OVERVIEW

Law and economics uses microeconomic tools and concepts of scarcity, choice, preferences, incentives, supply and demand to explain legal and political rules, social norms, firms, contracts, government organizations, and other institutions. As measured by publications and citations, law and economics is one of the fastest-growing areas of applied microeconomics. Law schools are devoting increasing attention to teaching the economic analysis of law. Most top law schools have multiple professors with a Ph.D. in economics and law classes that are not taught by Ph.D. economists typically integrate economic concepts into the material. Many of the most respected judges frequently use economic analysis in their rulings. This course shows how we can use economic principles to approach the courses that a typical 1L would take in law school (property, contracts, torts, criminal) and some of the advanced courses (intellectual property and antitrust).

OBJECTIVES

Students who successfully complete this class should understand:
1. How people respond to incentives;
2. How laws affect a wide range of economic outcomes;
3. How economics provides insight into many substantive areas of law.
4. Facts about the US economy and policy domain.
5. How data can be marshaled to evaluate policy claims;

Professionally, students will have an excellent foundation to prepare you for success in 3 areas:
1. Law school. Former students have attended many top law schools, such as Harvard University, University of Chicago, Columbia University, New York University, and the University of Virginia.
2. Business or entrepreneurship. Business people and entrepreneurs must increasingly understand legal principles and concepts.
3. Politics. Former students have won public office and many have careers in government agencies and are responsible for implementing policy.

WEB SITE and COURSE OUTLINE

The class website provides announcements, the syllabus, an outline of class notes and other class resources. Each term, I edit the outline to ensure that I cover current events and policy issues and cover some of the topics that I was unable to teach in previous terms. You are responsible for regularly checking the class web site.

REQUIRED READING

The textbook is Law and Economics (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008) by Jeffrey L. Harrison and Jules Theeuwes. Additional articles are linked directly to the outline of notes.

PREREQUISITES

This course assumes a strong working background in Intermediate Microeconomics (ECON 4010). Chapter 2 of the text reviews many principles from Intermediate Micro.
PAPERS
You will write one 4-6 page paper as outlined on the papers page.

CLASS ATTENDANCE AND EXPECTATIONS
You are expected to attend class each day and come to class prepared to discuss the merits and weaknesses of the reading. You cannot learn economics by passively absorbing it, but must be able to articulate thoughtful analysis. Therefore, my teaching style is to call on people and ask them to make arguments about the readings and problems I outline in class. If you are unwilling to make attending, preparing, and participating in class a priority, then this class is not a good match for you. Consistent with UGA policy, I have the right to exercise instructor-initiated withdrawals for students who are not attending class regularly.

ACADEMIC HONESTY
As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University’s academic honesty policy, “A Culture of Honesty,” and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards described in “A Culture of Honesty”. Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not an explanation for a violation.

GRADING and MISSED EXAM POLICY
The final grade will be based on two midterms (40%), one paper (15%), class participation (15%), and a comprehensive final (30%).

The class participation grade will be a function of class attendance and quality of participation. No extra credit will be given for the course.

Exams will be based on both the class notes and the reading. The midterm dates will be set on the website. You are required to take the midterms unless you have a justifiable excuse, such as a personal illness or family emergency. If you have an emergency and are unable to take the midterm at the assigned time, talk to me as soon as possible before the midterm. After discussing your situation I may permit a make-up exam or will shift the weight of that midterm to the final exam. Each student will be permitted at most one make-up exam during the semester.

The comprehensive final exam is Thurs. May 2 from noon - 3 p.m. Failure to take the final exam at the scheduled time will result in a grade of zero. If you are unable to take the final at the assigned time, you should not take this course. If you have three final exams scheduled within a 24-hour period or two examinations at the same time, a student may petition to reschedule an exam. If one of the conflicting final examinations is a mass exam, then it will be rescheduled for that student.

EXAM PHILOSOPHY
I curve the exams and do not use a 90-80-70 scale for grading. After each exam, I post the grade distribution (A, A-, B+, … D, and F) with the corresponding scores for that test. I curve because the larger distribution helps me more accurately measure each student’s ability, it is fairer to students who are less likely to narrowly miss a given cutoff for the next higher grade, it provides a greater learning tool, and provides incentives for students to study more. The average GPA for this course is usually about 3.0.