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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