
MICROECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS FOR BUSINESS STUDIES

Period: a.y. 2025/26 – I sem.

Instructor:

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Course description

This course introduces the fundamental tools of microeconomics for studying strategic interaction and the provision of the incentives. The course is largely based on lectures, and it is ideally divided into four parts. The first part introduces non-cooperative games and bargaining theory. The second part focuses on market-based competition and pricing. The third part uses the lens of transaction costs economics and incomplete contracts to analyze (repeated) transactions. The fourth part addresses the limitations of information asymmetries from a complete contract perspective. The second major goal of this course is to expose doctoral students to conceptual and formal models at the intersection of strategy, applied economics, and organizational economics. Models are presented in detail with an emphasis on understanding the economic intuition. The course follows modern strategy frameworks that emphasize the tension between value creation and value capture.

Course Material

The content of the lectures and the slides are the only required material for the exam. There is also a list of suggested readings that are meant to provide a range of perspectives and a flavor of the research in different areas in strategy and in economics. Additional readings will be provided during the course. The slides and the readings will be made available on Blackboard.

Tentative list of topics

Part I

- Introduction to non-cooperative games: simultaneous, sequential, and repeated games.
- Introduction to bargaining theory: the strategic and the axiomatic approach.

Part II

- Strategic interaction in the market
- Strategic interaction in two-sided markets

Part III

- Transacting in a world of incomplete contracts: TCE vs PRE.
- Asset ownership, control, and the bargaining landscape.

Part IV

- Introduction to the theory of incentives.
- Contracting under hidden action.
- Contracting under hidden information.

Assessment Methods.

Effective class participation includes attendance and making an active and constructive contribution to the discussion, asking questions, making constructive comments, and having a positive attitude toward learning. As we go through the course, students will participate to team assignments with the objective of applying the models developed in class for making sense of specific economic situations.

Students will be evaluated as follows:

Class participation:	10 points
Team assignments:	40 points
Final written exam:	50 points

Faculty Bio.

Claudio received his PhD in Economics from Toulouse School of Economics and he is interested in organizational economics, industrial organization, and more broadly in the use of formal models in strategy. His research has been published in the Academy of Management Review, Strategic Management Journal, Organization Science, and other international journals. Claudio is currently an Associate Editor of the Strategic Management Journal and is in the Editorial Board of Organization Science.



Suggested complementary readings

Intro: formal models in strategy

- Csaszar, 2019. Certum Quod Factum: How Formal Models Contribute to the Theoretical and Empirical Robustness of Organization Theory. *Journal of Management*.
- Hannah, Tidhar, Eisenhardt, 2020. Analytic models in strategy, organizations, and management research: A guide for consumers. *SMJ*.
- Knudsen-Levinthal-Puranam, 2019. Editorial: A Model Is a Model. *Strategy Science*.
- Makadok, 2022. Guidance for AMR authors about making formal theory accessible. *AMR*.
- Moorthy, 1993. Theoretical Modeling in Marketing. *The Journal of Marketing*.
- Saloner, 1991. Modeling, game theory, and strategic management. *SMJ*.

Part I: Non-cooperative games and bargaining

- Dufwenberg, 2011. Intro to Game theory. *WIREs Cogni Sci*, 2: 167–173.
- Jackson, A brief introduction to the basics of game theory. Available at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1968579
- Osborne-Rubinstein, 1994. A course in game theory. Available at <http://gametheory.tau.ac.il/arielDocs/>
- Osborne-Rubinstein, 2005. Bargaining and markets (Part 1). Available at <http://gametheory.tau.ac.il/arielDocs/>

Part II: Competition and pricing

Suggested textbook:

- Belleflamme, P., Peitz, M., 2015. *Industrial Organization: Markets and Strategies*. Second Edition, Cambridge University Press.

Part III: Incomplete contracts

- Aghion-Tirole, 1994. On the management of innovation. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 109.
- Coase, R. 1937. The nature of the firm. *Economica*, 16.
- Grossman-Hart, 1986. The costs and benefits of ownership: A theory of vertical and lateral integration. *Journal of Political Economy* 94.
- Lerner, 2016. Oliver Hart's Contributions to the Understanding of Strategic Alliances and Technology Licensing. Available at <https://academic.oup.com/book/38703/chapter/336534283>

Part IV: Theory of incentives

Suggested textbook:

- Laffont, Martimort, 2002. *The Theory of Incentives*. Princeton University Press.