Tentative Syllabus--Subject to Revision—27 November 2006

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI`I AT MĀNOA
Department of Economics
Spring 2007 Semester

ECON 130A Principles of Economics-Micro
Honors Section

Tuesday/Thursday 10:30 – 11:45 AM
Saunders 242
Professor Sumner La Croix

Office Hours: Tues. 8:30 – 10 am, Thurs. 2-3 pm, and by appointment.
Office: Saunders Hall 515A
Phone: 956-7061
E-mail: lacroix@hawaii.edu

The syllabus and class announcements are posted on the Economics 130A homepage at http://myuhportal.hawaii.edu. The lecture powerpoints—because of their size—are posted on http://www2.hawaii.edu/~lacroix. The powerpoints for each lecture are available for download from 12 pm the previous day. Some additional learning materials can be found at http://mankiw.swlearning.com.

Course Description

This course uses the popular Mankiw textbook—adopted at such varied schools as Harvard University and California State University-Northridge—to provide students with the basics of microeconomic theory. Students learn how to use economic theory to analyze markets, firm behavior, and individual behavior with economic models. Topics include: supply and demand analysis; comparative advantage; theory of the firm including production and costs, perfect competition, monopoly, monopolistic competition and oligopoly; and public policy analysis of various issues including, but not limited to, excise taxation, externalities and market structure.
Microeconomics has traditionally been known as the *dismal science*, an eccentric economist tries (with little success) to reposition it as the *joyous science*, and, now, Steven Levitt has popularized the term *Freakonomics*. Over the course of 5-6 classes, Econ 130A students will read and critique selections from the Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner best seller, *Freakonomics*, as well as the subsequent *New York Times Sunday Magazine* articles based on the book. The book’s economic analysis will help you understand how legalized abortion and crime rates may be related; why world cup soccer players tend to be born in January, February, and March; and why public school teachers sometimes change their student answers on standardized exams (yes, the teachers cheat!) to improve the exam results for their students, class, and school.

**Prerequisites**

No course prerequisites. The analytical skills required for successful completion of this course are elementary mathematical and graphical ability.

**Texts**


Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner. *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything*. HarperCollins, 2005. (New and used hardcover copies at UH bookstore. Softcover editions exist but are hard to locate. You may want to check on-line.)

Various Freakonomics columns from the *New York Times Sunday Magazine*.

**College Computer Labs**

Don’t have a computer? Use the College of Social Sciences computer labs:

Saunders Hall 635
Saunders Hall 342

Lab users are required to log in with their UH email address (without the @hawaii.edu) as their username and their UH ID number as their password. See the example below of a student ID card. The numbers in the box are your UH ID number and your password.
Once you’re entered into the system, the computer will ask you to change your password.

**Grade determination**

Letter grades are assigned using the University of Hawaii plus/minus grading system. The course is **NOT** graded on a curve. Grades depend on individual student performance which is evaluated via the following components.

- Class Attendance and Participation: 20%
- Homework Assignments: 10%
- Group Research Project: 10%
- Mid-term exam (1 March 2007): 20%
- Final exam (10 May 2007): 40%

**TOTAL** 100%

**Examinations**

Examinations will consist of short essay questions. Examinations are closed-note, closed-book. You are responsible for all material covered in the lectures, the assigned readings and homework problems, and the in-class exercises. The final examination is cumulative, with roughly 65-70 percent of the points earned on questions referring to topics covered since the midterm.

Attendance at all examinations is mandatory. No make-up examinations will be offered except for University-sanctioned excuses. If you do miss an examination, be sure to e-mail the instructor and explain why you missed the examination. Students with an unexcused absence will receive zero (0) points and a “F” letter
grade on that examination. Students who miss the midterm examination are advised to withdraw from the course at their earliest opportunity.

Check the time of the final exam—10 May 2007. If you cannot take this exam at the scheduled date/time, do not take this course.

Class attendance and participation

Class attendance is required. Students unable to attend the course lectures as scheduled should withdraw immediately. Attendance will be measured through a sign-in system. Students unable to attend the entire lecture should not sign-in. Because attendance will count toward course credit, abuse of the sign-in system will be treated as academic dishonesty. Students can miss two classes without penalty. Each subsequent class missed results in a 1.0 loss in the maximum 20 percent of the grade that can be earned from class attendance.

In-class exercises

We may devote all or part of 3-5 classes to in-class exercises. The exercises are fun. They are not graded. No animals or UH students will be harmed!!

You must come to class AND participate in these exercises to receive daily attendance credit on class exercise days. Possible topics include:

- International trade
- Voluntary provision of public goods
- Private Resolution of externalities
- Diminishing returns
- Prisoner’s dilemma (game theory)

Group research project

During the April-May discussion of the Levitt-Dubner book, students in this class will also be working on a group research project. The course instructor will assign a project to the class. Each student will then be responsible for a component of the project AND for bringing the project’s parts together as a coherent, carefully executed, clearly explained project. The class project report is due on Friday, 20 April 2007 at 11:30 pm. An additional handout will be provided in March 2007 detailing the report’s format, analysis, length, etc.
## CLASS READING-LECTURE SCHEDULE

**SUBJECT TO REVISION THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER AT DISCRETION OF INSTRUCTOR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, January 9</td>
<td>Course Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, January 11</td>
<td>Mankiw, ch 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, January 16</td>
<td>Mankiw, ch 3</td>
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<td>Thursday, January 18</td>
<td>Mankiw, ch 3</td>
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<td>Tuesday, January 23</td>
<td>Mankiw, ch. 4</td>
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<td>Thursday, January 25</td>
<td>Mankiw, ch. 4</td>
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<td>Tuesday, January 30</td>
<td>Mankiw, ch. 5</td>
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<td>Thursday, February 1</td>
<td>Mankiw, ch.5-6</td>
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<td>Tuesday, February 6</td>
<td>Mankiw, ch. 6</td>
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<td>Thursday, February 8</td>
<td>Mankiw, ch. 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, February 13</td>
<td>Mankiw, ch. 8</td>
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<td>Thursday, February 15</td>
<td>Mankiw, ch. 9</td>
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<td>Tuesday, February 20</td>
<td>Mankiw, ch. 10</td>
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<td>Thursday, February 22</td>
<td>Mankiw, ch. 10</td>
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<td>Tuesday, February 27</td>
<td>Mankiw, ch. 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, March 1</td>
<td>Midterm Examination</td>
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<td>Tuesday, March 6</td>
<td>Mankiw, chs 13</td>
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<td>Thursday, March 8</td>
<td>Mankiw, chs 13-14</td>
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<td>Tuesday, March 13</td>
<td>Mankiw, ch. 14</td>
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<td>Thursday, March 15</td>
<td>Levitt, intro and ch. 1</td>
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<td>Tuesday, March 20</td>
<td>Levitt, ch. 2</td>
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<td>Thursday, March 22</td>
<td>Levitt, ch. 3</td>
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<td>March 26-30</td>
<td>No Class—Spring Break!!!</td>
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Tuesday, April 3                      Levitt, chapter 4.
Thursday, April 5                   Levitt, chapter 5, maybe part of ch. 6

Tuesday, April 10                   Mankiw, ch. 15.
Thursday, April 12                  Mankiw, ch. 15

Tuesday, April 17                   Mankiw, ch. 16
Thursday, April 19                  Mankiw, ch. 16
Friday, April 20 at 11:30 pm        Group project report due.

Tuesday, April 24                   Mankiw, ch. 17
Thursday, April 26                  Mankiw, ch. 18

Tuesday, May 1                      Mankiw, ch. 18 (last day of class for Econ 130A!)

Thursday-Friday, May 3-4           UH-Manoa Study Days

Final examination information

DATE: Thursday, 10 May 2007
TIME: 9:45 – 11:45 am
PLACE: Our usual classroom—different time!!!!

Want to know your course grade? UH makes it available to you via the UH web site starting Tuesday evening, 15 May 2007.