

Economics 370Y: Economics of Organizations

University of Toronto
2011-2012

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The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the economic analysis of organizations. We develop an understanding of when markets can solve the problems of coordinating activities and motivating individuals; and, when markets are less successful, how business organizations and special contractual relationships emerge as alternative institutions for allocating resources.

Prerequisites: ECO 200/204/206; ECO 220/227 (or STA equivalent)

Lecture Topics and Reading Assignments

The readings listed below are available through Blackboard. Students are responsible for the material described in square brackets following each reading (some changes may be made during the course). Questions based on each reading are available (using *Internet Explorer*) on the course Blackboard web site; a subset of these questions will reappear on term tests and the final examination. Only try the assigned questions.

Assigned readings and problems can be found in Blackboard's Assignment File.

Answers to problem sets are NOT publicly available; the instructor will, however, review answers prepared by students.

Chapters from the following books will be used (you are not expected to purchase these books):

- MR:** Milgrom, P. and J. Roberts, *Economics, Organization and Management*, Prentice-Hall, 1992. (MR)
BDS: Besanko, D., Dranove, D., and M. Shanley, *The Economics of Strategy*, John Wiley & Sons, 1996. (BDS)

0. Background

- Varian, H. (1987), "Mathematical Appendix," Appendix in *Intermediate Microeconomics*, 4th Edition, Norton
Pyndyck, R. & D. Rubinfeld (1995), "The Basics of Regression," Appendix in *Microeconomics*, 3rd Edition, Prentice Hall

1. Introduction and Definitions

- MR (2) "Economic Organization and Efficiency" [19-25, 35-38, 53]
Alchian, A. (1950), "Uncertainty, Evolution and Economic Theory," *Journal of Political Economy*, 58: 211-21. [1, 19-27]
BDS (3) "The Vertical Boundaries of the Firm" [105-118, 122-124, 127]

2. Transaction Cost Economics

- BDS (4) "The Transactions Costs of Market Exchange" [141-166]
Baron, J. and D. Kreps (1999), "Transaction Cost Economics," App. A in *Strategic Human Resources: Frameworks for General Managers*, John Wiley & Sons. [542-47]
Riordan, M. and O. Williamson (1985), "Asset Specificity and Economic Organization," *International Journal of Industrial Organization*, 365-378 [365-370]
Gibbons, R. (2004) "Four Formal(izable) Theories of the Firm? mimeo [24-30]

3. TCE: Applications

- Klein, B., R. Crawford and A. Alchian (1978), "Vertical Integration, Appropriable Rents, and the Competitive Contracting Process," *Journal of Law and Economics*, 21(2): 297-326. [302-313]
Joskow, P. (1987), "Contract Duration and Relationship Specific Investments: Empirical Evidence from Coal Markets," *American Economic Review* 77:168-185. [168-178]
Monteverde, K. & D. Teece (1982), "Supplier Switching Costs and Vertical Integration," *Bell Journal of Economics* 13:206-13. [all]
Lafontaine, F. and M. Slade (2007), "Vertical Integration and Firm boundaries: The Evidence," *Journal of Economic Literature* 55 (3): 629-685 [Sections 2.2.3]

4. Property Rights Theory

- Hart, O. (1995), "The Property Rights Approach," pgs. 29-55 in *Firms, Contracts and Financial Structure*, Oxford University Press. [all]
Gibbons, R. (2004), "Control Rights," mimeo [all]
Whinston, M. (2001), "Assessing the Property Rights and Transaction-Cost Theories of Firm Scope," *American Economic Review, Papers and Proc.* 91(2):184-188. [all]

5. Reputation and Relational Contracts

- Shy, O. (1995), "Basic Concepts in Noncooperative Game Theory," Chap. 2 in *Industrial Organization: Theory and Applications*, MIT Press.
Kreps, D. (1990), "Corporate Culture and Economic Theory" in Alt, J. and K. Shepsle (eds.) *Perspectives on Positive Political Economy*, Cambridge University Press. [90-116]
Gibbons, R. (2004), "Make, Buy, or Cooperate?" mimeo [all]

6. Motivating Individuals

- Lazear, E. and M. Gibbs (2009), "Performance Evaluation," Chapt. 9 in *Personnel Economics in Practice*, 2nd Edition, John Wiley & Sons. [237-252]
- MR (7) "Risk Sharing and Incentive Contracts" [206-227]
- Holmstrom, B. (1999), "The Firm as a Subeconomy," *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organizations*, 15:74-102. [90-91]
- Prendergast, C. (1999), "The Provision of Incentives in Firms," *Journal of Economic Literature* 37:7-63. [44-49]

7. Principal-Agent Applications

- Gibbons, R. and K. Murphy (1990) "Relative Performance Evaluation for Chief Executive Officers," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 43: 30S-51S. [36S-39S]
- Lazear, E. (1999), "Personnel Economics: Past Lessons and Future Directions," *Journal of Labor Economics* 17 (2): 199-236. [212-216]
- Bertrand, M. & S. Mullainathan (2000), "Agents With and Without Principals," *American Economic Review, Papers and Proc.* 90(2):203-208. [203-204, Section IV]
- Akerberg, D. and M. Botticini (2002). "Endogenous Matching and the Empirical Determination of Contract form," *Journal of Political Economy*, 110 (3):564-591. [569-71]

8. Relative Compensation

- Lazear, E. (1998), "Promotions as Motivators," Chapter 9 in *Personnel Economics for Managers*, John Wiley & Sons. [all]
- DeVaro, J. (2006), "Internal Promotion Competitions in Firms," *RAND Journal of Economics*, 37(2): 521-42.[all]

9. Job Design and Performance Measures

- MR (7) "Risk Sharing and Incentive Contracts" [228-231]
- Gibbons, R. (2004), "Agency Theory," mimeo [9-16]
- Prendergast, C. (1999), "The Provision of Incentives in Firms," *Journal of Economic Literature* 37:7-63. [22-33]
- Holmstrom, B. & P. Milgrom (1991), "Multitask Principal-Agent Analyses: Incentive Contracts, Asset Ownership, and Job Design," *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organizations*, 7, 24-51. [38-43]
- Gibbons, R. (2004), "Relational Contracts," [10-16]

10. Team Production

- Kandel, E. & E. Lazear (1992), "Peer Pressure and Partnerships," *Journal of Political Economy* 100, 801-817 [803-809]
- Hamilton, B., Nickerson, J and H. Owan (2003), "Team Incentives and Worker Heterogeneity: An Empirical Analysis of the Impact of Teams on Productivity and Participation," *Journal of Political Economy* 111, 465-497 [all]
- Prendergast, C. (1999), "The Provision of Incentives in Firms," *Journal of Economic Literature* 37:7-63. [Section 2.4]

11. Firm Boundaries, Again

- MR (7) "Risk Sharing and Incentive Contracts" [231-232]
- Lafontaine, F. and M. Slade (2007), "Vertical Integration and Firm boundaries: The Evidence," *Journal of Economic Literature* 55 (3): 629-685 [Section 2.1]
- Gibbons, R. (2004) "Four Formal(izable) Theories of the Firm? mimeo [14-16]
- Tadelis, S. (2002), "Complexity, Flexibility, and the Make-or-Buy Decision," *American Economic Review Papers and Proceedings* (92) (2): 433-437 [all]

Rules of the Game:

Assessment is based on 3 in-class tests and a final examination. The tests and exam are each of 2 hours duration, are scheduled approximately every 6 weeks throughout the course, and cover the material assigned since the previous test.

- Test #1 October 12
Test #2 November 30
Test #3 February 15

The 3 in-class term tests count for 75% of the final grade (at 25% per test). An examination worth 25% of the final grade will be held during the spring examination period and will cover the material assigned after Test #3.

Missed Test: Students who miss a term test will be assigned a mark of zero for that test unless, **within 48 hours** of the test date, they submit to the instructor a written request for special consideration explaining the reason for missing the test. Appropriate documentation can be provided later; this documentation will be either a medical certificate indicating that the student was too ill to attend class or a college registrar's note.

Students with satisfactory explanations for having missed a test will arrange with the instructor to write a make-up test **before** the next class.