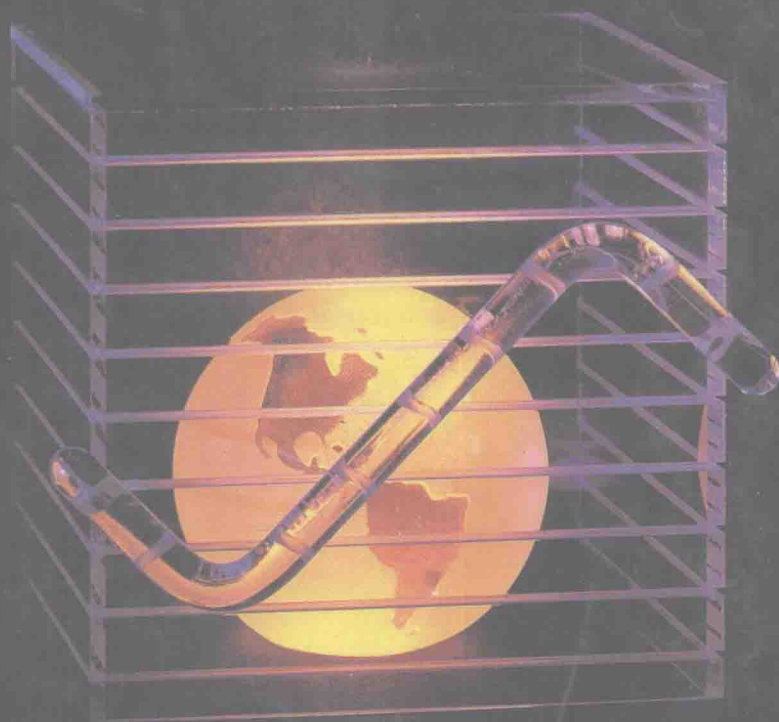


MICROECONOMICS

PRINCIPLES AND POLICY

FIFTH EDITION



WILLIAM J. BAUMOL
ALAN S. BLINDER

MICROECONOMICS

PRINCIPLES AND POLICY

FIFTH EDITION

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Preface

Economic analysis has continued to progress since the writing of the previous edition; but it has produced no revolutionary upheavals requiring major changes in this book. However, the world about us has changed in ways that were beyond belief just three years ago. Who would have dreamed in 1987 that in 1990 the Berlin wall would be chopped up and sold as souvenirs in shops throughout the world, or that the formerly socialist economies of Eastern Europe—perhaps even the USSR itself—would be headed by leaders eager to declare their commitment to the market mechanism.

For us, the fundamental importance of these events stems not only from their negative verdict on the workability of central planning, or from the fact that the free market has won the competitive struggle with “Marxism,” sensational though that victory clearly is. Perhaps equally important for the long run is the fact that the United States cannot just stand by as a passive observer of these cataclysmic developments. They affect our economy inescapably, and in a large variety of ways. U.S. military spending will probably be cut substantially, under powerful public pressure. The reunification of Germany has implications for the U.S. balance of payments and for American competitiveness in world markets that constitute a major and persistent source of concern. U.S. business is now offered substantial marketing and investment opportunities in the newly opened economies of Eastern Europe that competition does not permit it to ignore.


These and other related developments hammer home the fact that American workers and American firms carry out their economic activities *in a market that is fundamentally international*. Half a century ago, the rest of the world mattered far less to the U.S. economy than it does today. Back then, General Motors was primarily concerned with competition from Ford and Chrysler; foreign cars were hardly worth worrying about. In almost all industries, the bulk of U.S. production was sold to other Americans. Imports and exports constituted a far smaller share of GNP than they do today. But all this has changed. American producers of computers, airplanes, and TV programs make a large proportion of their sales and profits outside our borders. Television sets in U.S. homes come almost entirely from abroad, and Japanese cars are the primary competitive threat to our automobile industry.

For these reasons, it made sense in the past for most of the pages of an *American* textbook to treat the U.S. economy as an isolated world complete in itself. And, for the sake of expository simplicity, that is how most books were written. Only in later chapters were international economic linkages introduced as a necessary but troublesome complication, modifying somewhat the isolated-country analysis of the remainder of the volume.

Whether such an approach was defensible in the past is perhaps debatable. But it clearly no longer makes sense. The isolated-country economy is so gross a distortion of reality that its use for expository simplicity can no longer be justified even as a starting point.

Accordingly, in this Fifth Edition, our book has been transformed to provide the reader with a depiction of the workings of an economy firmly intertwined with many others. The international interconnections of our economy are embedded throughout the book rather than appended as an afterthought. Illustrative cases, descriptive factual materials, analytic tools, and end-of-chapter problems have all been modified in this way. We trust the result will give the reader an enhanced sense of pertinence, and offer him or her more illuminating insights into the way the economy really works.

There have been other major changes in this new edition. For example, we have scattered throughout the book a new feature, *At the Frontier*, which was introduced in the Fourth Edition. These boxed inserts offer straightforward introductory descriptions of work that currently occupies the attention of the most innovative academic economists, work that is currently featured prominently in the leading professional journals. This feature offers glimpses of exciting developments that constitute work currently in progress, so that students get some sense that economics is a living and evolving discipline, not one that is confined to the insights of the distant past.

This edition, however, continues the basic philosophy of its predecessors. In particular, we avoid the fiction, so popular among textbook writers, that everything is of the utmost importance—a pretense that students are sufficiently intelligent to see through in any event. We have, instead, tried to highlight those important ideas that are likely to be of lasting significance—principles that students will want to remember long after the course is over because they offer insights that are far from obvious, because they are of practical importance, and because they are widely misunderstood by intelligent laymen. A dozen of the most important of these ideas have been selected as **12 Ideas for Beyond the Final Exam** and are called to your attention when they occur through the use of the book's logo. 

All modern economics textbooks abound with “real world” examples. We have tried to go beyond this by elevating the examples to preeminence for, in our view, the policy issue or everyday economic problem ought to lead the student naturally to the economic principle, not the other way around. For this reason, many chapters start with a real policy issue or a practical problem, sometimes drawn from our own experience, that may seem puzzling or paradoxical to noneconomists. We then proceed to describe the economic analysis required to remove the mystery.

In so doing, we utilize technical jargon terminology and diagrams only where there is a clear need for them, never for their own sake. Still, economics is a technical subject and so this is, unavoidably, a book for the desk and not for the bed. We have, however, made strenuous efforts to simplify the technical level of the discussion as much as possible without sacrificing content. Fortunately, almost every important idea in economics can be explained in plain English, and this is what we have tried to do.

Another example is our treatment of the market mechanism's ability, under ideal circumstances, to allocate society's resources in the most efficient manner possible. Many introductory textbooks, thinking the topic too difficult for beginning students, give little more than some general hints about this important result. We offer a genuine description of a proof and an extensive discussion of precisely what the result does—and does not—imply about the efficiency of real-world market economies. This issue has emerged dramatically in newspapers in the wake of the collapse of central planning in so many countries.

Changes from the Fourth Edition

Our theme of greater internationalization is most noticeable in Chapter 24 on comparative economic systems. This chapter has been given a major facelift in the hope that instructors who have not previously found time for it will begin to include it in their courses. The transition from planning to markets is, after all, the most burning

economic issue of our time. Naturally, the material on the Soviet Union was extensively rewritten and some new text material on Eastern Europe added. In addition, the current importance of Japan in the world economy, and the growing recognition that Japanese capitalism really is something different from American capitalism, prompted us to add a unique discussion of the Japanese economy.

Other changes include references to international competition and the problems of central planning sprinkled throughout; updated data and examples; a few new topics (for example, a series of *At the Frontier boxes*); and sections found difficult by readers of the Fourth Edition have been rewritten.

Note to the Student

Whatever the nature of your course, we would like to offer one suggestion. Unlike some of the other courses you may be taking, microeconomics is cumulative—each week's lesson builds on what you have learned before. You will save yourself both a lot of frustration and a lot of work by keeping up on a week-to-week basis. To help you do this, there is a chapter summary, a list of important terms and concepts, and a selection of questions to help you review at the end of each chapter. In addition to these aids, special supplementary materials have been designed specifically to accompany this text. Many students will find the *Study Guide* by Professor Craig Swan helpful as a self-testing and diagnostic device. Others may prefer one of two computer-assisted software packages, *CAPER* by Calvin Hoerneman, John Cole, Karen Wilson, and David Howard and *ECO TALK* by Michael Claudon and Kipley Olson. When you encounter difficulties, the *Study Guide* and the interactive software will help you target the specific sections of the text you need to review.

Note to the Instructor

Several materials are available for instructors to use with the text:

- *Instructor's Manual* by John Isbister
- *Testbook-A* by Jim Starkey
- *Testbook-B* by Diane Owen and Jozell Brister (Both testbooks are available in book and computerized formats.)
- Transparencies
- Transparency Masters

In trying to improve the book from one edition to the next, we rely heavily on our experiences as teachers. But our experience using the book is minuscule compared with that of the hundreds of instructors who use it nationwide. If you encounter problems, or have suggestions for improving the book, we urge you to let us know by writing to either one of us in care of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, College Department, 1250 Sixth Avenue, San Diego, California 92101. Such letters are invaluable, and we are glad to receive them, even if they are critical (but not *too* critical!). Many such suggestions accumulated over the past three years found their way into the Fifth Edition.

What follows is a set of suggested course outlines predicated on the assumptions that a one-semester course will be able to cover about half the book, and a one-quarter course will be able to cover about one-third of the book.

OUTLINE FOR A ONE-SEMESTER COURSE IN MICROECONOMICS

Chapter Number	Title
1	What Is Economics?
2	The Use and Misuse of Graphs
3	Scarcity and Choice: <i>The Economic Problem</i>

4	Supply and Demand: An Initial Look
5	Consumer Choice and the Individual's Demand Curve
6	Market Demand and Elasticity
7	Input Decisions and Production Costs
8	Output–Price Decisions: The Importance of Marginal Analysis
9	The Firm and the Industry under Perfect Competition
10	The Price System and the Case for Laissez Faire
11	Monopoly
12	Between Competition and Monopoly
13	The Market Mechanism: Shortcomings and Remedies
14	Real Firms and Their Financing: Stocks and Bonds
15	Limiting Market Power: Regulation of Industry
16	Limiting Market Power: Antitrust Policy
17	Taxation, Government Spending, and Resource Allocation
20	Pricing the Factors of Production
21	Labor: The Human Input

Plus Any Two of the Following:

18	Environmental Protection and Resource Conservation
19	International Trade and Comparative Advantage
22	Poverty, Inequality, and Discrimination
23	The Economics of Karl Marx
24	Comparative Economic Systems: What Are the Choices?
25	Dissenting Opinions: Conservative, Moderate, and Radical

OUTLINE FOR A ONE-QUARTER COURSE IN MICROECONOMICS

Chapter Number	Title
3	Scarcity and Choice: <i>The</i> Economic Problem
4	Supply and Demand: An Initial Look
5	Consumer Choice and the Individual's Demand Curve
6	Market Demand and Elasticity
7	Input Decisions and Production Costs
8	Output–Price Decisions: The Importance of Marginal Analysis
9	The Firm and the Industry under Perfect Competition
10	The Price System and the Case for Laissez Faire
11	Monopoly
12	Between Competition and Monopoly
13	The Market Mechanism: Shortcomings and Remedies
14	Real Firms and Their Financing: Stocks and Bonds
17	Taxation, Government Spending, and Resource Allocation
20	Pricing the Factors of Production
21	Labor: The Human Input

With Thanks

Finally, and with great pleasure, we turn to the customary acknowledgments of indebtedness. Ours have been accumulating now through five editions. In these days of specialization, not even a pair of authors can master every subject that an introductory text must cover. Our friends and colleagues Albert Ando, Charles Berry, Rebecca Blank, William Branson, the late Lester Chandler, Gregory Chow, Avinash Dixit, Robert Eisner, Stephen Goldfeld, Claudia Goldin, Ronald Grieson, Daniel Hamermesh, Yuzo Honda, Peter Kenen, Melvin Krauss, Herbert Levine, Arthur Lewis, Burton Malkiel, Edwin Mills, Janusz Ordover, Uwe Reinhardt, Harvey Rosen, Laura Tyson, and Martin Weitzman have all given generously of their knowledge in particular areas over the course of five editions. We have learned much from them, and only wish we had learned more.

Many economists and students at other colleges and universities offered useful suggestions for improvements, many of which we have incorporated into the Fifth Edition. We wish to thank Mohsen Bahamani, University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee; Stephen Baker, Capital University; Robert Carbaugh, Central Washington University; Walter A. Chudson; Jim Cochrane, New York Stock Exchange; Ivan K. Cohen, University of North Carolina—Asheville; Stephen Groninger, University of Connecticut; Bruce Herrick, Washington and Lee University; Richard Hydell, Mary Washington College; Michael Javorka, University of Texas—Austin; Walter Johnson, University of Missouri—Columbia; Louis Johnston, University of California—Berkeley; Randolph P. Mann, New York Stock Exchange; Edward Montgomery, Michigan State University; Donald Peppard, Jr., Connecticut College; Joe Reyes, California Polytechnic University; David Round, College of William and Mary; Mohammed Samhouri, Kansas State University; Bernard Udis, University of Colorado—Boulder; Paul Wendt, University of New Hampshire; Walter Wessels, North Carolina State University; John Wolfe, Michigan State University; M. L. Wu, New York University.

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The book you hold in your hand was not done by us alone. The fine people at Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, including Rick Hammonds, Margie Rogers, Leslie Leland, Ann Smith, Avery Hallowell, and Lynne Bush worked hard and well to turn our manuscript into the book you see. We appreciate their efforts.

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William J. Baumol
Alan S. Blinder

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