1 Overview

What this class is: This is an intermediate-level, mathematically oriented class in game theory, aimed at economics PhD students (but qualified students in other departments are very much welcome to attend). The goals are twofold: to provide technical tools for studying game-theoretic problems that arise in economic models, and to discuss conceptual issues in interpreting the predictions of game theory.

What this class is not:

• **A class just for micro theorists.** This class is meant to provide concepts and analytical tools useful in every area of economics (and beyond).

• **A first course in game theory.** Technically, the mathematical content will be developed in a way that doesn’t presume game theory background; but in practice, if you haven’t taken a previous game theory class it will be steep going. (The official prerequisite is ECON 203. If you have taken a different game theory class and are unsure if you are prepared, you are encouraged to discuss with me.)

• **An introduction to the research frontiers.** This is intended as a foundational course, although we will run across some relatively recent papers. ECON 290 or MGTECON 616 are more like “advanced topics” classes.

Textbooks: The main source for this class is the still-classic


Other books that will provide helpful reading for specific parts of the class are


There are also a couple more recent books that overlap substantially with parts of the class. I haven’t made them official materials for the course, and haven’t referred directly to them on the reading list, but you might find them useful:


The course will also draw on assorted papers, as listed below. Note that in order to keep the reading list manageable I’ve only listed papers that are relatively central to the lecture material. The lectures will periodically refer to other papers not listed here as well.

**Other materials:** I don’t have detailed lecture notes to distribute, although outlines will be available. If any students are interested in typing up fully fleshed-out notes as a public good, I am happy to help coordinate.

**Assignments:** There will be two types of assignments.

• **Problem sets.** There will be four of these assigned (planned due dates 10/14, 10/28, 11/11, 12/2). Grading, and writing of official solutions, will be done collaboratively, and everyone who is enrolled for credit is expected to pitch in. More details will be issued with the first problem set.

  On each problem set, you should participate in at least three problems — where “participating” means either turning in a written solution, or helping with grading or with writing official solutions. However, you are encouraged to solve all the problems! They will help build your intuitions for the concepts in the course, and will also cover some classic results not covered in lecture.
• **Final projects.** These do not need to be original research. Instead, you should summarize and critically review several existing papers related to some topic from this course. You can choose either pure theory papers, or papers that do more applied modeling as long as they draw on some tools from the course. The intent is for you to dive into the literature on a topic you find interesting, and understand the motivating questions, the approaches that existing research has taken, and the challenges and possible limitations. These will be due 12/5. More instructions will emerge later.

2 Schedule of classes

The lectures will aim to adhere to the schedule below, but in practice there may be some adjustment.

2.1 First half: Static games

• 9/23, 9/25: Basics of static games, solution concepts, complete and incomplete information
  – Fudenberg & Tirole, chapters 1, 2, sections 6.1–6.6, 8.4

• 9/30: Zero-sum and potential games
  – Osborne & Rubinstein, section 2.5

• 10/2, 10/7, 10/9: Supermodular games
  – Fudenberg & Tirole, section 12.3
– Topkis, chapter 2, sections 3.1–3.3, chapter 4

• 10/14, 10/16: Knowledge and rationality
  – Osborne & Rubinstein, chapter 5
  – Fudenberg & Tirole, chapter 14

2.2 Second half: Dynamic games and processes

• 10/21: Basics of dynamic games
  – Fudenberg & Tirole, chapter 3, sections 4.2, 8.1–8.3

• 10/23: Intuitive criterion, forward induction
  – Fudenberg & Tirole, sections 11.2–11.3

• 10/28: Communication games

• 10/30, 11/4, 11/6: Repeated games
  – Fudenberg & Tirole, sections 5.1, 5.5–5.6

• 11/11, 11/13: Reputation
– Fudenberg & Tirole, sections 9.1–9.2

**• 11/18, 11/20: Bargaining**
– Fudenberg & Tirole, section 4.4, chapter 10

**• 12/2, 12/4: Evolutionary foundations**
– Fudenberg & Levine, sections 1.1–1.6, 2.1–2.4, 5.1–5.5