

Business Economics

2019-20 Academic Year

Master of Research in Economics, Finance and Management

1. Description of the subject

- Business Economics Code: 32586
- Total credits: 6 ECTS Workload: 150 hours
- Term: 2nd
- Type of subject: Optional
- Department of Economics and Business
- Teaching team: [Benito Arruñada](#) and [Mircea Epure](#)

2. Teaching guide

• Introduction

This course bridges between economics and management by combining the best of both disciplines. Economics provides rigorous frameworks but often departs from reality for the sake of tractability. This pushes theory to rely on too narrow assumptions and empirics to myopically trade off identification for relevance. Management suffers the opposite bias, when its reliance on casuistic induction falls in the trap of empty theorizing and ad hoc explanations.

Business Economics will tackle this tension by drawing on theories and empirical analyses focused on transaction costs, property rights, law and economics, public choice, and entrepreneurship as applied to explain key organizational problems such as vertical integration, divisionalization, regulation, and specialization of ownership and control. It will cover many current business dilemmas, such as the role of blockchain governance for impersonal transactions, management practices for firm productivity, and the role of corporations, family and entrepreneurial firms in society.

The course emphasizes the analysis of real cases, policy and organizational applications and the methodological difficulties faced by the scientific inquiry in this field. It shall therefore: (1) deepen your understanding of business questions relevant for jobs in research, consultancy, government and industry, (2) provide you with fundamentals for analyzing managerial and policy questions, (3) suggest projects to which you can relate, and (4) engage your curiosity about real economic organizations.

All BGSE Economics and MRes students are allowed to take this class. No pre-requisites.

◦ Contents

Influential background readings are preceded by an asterisk (*); applications to discuss are preceded by a dagger (+). Other items are included for bibliographic completeness.

1. Introduction

- * Hayek, F. A. 1989. The Pretence of Knowledge. *American Economic Review* 79(6), 3-7.
- * Coase, R. H. 1992. The Institutional Structure of Production. *American Economic Review* 82(4), 713-719.
- * Williamson, O. E. 1985. *The Economic Institutions of Capitalism: Firms, Markets, Relational Contracting*. The Free Press, New York. Chapter on "Transaction Cost Economics" , pp. 15-42.
- * Gibbons, R. 2005. Four Formal(izable) Theories of the Firm? *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 58(2), 200-245.
- * Williamson, O. E. 2000. The New Institutional Economics: Taking Stock, Looking Ahead. *Journal of Economic Literature* 38(3), 595-613.
- * Simon, H. A. 1991. Organizations and Markets. *Journal of Economic perspectives* 5(2), 25-44.
- North, D. C. 1991. Institutions. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 5(1), 97-112.

2. Specialization and exchange: Markets and politics

- * Hayek, F. A., 1945. The Use of Knowledge in Society. *American Economic Review* 35(4), 519-530.
- * Coase, R. H., 1960. The Problem of Social Cost. *Journal of Law and Economics* 3, 1-44.
- * Frank, R. H. 2007. *Microeconomics and Behavior*, 9th ed. McGraw-Hill, New York (excerpts from Ch. 16, "Externalities, Property Rights, and 'The Coase Theorem' ").
- * Brickley, J. A., Smith, Jr. C.W., Zimmerman J. L. 2016. *Managerial Economics and Organizational Architecture*, 6th ed. McGraw-Hill, New York (Ch. 21, "Understanding the Business Environment: The Economics of Regulation"), pp. 655-683.
- + Coase, R. H. 1937. The Nature of the Firm. *Economica* 4(16), 386-405.
- + Arruñada, B. 2019. Experience versus Perception in Evaluating the Rule of Law. *Working Paper*.

3. The institutional support of business activity. A contractual perspective

- * Cooter, R., Ulen, T. 2016. *Law and Economics*, 6th ed. Pearson: Boston, Ch. 8, "An Economic Theory of Contract Law" , pp. 276-306.
- * Arruñada, B. 2001. The Role of Institutions in the Contractual Process. In B. Deffains and T. Kirat, eds., *Law and Economics in Civil Law Countries*, Elsevier Science, Amsterdam, pp. 177-196.
- + Arruñada, B., Casari, M. 2016. Fragile Markets: An Experiment on Judicial Independence. *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* 129, 142-156.

- + Arruñada, B. 2007. Pitfalls to Avoid when Measuring the Institutional Environment: Is 'Doing Business' Damaging Business? *Journal of Comparative Economics* 35(4), 729-747.
- + Arruñada, B., González-Díaz, M., Fernández, A. 2004. Determinants of Organizational Form: Transaction Costs and Institutions in the European Trucking Industry. *Industrial and Corporate Change* 13(6), 867-882.
- + World Bank, 2018. *Doing Business 2019: Training for Reform*, World Bank. Washington, D.C. (focus on "Starting a Business" and "Registering property" indicators).

4. Governance of relational transactions

- * Williamson, O. E. 1979. Transaction-Cost Economics: The Governance of Contractual Relations. *Journal of Law and Economics* 22(2), 233-261.
- * Levin, J. 2003. Relational Incentive Contracts. *American Economic Review* 93(3), 835-857.
- * Klein, B., Leffler, K. 1981. The Role of Market Forces in Assuring Contractual Performance. *Journal of Political Economy* 89(4), 615-641.
- + Zanarone, G., 2013. Contract Adaptation under Legal Constraints. *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 29(4), 799-834.
- + Arruñada, B., Garicano, L., Vázquez, L. 2001. Contractual Allocation of Decision Rights and Incentives: The Case of Automobile Distribution. *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 17(1), 256-283.
- + Arruñada, B., Vázquez, X. H. 2006. When Your Contract Manufacturer Becomes Your Competitor. *Harvard Business Review* 84(9), 135-145.

5. Property rights

- * Alchian, A. A., Demsetz, H. 1973. The Property Rights Paradigm. *Journal of Economic History* 33(1), 16-27.
- * Cooter, R., Ulen, T. 2016. *Law and Economics*, 6th ed. Pearson: Boston, Ch. 4, "An Economic Theory of Property Law" , pp. 70-111.
- + Arruñada, B. 2003. Property Enforcement as Organized Consent. *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 19(2), 401-444.
- + Arruñada, B., Garoupa, N. 2005. The Choice of Titling System in Land. *Journal of Law and Economics* 48(2), 709-727.
- Arruñada, B., Zanarone, G., Garoupa, N. 2019. Property Rights in Sequential Exchange. *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 35(1), 127-153.
- Arruñada, B. 2017. Property as Sequential Exchange: The Forgotten Limits of Private Contract. *Journal of Institutional Economics* 13(4), 753-783.

6. Blockchain: Limitations and opportunities

- * Narayanan, A, Bonneau, J., Felten, E., Miller, A., Goldfeder, S. 2016. *Bitcoin and Cryptocurrency Technologies: A Comprehensive Introduction*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, pp. 1-26.
- + Gans, J. S. 2019. The Fine Print in Smart Contracts. *NBER Working Paper 25443*.
- + Arruñada, B. 2019. Prospects of Blockchain in Contract and Property. *Working Paper*.
- + Arruñada, B., Espinosa, M., Garicano, L. 2019. The Birth of Decentralized Governance. *Working Paper*.
- Arruñada, B. 2018. Blockchain' s Struggle to Deliver Impersonal Exchange. *Minnesota Journal of Law, Science & Technology* 19, 55-105.

7. Divisionalization: Performance control and management practices

- * Jensen, M. C., Meckling, W. H. 1998. Divisional Performance Measurement. In Jensen, M., *Foundations of Organizational Strategy*, Harvard Business Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 345-361.
- * Klein, B. 1995. The Economics of Franchise Contracts. *Journal of Corporate Finance* 2(1-2), 9-37.
- Brickley, J. A., Smith, Jr. C.W., Zimmerman J. L. 2016. *Managerial Economics and Organizational Architecture*, 6th ed. McGraw-Hill, New York (Ch. 17, "Divisional Performance Evaluation"), pp. 537-566.
- + Abernethy, M. A., Bouwens, J., van Lent, L. 2004. Determinants of Control System Design in Divisionalized Firms. *The Accounting Review* 79(3), 545-570.
- + Gerakos, J., Ittner, C., Moers, F. 2018. Compensation Objectives and Business Unit Pay Strategy. *Journal of Management Accounting Research* 30(2), 105-130.
- * Bloom, N., Van Reenen, J. 2010. Why Do Management Practices Differ Across Firms and Countries? *Journal of economic perspectives* 24(1), 203-224.
- * Gibbons, R., Henderson, R. 2013. What Do Managers Do? Exploring Persistent Performance Differences Among Seemingly Similar Enterprises. In Gibbons R., Roberts J., eds., *Handbook of Organizational Economics*, Ch. 17, Princeton University Press.
- + Bloom, N., Sadun, R., Van Reenen, J. 2012. The Organization of Firms Across Countries. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 127(4), 1663-1705.
- + Bloom, N., Brynjolfsson, E., Foster, L., Jarmin, R., Patnaik, M., Saporta-Eksten, I., Van Reenen, J. 2019. What Drives Differences in Management Practices? *American Economic Review* 109(5), 1648-83.

8. Contracting, ownership and control

- * Fama, E. F., Jensen, M. C. 1983. Agency Problems and Residual Claims. *Journal of Law and Economics* 26(2), 327-349.
- * Jensen, M. C., Meckling W. H. 1976. Theory of Firm: Managerial Behavior, Agency Costs and Ownership Structure. *Journal of Financial Economics* 3(4), 305-360.
- Larcker, D., Tayan, B. 2015. *Corporate Governance Matters: A Closer Look at Organizational Choices and Their Consequences*. Pearson Education. Ch. 1, 3, 8.

- * Edmans, A., Holderness, C. G. 2017. Blockholders: A Survey of Theory And Evidence. In *The Handbook of the Economics of Corporate Governance*, North-Holland, pp. 541-636.
 - + Bertrand, M., Mullainathan, S. 2001. Are CEOs Rewarded for Luck? The Ones Without Principals Are. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 116(3), 901-932.
 - + Bennedsen, M., Pérez-González, F., Wolfenzon, D. 2018. Evaluating the Impact of the Boss: Evidence from CEO Hospitalization Events. *Journal of Finance*, forthcoming.
 - + Goldman, E., Rocholl, J. So. J. 2009. Do Politically Connected Boards Affect Firm Value? *Review of Financial Studies* 22(6), 2331-2360.
 - + Ahern, K. R., Dittmar, A. K. 2012. The changing of the Boards: The Impact on Firm Valuation of Mandated Female Board Representation. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 127(1), 137-197.
9. Comparative governance, and the influence of norms and culture
- * La Porta R., Lopez-de-Silanes F. Schleifer A. 1999. Corporate Ownership Around the World. *Journal of Finance* 54(2), 471-517.
 - * Aguilera, R. V., Jackson, G. 2003. The Cross-National Diversity of Corporate Governance: Dimensions and Determinants. *Academy of management Review* 28(3), 447-465.
 - * Guiso, L., Sapienza, P., Zingales, L. 2006. Does Culture Affect Economic Outcomes? *Journal of Economic perspectives* 20(2), 23-48.
 - Larcker, D., Tayan, B. 2015. *Corporate Governance Matters: A Closer Look at Organizational Choices and Their Consequences*. Pearson Education. Ch. 2, 11, 13.
 - + Guillén, M.F., Capron, L. 2016. State Capacity, Minority Shareholder Protections, and Stock Market Development. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 61(1), 125-160.
 - + Haveman, H. A., Jia, N., Shi, J., Wang, Y. 2017. The Dynamics of Political Embeddedness in China. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 62(1), 67-104.
 - + Giannetti, M., Zhao, M. 2019. Board Ancestral Diversity and Firm Performance Volatility. *Journal of Financial and Quantitative Analysis* 54(3), 1117-1155.
 - Guiso, L., Sapienza, P., Zingales, L. 2015. The Value of Corporate Culture. *Journal of Financial Economics* 117(1), 60-76.
10. Governance in family firms and entrepreneurship
- * Bertrand, M., Schoar, A. 2006. The Role of Family in Family Firms. *Journal of economic perspectives* 20(2), 73-96.
 - + Bennedsen, M., Nielsen, K. M., Pérez-González, F., Wolfenzon, D. 2007. Inside the Family Firm: The Role of Families in Succession Decisions and Performance. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 122(2), 647-691.
 - + Amore, M. D., Epure, M. 2018. Family Ownership and Trust During a Financial Crisis. *Working paper*.
 - + Bandiera, O., Lemos, R., Prat, A., Sadun, R. 2017. Managing the Family Firm: Evidence from CEOs at Work. *Review of Financial Studies* 31(5), 1605-1653.

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- * Alvarez, S. A., Barney, J. B. 2007. Discovery and Creation: Alternative Theories of Entrepreneurial Action. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal* 1(1–2), 11–26.
- * Gompers, P., Lerner, J. 2001. The Venture Capital Revolution. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 15(2), 145-168.
- Packard, M. D., Clark, B. B., Klein, P. G. 2017. Uncertainty Types and Transitions in the Entrepreneurial Process. *Organization Science* 28(5), 840-856.
- + Epure, M., Guasch, M. 2019. Debt Signaling and Outside Investors in Early Stage Firms. *Journal of Business Venturing*, forthcoming.
- + Chemmanur, T. J., Loutskina, E., Tian, X. 2014. Corporate Venture Capital, Value Creation, and Innovation. *Review of Financial Studies* 27(8), 2434-2473.

11. Firms and society

- * Friedman, M. 1970. The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits. *New York Times Magazine* 13 September.
- * Arrow, J. K. 1973. Social Responsibility and Economic Efficiency. *Public Policy* 21, 303-317.
- * Blair, M., Stout, L. A. 1999. A Team Production Theory of Corporate Law. *Virginia Law Review* 85(2), 247–328.
- * Ormazabal, G. 2017. The Role of Stakeholders in Corporate Governance: A View from Accounting Research. *Foundations and Trends in Accounting*, forthcoming.
- + Eichholtz, P., Kok, N., Quigley, J. M. 2010. Doing Well by Doing Good? Green Office Buildings. *American Economic Review* 100(5), 2492-2509.
- + Eccles, R. G., Ioannou, I., Serafeim, G. 2014. The Impact of Corporate Sustainability on Organizational Processes and Performance. *Management Science* 60(11), 2835-2857.
- + Lins, K. V., Servaes, H., Tamayo, A. 2017. Social Capital, Trust, and Firm Performance: The Value of Corporate Social Responsibility during the Financial Crisis. *Journal of Finance* 72(4), 1785-1824.
- + Lys, T., Naughton, J., Wang, C. 2015. Signaling Through Corporate Accountability Reporting. *Journal of Accounting and Economics* 60(1), 56–72.

General reference books

- Brickley, J. A., Smith, Jr. C.W., Zimmerman J. L. 2016. *Managerial Economics and Organizational Architecture*, 6th ed. McGraw-Hill, New York.
- Williamson, O. E. 1985. *The Economic Institutions of Capitalism: Firms, Markets, Relational Contracting*. The Free Press, New York.

• **Teaching methodology**

The course is made of eleven topics taught by two professors. Each topic includes background readings and applications. Most of these papers should be read *carefully* before each session of the topic for which they are assigned.

You will choose one of two types of assignments:

1. Write a **short paper** (of not more than eight pages) on how some assigned readings relate to your thesis; the paper should include a three hundred words abstract. Introduce your research focus and explain how you can use some of the theoretical frameworks and analyses found in the readings for your current or future work. If you are researching on a topic related to this course, this should be your preferred option.
2. **For two topics per professor**, you will write a **two-page report** on two preferred papers. The commentaries should highlight: (1) the central ideas, and (2) the pros and cons you see in the analyzed papers. These commentaries will be shared with the professor by 23:00 the day before the corresponding session and should not simply summarize the papers. Instead, they should reflect *critical thinking* and *analysis* of the papers being discussed.

The sessions will be run in mix-method lecturing and seminar format: professors and students will take turns in leading the discussion of the assigned papers. The professor will make sure the discussion covers the important themes for the session. Class participation is welcome and expected.

• **Assessment**

Your grade for the course will be made of two components:

- 60%: average of the assignments
- 40%: active participation in the sessions. Make sure to use a name tag in all sessions.