

ECON 104: Contemporary Macroeconomic Principles

Fall 2026

Professor	Alex Tabarrok
Email	Tabarrok@gmu.edu
Office	Carow Hall
Format	Entirely online

Teaching Assistants

Two teaching assistants will be available for extra help:

- Zixuan “Eric” Ma - zma5@gmu.edu
- Mehrzad Saeedi - mehrzaad.s@gmail.com

Course Overview

This is an entirely online course taught by Alex Tabarrok, with some video lectures by Tyler Cowen, and based on their book *Modern Principles: Macroeconomics*. We think this is the best online course in principles of economics ever offered.

The course is video-based. Every video is followed by questions. Every week there is homework and a test. Lecture time is less and active-learning time is more. Active learning requires more from the student, so be prepared: the class will move quickly. There will also be opportunities to ask questions of the instructor and TAs.

Required Course Materials and Achieve Access

Required: To take this course, you must purchase access to the Achieve homework system, which provides the textbook, video assignments, and tests. Achieve access for one term costs approximately \$129.99. You can receive a two-week grace period to pay when you sign up. You must purchase Achieve to take the class.

You will purchase Achieve when you connect through Canvas. You must sign up using your GMU email and must access Achieve through Canvas. This will keep your GMU and Achieve accounts linked.

Once you have gone to the Canvas home page, go to Course Content and then Student Registration or Achieve Home Page. Once in Achieve, you can view the course by Course Content or Week Outline and then begin the assignments. I suggest you view by Course Content.

Canvas is used only to access Achieve. All class materials, including homework and exams, are on Achieve. Achieve is the gradebook of record. Grades displayed in Canvas may lag because of synchronization delays.

Technical Support

If you have trouble accessing Achieve, try the usual procedures: use a different browser, update your browser, and clear the cache. If that does not work, contact [Achieve Support](#).

My experience is that support is very good. Note that I cannot help you with technical support. I would like to, but I do not control the Achieve system. If support needs to contact me, they will.

Economics Support

The Economics Department offers regular economics tutoring. I will email you the hours.

You can also email me with questions or arrange to come to my office in real life.

Email

Every GMU student in this class should monitor their GMU email for periodic announcements.

Grading

At the end of each video, there are homework questions. You receive unlimited attempts on these questions, but you lose 25% for each incorrect attempt.

For each chapter, there is also a Learning Curve. You can answer as many Learning Curve questions as you want to earn up to a set number of points.

Each section also has an assessment component consisting of some combination of Discovering Data/FRED, Work It Out, and News Analysis questions; not every chapter includes all categories. You receive multiple attempts on these questions, with a 5% penalty for each incorrect attempt.

Each chapter concludes with a Chapter Test. Finally, there is a Midterm and a Final.

Grade Weights

Category	Percentage of Grade
Video Homework	20%
Learning Curve	5%
Discovering Data/ Ask Fred / Work It Out / News Analysis	15%
Chapter Tests	20%
Midterm	20%
Final	20%
Total	100%

Your numerical grade will be a good guide to your standing in the class, but I reserve the right to adjust (bell) the final grade.

Class Structure and Due Dates

It is very important that you submit your homework and tests before the due date. All deadlines are stated in Eastern Time. If your computer breaks down or you lose internet access and cannot submit your work, you receive a zero.

You will have plenty of opportunity to complete your work on time. We will follow the schedule below, and you will be able to work one week ahead if you choose. You have flexibility in when you do your work, but it is your responsibility to complete everything on time.

The lowest Chapter Test score, the 4 lowest Video Assignment scores, and the two lowest scores among all Discovering Data, Ask Fred, Work It Out, and News Analysis assignments will be dropped. This policy is instead of asking me to change a due date if you were sick, forgetful, or had a family emergency. Everyone receives the same opportunity to miss a small amount of work and still catch up. Note that it is never in your interest to miss work. As noted above, you also have the opportunity to work ahead by one week.

The rhythm of the class is that you have all week to finish assignments, which are generally due Sunday night at midnight. There are exceptions. Do not leave all your work until Sunday night, as that will lead to disaster.

Use the Achieve homework system to check due dates. Always check Achieve for exact due dates.

Fall 2026 Schedule

Week of	Last day to complete	Chapter or exam
August 24	August 30 preferred; September 3 final	Chapter 6: GDP
August 31	September 6	Chapter 7: The Wealth of Nations
September 7	September 13	Chapter 8: Growth, Capital Accumulation, and the Economics of Ideas
September 14	September 20	Chapter 9: Saving, Investment, and the Financial System
September 21	September 27	Chapter 10: Stock Markets and Personal Finance
September 28	October 4	Chapter 11: Unemployment and Labor Force Participation
October 5	October 11	Chapter 12: Inflation and the Quantity Theory of Money
October 12	October 18	Midterm - must be completed by October 18
October 19	October 25	Chapter 13: Business Fluctuations: Aggregate Demand and Supply
October 26	November 1	Chapter 14: Transmission and Amplification Mechanisms
November 2	November 8	Chapter 15: The Federal Reserve System and Aggregate Demand
November 9	November 15	Chapter 16: Monetary Policy
November 16	November 22	Chapter 17: The Federal Budget: Taxes and Spending
November 23	December 6	Chapter 18: Fiscal Policy; Chapter 21: Political Economy and Public Choice
December 11	December 13	Final Exam - must be completed by December 13

Honor Code Statement

- George Mason University has an Honor Code, which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited.
- All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee.

Disability Statement

If you are a student with a disability and need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Enrollment Statement

Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes. Deadlines for each semester are published in the Schedule of Classes available from the [Registrar's website](#).

Mason Core

This course fulfills the Mason Core Social and Behavioral Sciences requirement within the Exploration category.