

Economic Theory - GSI Section Syllabus

GSI: Clotaire Boyer (he/him)

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Sections: 101 (MoWe 2pm in Etcheverry 3119) and 103 (MoWe 10am in Social Sciences Building 175)

OH: Mondays 3pm - 4pm (Evans 636) ; Thursdays 2pm - 3pm (Zoom, Room 570 681 5422).

What We Do in Section

Section complements (not repeats) lecture. We will:

- Work through targeted problems and exam preparation.
- Re-explain and discuss core concepts rigorously, with proofs/intuition as appropriate.
- This class may sound at times highly abstract to many of you. For your learning, I will try to connect material to recent research papers to show how ideas operate in practice. I think it is essential to provide you with useful references so that you can get a better understanding of the material and also a sense of what economic research is like!

You will find all section material on my website under the teaching page. Make sure you check it out even if you miss a section.

Communication & Availability

Office hours are the primary help channel. Please book them in advance on my website! I do not think that email communications are relevant for this course. On the rare occasions you do email me, please start the subject line with **Econ 101A** so it reaches me quickly. We do not accept regrade requests or deadline extensions for problem sets. For any conceptual questions, please come to OH or ask in section so everyone benefits!

Participation matters a lot to me!

I would love to have the most engaging section! I consider totally valid many forms of participation:

- Active listening and careful note-taking
- Thoughtful preparation; asking precise questions after reflection
- Helping a classmate understand a concept
- Sharing a well-formulated idea after a long pause
- Coming to office hours with targeted questions
- Bringing relevant research tidbits that connect to class

Expectations and Attendance

- **Attendance:** You are expected to attend sections. I prefer not to police it closely: illness & life happens you do not need to justify occasional absences to me. Note that high attendance and participation can increase your final grade!
- **Problem Sets:** I encourage you to form subgroups in my sections to study and work through the problem sets together. However, you will have to write up the answers on your own. Using IA to do the problem sets is prohibited and seems like a terrible idea given that the problem sets are the **best** way to prepare for our exams. You will not have time to gain a real understanding of all the content right before the exam if you do not work through these at a steady pace.

Academic Integrity & Plagiarism

All university policies apply: submit your own work and **cite** any sources you use. Suspected violations are reported to the appropriate office.

Research Paper Spotlights

I will occasionally introduce recent applied micro/public finance/IO/development papers to connect theory to practice. Example areas: consumer demand and welfare measurement, pass-through and incidence, market structure and policy, taxation and informality, and social protection design. My own research sits in public finance and development economics, and most of my fieldwork is based in the Democratic Republic of Congo. With Jonathan Weigel (a professor at Haas) and coauthors, I study how fragile, low-capacity states build tax capacity from the ground up, and how ordinary citizens bargain with the state over what they owe. My solo work chases a bigger question: can a state deliberately grow its own capitalists? I trace how industrial policy reshapes local firms and who captures the rents it creates, essentially watching a domestic business class take form in real time in a low-income economy. I also work with the World Bank on rethinking how social programs reach the people they are meant to serve, using new consumer-level data to make targeting sharper and fairer. As PhD candidates we tend to be passionate about our field, so I am always glad to discuss research in office hours, and I hope to pass some of that enthusiasm on to you.

Community norms and accessibility

We learn best in a respectful, curious, and inclusive environment. Thank you for contributing to it. If you need accommodations, please coordinate with DSP and they will let me know how my sections can best support you.

After the Course: Stay in Touch

Don't be a stranger! Reach out about economics, research paths, or readings. I regularly get URAP RAs (including this semester). Interested students should watch the URAP portal and come discuss in OH :)

I wish you all a great semester!