

Robert H. Frank  
Ben S. Bernanke



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**Brief Edition**

# Principles of MICROECONOMICS

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## ECONOMICS



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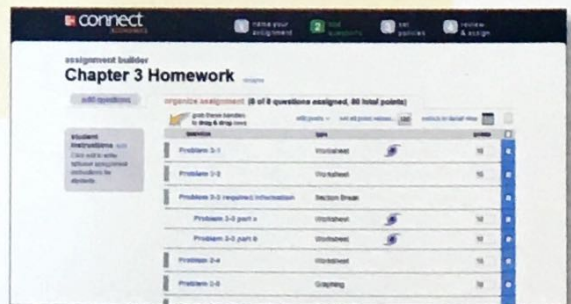
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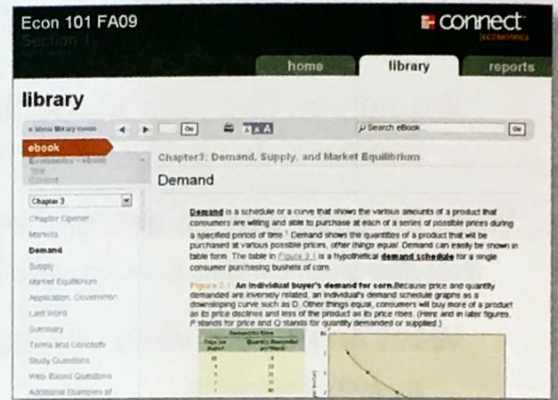


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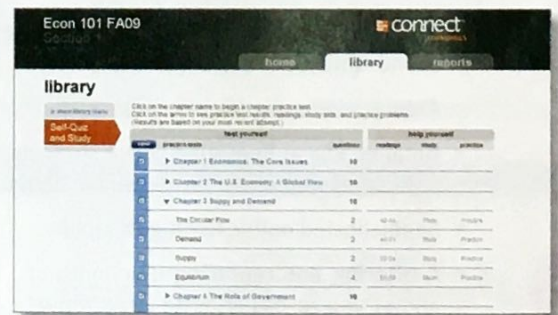
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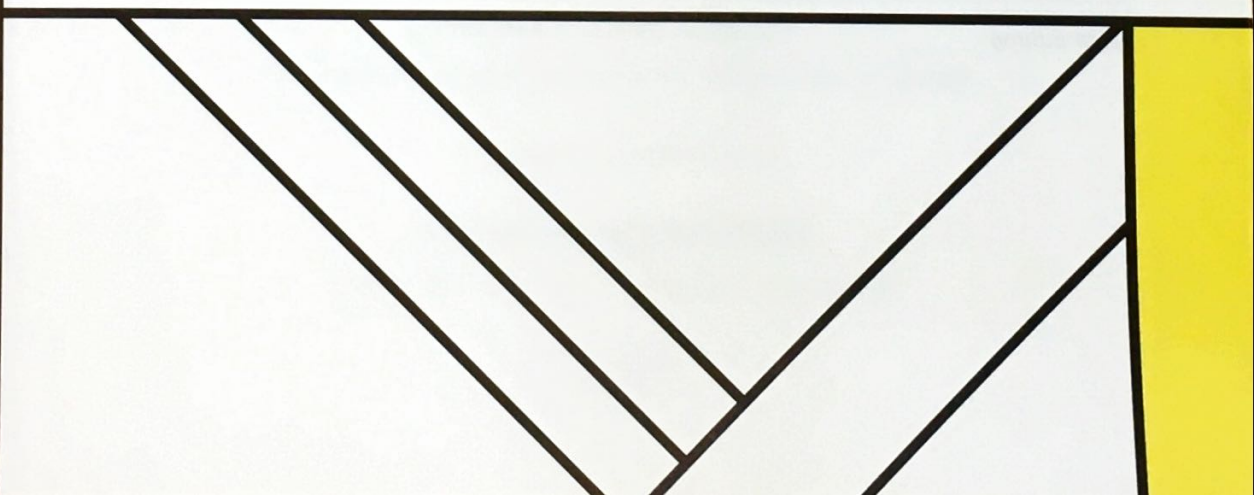
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ROBERT PRATT

BEN S. BERNANKE



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BRIEF  
EDITION

Second Edition

**ROBERT H. FRANK**

*Cornell University*

**BEN S. BERNANKE**


*Princeton University [affiliated]*

*Chairman, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System*

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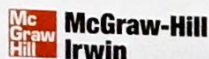
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**Design of book:** The images in the design of this book are based on elements of the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, specifically from the leaded glass windows seen in many of his houses. Wright's design was rooted in nature and based on simplicity and harmony. His windows use elemental geometry to abstract natural forms, complementing and framing the natural world outside. This concept of seeing the world through an elegantly structured framework ties in nicely to the idea of framing one's view of the world through the window of economics.

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# DEDICATION

For Ellen

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For Anna

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# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

## ROBERT H. FRANK



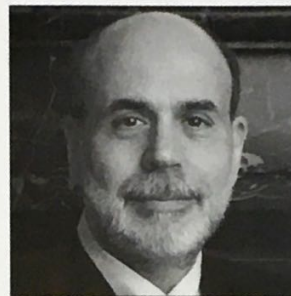
Professor Frank is the Henrietta Johnson Louis Professor of Management and Professor of Economics at the Johnson Graduate School of Management at Cornell University, where he has taught since 1972. His “Economic View” column appears regularly in *The New York Times*. After receiving his B.S. from

Georgia Tech in 1966, he taught math and science for two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer in rural Nepal. He received his M.A. in statistics in 1971 and his Ph.D. in economics in 1972 from The University of California at Berkeley. During leaves of absence from Cornell, he has served as chief economist for the Civil Aeronautics Board (1978–1980), a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (1992–93), and Professor of American Civilization at l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris (2000–01), and the Peter and Charlotte Schoenfeld Visiting Faculty Fellow at the NYU Stern School of Business in 2008–09.

Professor Frank is the author of a best-selling intermediate economics textbook—*Microeconomics and Behavior*, Eighth Edition (Irwin/McGraw-Hill, 2010). His research has focused on rivalry and cooperation in economic and social behavior. His books on these themes include *Choosing the Right Pond* (Oxford, 1995), *Passions Within Reason* (W. W. Norton, 1988), *What Price the Moral High Ground?* (Princeton, 2004), *Falling Behind* (University of California Press, 2007), *The Economic Naturalist* (Basic Books, 2007), and *The Economic Naturalist's Field Guide* (Basic Books, 2009), have been translated into 21 languages. *The Winner-Take-All Society* (The Free Press, 1995), co-authored with Philip Cook, received a Critic's Choice Award, was named a Notable Book of the Year by *The New York Times*, and was included in *BusinessWeek's* list of the 10 best books of 1995. *Luxury Fever* (The Free Press, 1999) was named to the *Knight-Ridder* Best Books list for 1999.

Professor Frank has been awarded an Andrew W. Mellon Professorship (1987–1990), a Kenan Enterprise Award (1993), and a Merrill Scholars Program Outstanding Educator Citation (1991). He is a co-recipient of the 2004 Leontief Prize for Advancing the Frontiers of Economic Thought. He was awarded the Johnson School's Stephen Russell Distinguished Teaching Award in 2004 and 2010 and the School's Apple Distinguished Teaching Award in 2005. His introductory microeconomics course has graduated more than 7,000 enthusiastic economic naturalists over the years.

## BEN S. BERNANKE



Professor Bernanke received his B.A. in economics from Harvard University in 1975 and his Ph.D. in economics from MIT in 1979. He taught at the Stanford Graduate School of Business from 1979 to 1985 and moved to Princeton University in 1985, where he was named the Howard Harrison and

Gabrielle Snyder Beck Professor of Economics and Public Affairs, and where he served as Chairman of the Economics Department.

Professor Bernanke was sworn in on February 1, 2006, as Chairman and a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. He was recently appointed to a second term, which expires January 31, 2014. Professor Bernanke also serves as Chairman of the Federal Open Market Committee, the System's principal monetary policymaking body. He was appointed as a member of the Board to a full 14-year term, which expires January 31, 2020. Before his appointment as Chairman, Professor Bernanke was Chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, from June 2005 to January 2006.

Professor Bernanke's intermediate textbook, with Andrew Abel, and Dean Croushore, *Macroeconomics*, Seventh Edition (Addison-Wesley, 2011), is a best seller in its field. He has authored more than 50 scholarly publications in macroeconomics, macroeconomic history, and finance. He has done significant research on the causes of the Great Depression, the role of financial markets and institutions in the business cycle, and measuring the effects of monetary policy on the economy.

Professor Bernanke has held a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Sloan Fellowship, and he is a Fellow of the Econometric Society and of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He served as the Director of the Monetary Economics Program of the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) and as a member of the NBER's Business Cycle Dating Committee. In July 2001, he was appointed editor of the *American Economic Review*. Professor Bernanke's work with civic and professional groups includes having served two terms as a member of the Montgomery Township (N.J.) Board of Education.

**A**lthough many millions of dollars are spent each year on introductory economics instruction in American colleges and universities, the return on this investment has been disturbingly low. Studies have shown, for example, that several months after having taken a principles of economics course, former students are no better able to answer simple economic questions than others who never even took the course. Most students, it seems, leave our introductory courses without having learned even the most important basic economic principles.

The problem, in our view, is that these courses almost always try to teach students far too much. In the process, really important ideas get little more coverage than minor ones, and everything ends up going by in a blur. Many instructors ask themselves, “How much can I cover today?” when instead they should be asking, “How much can my students absorb?”

Our textbook grew out of our conviction that students will learn far more if we attempt to cover much less, and this *Brief Edition* only further supports our goal. Our basic premise is that a small number of basic principles do most of the heavy lifting in economics, and that if we focus narrowly and repeatedly on those principles, students can actually master them in just a single semester.

The enthusiastic reactions of users of the full principles books we author affirm the validity of this premise. We have constructed *Principles of Microeconomics, Brief Edition* to support a concise approach to teaching economics by focusing on the most essential information. Avoiding excessive reliance on formal mathematical derivations, we present concepts intuitively through examples drawn from familiar contexts. We rely throughout on a well-articulated list of seven core principles, which we reinforce repeatedly by illustrating and applying each principle in numerous contexts. We ask students periodically to apply these principles themselves to answer related questions, exercises, and problems.

Throughout this process, we encourage students to become “economic naturalists,” people who employ basic economic principles to understand and explain what they observe in the world around them. An economic naturalist understands, for example, that infant safety seats are required in cars but not in airplanes because the marginal cost of space to accommodate these seats is typically zero in cars but often hundreds of dollars in airplanes. Scores of such examples are sprinkled throughout the book. Each one, we believe, poses a question that should make any curious person eager to learn the

answer. These examples stimulate interest while teaching students to see each feature of their economic landscape as the reflection of one or more of the core principles. Students talk about these examples with their friends and families. Learning economics is like learning a language. In each case, there is no substitute for actually speaking. By inducing students to speak economics, the economic naturalist examples serve this purpose.

For those who would like to learn more about the role of examples in learning economics, Bob Frank’s lecture on this topic is posted on YouTube’s “Authors @ Google” series ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=QalNVxeIKEE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QalNVxeIKEE) or search “Authors @ Google Robert Frank”).

## KEY THEMES AND FEATURES

### An Emphasis on Seven Core Principles

As noted, a few core principles do most of the work in economics. By focusing almost exclusively on these principles, the text assures that students leave the course with a deep mastery of them. In contrast, traditional encyclopedic texts so overwhelm students with detail that they often leave the course with little useful working knowledge at all.

- **The Scarcity Principle:** Having more of one good thing usually means having less of another.
- **The Cost-Benefit Principle:** Take no action unless its marginal benefit is at least as great as its marginal cost.
- **The Incentive Principle:** Cost-benefit comparisons are relevant not only for identifying the decisions that rational people should make, but also for predicting the actual decisions they do make.
- **The Principle of Comparative Advantage:** Everyone does best when each concentrates on the activity for which he or she is relatively most productive.
- **The Principle of Increasing Opportunity Cost:** Use the resources with the lowest opportunity cost before turning to those with higher opportunity costs.
- **The Efficiency Principle:** Efficiency is an important social goal because when the economic pie grows larger, everyone can have a larger slice.
- **The Equilibrium Principle:** A market in equilibrium leaves no unexploited opportunities for individuals but may not exploit all gains achievable through collective action.