Seminar in Economics Topics  
ECON 8351  
Jean-Baptiste Tondji  
Spring, 2019

COURSE OUTLINE

Class schedule:  
Tuesday, 1.40 pm to 4.20 pm  
Room: CIC, Weslaco, Room 1.136

Instructor’s office hours:  
By appointment  
Office: CIC, Weslaco, Room 218  
Phone: (956)-665-3907

Instructor’s E-mail:  
jeanbaptiste.tondji@utrgv.edu

I. Course Objective and Prerequisites
This course is designed to equip Ph.D. students with the main economic-theoretic tools used in contemporary economics. It covers topics in decision theory, general equilibrium, strategic games and examines some models in formal theories of political behavior. We will discuss both the foundational models in the field and topics of current research. Emphasis will be placed on understanding the essentials underlying the various theoretical methods and developing the ability to relate the methods to important issues. Through readings, lectures, presentations, and written assignments, students are expected to become familiar with these techniques to read and understand theoretical scientific papers. There are no prerequisites for this course. Course materials will be delivered via lectures and discussions. Where necessary, lecture slides will be supplemented with notes on the chalkboard.

II. Resource Materials
In addition to the material listed for each topic in section IV below, the following books will be useful.
III. Robert C. Vackar College of Business and Entrepreneurship Learning Goals and Mission

The Robert C. Vackar College of Business Entrepreneurship has adopted the following learning goals and objectives that each student should achieve while in the Ph.D. degree program. Not all goals and objectives are covered in each course; however, all goals and objectives should be addressed throughout the degree program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ph.D. Learning Goals</th>
<th>This course contributes to the following Ph.D. learning objectives</th>
<th>Assessment method</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discipline knowledge</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>Presentations, Homework Assignments, and Exams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advanced theoretical or practical research skills for the specialization</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>Applications of Mathematics to Finance: Homework Assignments and Exams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation for teaching responsibilities</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dissertation competency preparation</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>Writing: Homework Assignments and Exams</td>
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Our mission is to be the agent of innovation, knowledge discovery, and economic development in South Texas, Northern Mexico, and beyond, by offering a rigorous curriculum informed by experiential learning, high quality research, and community partnerships. Your mastery of these learning goals and objectives help us to achieve this mission.

IV. Tentative Course Outline and Readings

A. Decision Theory

The basic theory of choice, Decision-making under uncertainty, Attitudes towards risk.
Reading: Varian 7.1, 11; Riley 2.1

B. Topics in Game Theory and Applications

Strategic games (static games, dynamic games), Cooperative games
Reading: Varian 15, 21.1; Gibbons 1, 2, 3; Riley 9

**C. Topics in General Equilibrium**
Exchange, Production, Equilibrium Analysis, Welfare, Externalities.
Reading: Varian 17, 18, 22, 24; Riley 3, 5.1, 5.2

**D. Topics in Contract Theory**
Adverse selection, Moral hazard.
Reading: Laffont 2.1 to 2.8, 2.15, 4 (except 4.5)

**E. Topics in voting mechanisms, fairness, and allocative justice**
Readings:
Varian 23 (Public goods).

**V. Assessment Methods and Grading Policies**
There will be two exams; each will count 25% towards your final grade, four problem sets of 10% each, and one in-class presentation (10%). You must have a valid University excuse to take a make-up exam. No additional credit will be given.

**In-class presentation:**
Each student should select a paper to present during class time. The paper needs to be related to one of the class topics. Submit your paper to the class instructor for approval early in the semester to schedule the presentations. Note that there is a limited number of topics, so topics will be assigned on a first-come, first-serve basis. Prepare your presentations to be 30 minutes long, including questions. The cutoffs for the A-F grading system are given by 90 points or up A; 80 -- 89 points: B; 70 -- 79 points: C; 60 -- 69 points: D; 59 or fewer points: F.

The tentative periods for the exams and presentation follow:
First exam: April 2, 2019.
Second exam: May 7, 2019.

VI. About your Professor
Jean-Baptiste Tondji obtained his Ph.D. in Economics at the University of Ottawa in Canada. Prior of joining UTRGV in Fall 2018, he worked as a Part-time professor in economics at the University of Ottawa. Jean-Baptiste is deeply passionate about research, teaching, and learning. His primary goal is to invoke learners to make efficient use of their natural dispositions in the appropriation of new techniques and materials, so that they may easily apply them to real-life situations. In addition to teaching, he does researches in the fields of applied microeconomic theory, political economy, and the economics of organizations. For more information on his current research, you are welcome to consult his website at https://sites.google.com/site/jbtondjicom/home.

VII. Important University Dates, Policies and Services
The UTRGV academic calendar can be found at https://my.utrgv.edu/home at the bottom of the screen, prior to login. Some important dates for spring 2019 include:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 14 (Mon.)</td>
<td>Spring classes begin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 17 (Thurs.)</td>
<td>Last day to add or register for Spring classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 21 (Mon.)</td>
<td>Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday. No classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 30 (Wed.)</td>
<td>Census Day (last day to drop without it appearing on the transcript)</td>
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<td>Mar. 11 – Mar. 16 (Mon. – Sat.)</td>
<td>Spring Break. No classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 10 (Wed.)</td>
<td>Last day to drop a class (grade of DR) or withdraw (grade of W)</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 19 – April 20 (Fri. – Sat.)</td>
<td>Easter Holiday. No classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 2 (Thurs.)</td>
<td>Study Day. No classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 3 – 9 (Fri. – Thurs.)</td>
<td>Final Exams</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 10 - May 11 (Fri. – Sat.)</td>
<td>Commencement Exercises</td>
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Students with Disabilities
Students with a documented disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other disability which affects academic performance) who would like to receive academic accommodations should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) as soon as possible to schedule an appointment to initiate services. Accommodations can be arranged
through SAS at any time but are not retroactive. Students who suffer a broken bone, severe injury or undergo surgery during the semester are eligible for temporary services.

**Pregnancy, Pregnancy-related, and Parenting Accommodations**

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination, which includes discrimination based on pregnancy, marital status, or parental status. Students seeking accommodations related to pregnancy, pregnancy-related condition, or parenting (reasonably immediate postpartum period) are encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services for additional information and to request accommodations.

**Student Accessibility Services**

**Brownsville Campus:** Student Accessibility Services is in Cortez Hall Room 129 and can be contacted by phone at (956) 882-7374 (Voice) or via email at ability@utrgv.edu.

**Edinburg Campus:** Student Accessibility Services is in 108 University Center and can be contacted by phone at (956) 665-7005 (Voice), (956) 665-3840 (Fax), or via email at ability@utrgv.edu.

**Mandatory Course Evaluation Period**

Students are required to complete an ONLINE evaluation of this course, accessed through your UTRGV account (http://my.utrgv.edu); you will be contacted through email with further instructions. Students who complete their evaluations will have priority access to their grades.

**Attendance**

Please, attend all scheduled classes. You may be dropped from the course for excessive absences. UTRGV's attendance policy excuses students from attending class if they are participating in officially sponsored university activities, such as athletics; for the observance of religious holy days; or for military service. Students should contact the instructor in advance of the excused absence and arrange to make up missed work or examinations.

**Scholastic Integrity**

As members of a community dedicated to Honesty, Integrity, and Respect, students are reminded that those who engage in scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and expulsion from the University. Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, plagiarism (including self-plagiarism), and collusion; submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person; taking an examination for another person; any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student; or the attempt to commit such acts. Since scholastic dishonesty harms the individual, all students and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced (Board of Regents Rules and Regulations and UTRGV Academic Integrity Guidelines). All scholastic dishonesty incidents will be reported to the Dean of Students.
Sexual Harassment, Discrimination, and Violence

In accordance with UT System regulations, your instructor is a “Responsible Employee” for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and so must report any instance, occurring during a student’s time in college, of sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, domestic violence, or sexual harassment about which she/he becomes aware during this course through writing, discussion, or personal disclosure. More information can be found at www.utrgv.edu/equity, including confidential resources available on campus. The faculty and staff of UTRGV actively strive to provide a learning, working, and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect that is free from sexual misconduct and discrimination.

Course Drops

According to UTRGV policy, students may drop any class without penalty earning a grade of DR until the official drop date. Following that date, students must be assigned a letter grade and can no longer drop the class. Students considering dropping the class should be aware of the “3-peat rule” and the “6-drop” rule so they can recognize how dropped classes may affect their academic success. The 6-drop rule refers to Texas law that dictates that undergraduate students may not drop more than six courses during their undergraduate career. Courses dropped at other Texas public higher education institutions will count toward the six-course drop limit. The 3PEAT rule refers to additional fees charged to students who take the same class for the third time.

Students Services

Students who demonstrate financial need have a variety of options when it comes to paying for college costs, such as scholarships, grants, loans, and work-study. Students should visit the Students Services Center (U Central) for additional information. U Central is located in BMAIN 1.100 (Brownsville) or ESSBL 1.145 (Edinburg) or can be reached by email (ucentral@utrgv.edu) or telephone: (888) 882-4026. In addition to financial aid, U Central can assist students with registration and admissions.

Students seeking academic help in their studies can use university resources in addition to an instructor’s office hours. University Resources include the Learning Center, Writing Center, Advising Center, and Career Center. The centers provide services such as tutoring, writing help, critical thinking, study skills, degree planning, and student employment. Locations are:

- Learning center: BSTUN 2.10 (Brownsville) or ELCTR 100 (Edinburg)
- Writing center: BLIBR 3.206 (Brownsville) or ESTAC 3.119 (Edinburg)
- Advising center: BMAIN 1.400 (Brownsville) or ESWKH 101 (Edinburg)
- Career center: BCRTZ 129 (Brownsville) or ESSBL 2.101 (Edinburg)