

Economics 421 (M001): Game Theory and Economic Strategy

Fall 2020

Professor Buzard

This course examines situations in which each agent's behavior affects the well-being of the other agents. Game theory is a technical framework for rigorously analyzing decision-making in such settings. We will focus on human interaction and assume that people behave in a rational, deliberate manner. In addition to exploring theory in the abstract, we will consider a variety of applications from economics, business, political science, sports and everyday life.

Schedule: MW 12:45 – 2:05 p.m. Syracuse time, Blackboard-integrated Zoom
We will meet on Labor Day (Sep. 7) as well as Sat, Sep. 5 at 12:45pm

Office Hours and Contact Information:

- Professor Buzard (kbuzard@sy.edu): email for Zoom office hours appointment
- Teaching Assistant: Matt Gonzalez mrgonzal@sy.edu: email for Zoom office hours appointment

Class Website: All materials and announcements will be posted on **Blackboard**, <https://blackboard.syr.edu>. Announcements will also be pushed to SU email accounts. It is each student's responsibility to check for announcements on a daily basis.

Required Materials:

- Book (on reserve at Bird Library, waiting for electronic reserve): Watson, J., *Strategy: An Introduction to Game Theory* (Norton) **3rd Edition**, 2013.
- A Turning Point Account and Subscription is necessary to receive credit for in-class participation. See "Book and TurningPoint Information" under *Course Overview* tab on Blackboard.

Technology Requirements: In order to participate in this course, you must be able to 1) access Blackboard 3-4 days/week; 2) participate in Zoom meetings with video and microphone (synchronous) or download class recordings and communicate by audio with team members in real time (asynchronous); 3) utilize the TurningPoint App or web portal; 4) utilize MS OneNote; 5) submit assignments via TurnItIn on Blackboard

Prerequisites: The prerequisites for this course are Intermediate Microeconomics (ECN 301 or 311) and Calculus (MAT 284, 285, 295 or 296). You will need to already be comfortable with partial differentiation or be able to learn it quickly. Appendix A of the Watson text is a good gauge of the math you will need. There will be two math quizzes during the semester; for each quiz, you must keep re-taking a version until you earn a score of at least 80% in order to stay in good standing to earn participation points. You must declare whether you will be a synchronous or asynchronous participant by Thursday, Sep. 3.

Course Approach: This course centers learning around students. Working most often in small teams, we will emphasize reflection and discussion of course material and how it relates to applications to help each other understand issues in which you are interested. While one goal is to learn important tools of strategic analysis, most important is learning how to *think* about situations you might encounter in the future. By the end of the semester, members of the ECN 421 learning community will be able to:

1. Distinguish a strategic situation from an individual's decision problem;
2. Describe a given strategic situation and mathematically represent it so that it can be analyzed;
3. Identify, precisely state, justify and apply the appropriate solution concept (i.e. solve the game) for a given strategic situation, including well-known games;
4. Recognize and explain the problems that arise from strategic interactions (i.e. strategic tensions)
5. Use Game Theory to understand and explain strategic interactions and the outcomes to which they lead, both within and beyond the classroom

I believe that the best use of class time is to work together on the most challenging questions with the guidance of your instructors, so students are asked to read AND WATCH the basic materials ahead of class and are **quizzed before each class** to ensure everyone is prepared. These quizzes will be on Blackboard. We will use the **Turning Point App** for individual and team responses to discussion questions posed throughout each class period (these responses are graded for participation only and not correctness so that there is no anxiety about grades as we wrestle with new ideas; asynchronous students will work through the material together with an assigned group within 24 hours after class). Short periods of lecture will be interspersed with individual reflection and team discussion to move the conversation forward and introduce key new concepts and challenges. In this way, it is my hope that we do the “heavy lifting” of learning in class at a relatively even pace, with little need for cramming. The learning community that we will create together will become the defining feature of the course.

In addition to the textbook, I will periodically introduce articles, videos, games and other outside materials from various sources. I’ll make clear which materials are required for exam purposes.

Problem Sets: Problem sets will be provided for practice but will not be graded. You may submit work either in written form or verbally during an Office Hours appointment to get feedback.

Evaluations: There will be about ten in-class evaluations (longer than a quiz but shorter than an exam); each will cover between one and three chapters. The lowest score will be dropped. Asynchronous students will submit an assigned essay on the chapter via TurnItIn within 12 hours of the end of class.

Course Project: You will work throughout the semester, either on your own or in a group of up to four, to model a strategic situation of your choosing. You will choose the size and composition of your group by Sep. 11. Your group’s grade will depend on the final submission as well as timely participation in intermediate steps that will help you successfully attain all five goals on the previous page.

Grading Weights: Reading quizzes 10%; Class participation 15%; Chapter Evaluations 45%; Course Project 30%.

- The score for class participation and reading quizzes is calculated from 85% of the total points in each category. That is, you only need to get 85% of the quiz questions correct to get the full 10% of the grade and answer 85% of the discussion questions to get the 15% for class participation. This is to allow for family emergencies, illness, job interviews, technology problems and similar circumstances since there is no way to make up these portions of the course. No other allowances will be made; this policy substitutes for ‘excused’ absences. You must have your camera and microphone turned on when required in order to receive participation points for the day.
- In order to receive a team assignment and be eligible to earn participation points, you must:
 1. submit a 400-word synopsis (Blackboard/Turnitin) of Aug. 24’s class material pertaining to the course design and commitments to the learning community by Aug. 28 at 11:59pm;
 2. complete the Syllabus Quiz (Blackboard) by Aug. 28 at 11:59pm.
 - If you have not been added to Blackboard by midnight on Aug. 27, the deadlines for items 1 and 2 are extended to 11:59pm the day after Blackboard access is granted.
 3. a student who registers after class on Wednesday, Aug. 26 must arrange to complete the math pre-test by Thursday, Sep. 3;
 4. submit the First Class Survey (Google Form) by Thursday, Sep. 3 at 11:59pm;
 5. create a TurningPoint Account and register a subscription (Blackboard/Turningpoint) by Thursday, Sep. 3 at 11:59 pm;
- Because poor attendance causes difficulties for small team dynamics, I reserve the right to withdraw a team assignment from any student whose attendance falls to less than 70% of class sessions that involve team work. If this action must be taken, that student **forfeits** all future class participation points. In addition, no class participation points can be earned as long as a student’s attendance is below the 70% threshold, regardless of team assignment status.

Grading: Grades are assigned according to the following percentages: A: 93-100%, B: 85-92%, C: 75-84%, D: 65-74%, F: below 65% (plus/minuses awarded within those ranges) unless the curve that awards the following percentages of letter grades (plus/minuses again awarded) would increase your grade:

Grade	Percent of Students Receiving that Grade (Approximate)
A	20-30
B	25-35
C	25-35
D & F	5-10

Course Policies:

1. SU’s religious observances policy (http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm) recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes. An online notification process is available through MySlice/Student Services/ Enrollment/My Religious Observances from the first day of class until the end of the second week.

2. If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), located in Room 309 of 804 University Avenue, or call (315) 443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented Disabilities Accommodation Authorization Letters, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

3. SU’s Academic Integrity Policy defines expectations for academic honesty and holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit. Students should understand that it is their responsibility to learn about course-specific expectations (ECN 421: No collaboration allowed on written/Blackboard quizzes or in-class evaluations. This includes submitting answers using another student’s TurningPoint account), as well as about university-wide academic integrity expectations. The policy governs appropriate citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. The policy also prohibits students from submitting the same work in more than one class without receiving written authorization in advance from both instructors. Under the policy, students found in violation are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered as described in the Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric. For more information about the policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>. The Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric establishes recommended guidelines for the determination of grade penalties by faculty and instructors, while also giving them discretion to select the grade penalty they believe most suitable, including course failure, regardless of violation level. Any established violation in this course may result in course failure regardless of violation level.

4. Some work in this class will be submitted via the plagiarism detection and prevention system Turnitin. Turnitin compares submitted documents against documents on the Internet and against student papers submitted to Turnitin at SU and at other colleges and universities. I will take your knowledge of the subject matter of this course and your writing level and style into account in interpreting the originality report. Keep in mind that all papers you submit for this class will become part of the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers.

5. As stated in the University’s Academic Rules and Regulations, student work prepared for this course in

any media may be used for educational purposes. You grant permission to have your work used in this manner by registering for, and by continuing to be enrolled in, this course. After you have completed this course, any further use of your work will either be rendered anonymous by removing all your personal identification or your written permission will be secured. If you object in any way, please send me an email no later than the second week of class at kbuzard@syr.edu.

6. Students have one week from the day on which an evaluation is graded to request a re-grade. This request must be made by email. If a student submits his/her work for re-grading, the student's entire submission will be re-graded by the professor (with no guarantee of a higher total score).

7. If you arrive late to an evaluation, you will be allowed to take it in the time that remains *as long as no one has submitted his/her evaluation*. Once a classmate has turned in his/her exam, your only option will be to submit the TurnItIn essay.

8. Electronic devices other than the one(s) you're using to access Zoom and TurningPoint are allowed *only* as long as it does not become a distraction to others. Other use of electronic devices is not allowed and will be enforced by the deduction of participation points. The wearing of headphones during class is strictly prohibited. No additional devices of any kind are allowed during quizzes or evaluations.

9. English is the language of instruction and interaction in class at all times. As it is the sole language that is shared by all students in the learning community, participation points will be deducted for using a language other than English during class time.

10. You may not post any course materials, including quizzes, exams, problem sets and/or their answers on the internet or any other media. You may not share any of these materials in any way without my express written consent except for the explicit and time-limited purpose of studying with your classmates this semester.

Course Outline

Topic	Chapters in the textbook
A. Representing Games	
Extensive form, strategies, normal form	1 – 3
Beliefs/mixed strategies, assumptions	4 – 5
II. Analysis of Static Settings	
Best response, rationalizability, applications	6 – 8
Equilibrium, applications	9 – 10
Mixed strategy equilibrium	11
III. Analysis of Dynamic Settings	
Extensive form, backward induction, SPE	14 – 15
Examples and applications	16
IV. Information	
Random events and incomplete information	24
Bayesian equilibrium, applications	26 – 27
PBE, applications	28 – 29