

MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF ECONOMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS

ECON 131: ECONOMICS OF SHITPOSTING
FALL SEMESTER SYLLABUS

Course Code & Title:	ECON 131: Economics of Shitposting
Instructor:	ODTUSHIKTISAT
Classroom:	F-AUD (FEAS Auditorium)
Credits / ECTS:	3 Credits (3-0) 3 5 ECTS
Course Category:	Elective Economics (Undergraduate Level)
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1. COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

This course introduces fundamental economic principles through the lens of internet memes, shitposts, and digital attention markets. At its core, economics studies scarcity: human attention is strictly limited to 24 hours a day, whereas digital content is virtually infinite. Throughout this semester, we explore how supply and demand, production costs, asymmetric information, game theory, and speculative bubbles govern online platforms. Students learn economic theory not through dry textbooks, but by analyzing real internet history, editing high-velocity short videos, and incubating an active social media account.

2. CORE ECONOMIC CONCEPTS & LEARNING OUTCOMES

- **Scarcity & Opportunity Cost:** Why spending three hours consuming low-effort videos carries a real opportunity cost in lost sleep and lower academic performance.
- **Production Costs & Zero Marginal Cost ($MC = 0$):** Why low-cost, easily produced Paint memes systematically push expensive, labor-intensive content out of circulation (Gresham's Law).
- **Trade Barriers & Autarky:** What happens to a domestic cultural market when it is severed from global exchange (The Turkish 4chan Embargo).
- **Signaling Theory:** Why unpolished, low-resolution images signal authentic peer humor, while expensive corporate designs are dismissed as advertisements.
- **Asymmetric Information & Lemons Theory:** Why sensational rumors and fabricated news spread faster than verified facts in low-budget media environments.
- **Risk & Rational Choice (The Becker Crime Model):** How online creators calculate the risk versus reward of political satire within legal boundaries (TCK 299).
- **Financial Speculation & Asset Bubbles:** How memetic coordination and viral posts directly move real-world financial markets (such as Dogecoin and GameStop).

3. CANONICAL COURSE READINGS

George Akerlof (1970). *The Market for 'Lemons': Quality Uncertainty and the Market Mechanism.* *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 84(3), 488-500. (Nobel Prize paper applied to why fabricated news outcompetes factual journalism).

OhSNAP!Tray (2007). *On the Systematic Deprecation of Forum Discourse.* *Something Awful BYOB Archives.* (The historical post where the term 'shitposting' was first coined).

Michael Spence (1973). *Job Market Signaling.* *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 87(3), 355-374. (Applied to why low-fidelity memes signal authentic peer culture).

Gary Becker (1968). *Crime and Punishment: An Economic Approach.* *Journal of Political Economy*, 76(2), 169-217. (Applied to legal risk calculations under TCK 299).

Franz Kafka (1915). *The Metamorphosis.* (Essential literary reference for analyzing modern Turkish cockroach video memes).

4. 14-WEEK COMPREHENSIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: What is a Shitpost? & Excavating the Mind-Palace

- Economics Concept: Scarcity & Opportunity Cost.
- Economic Principle: Human desire for entertainment is limitless, but daily time is strictly bounded. Spending two hours searching for an obscure television clip involves a real opportunity cost of sleep and study hours.
- What is a Shitpost? Distinguishing a shitpost from conventional jokes and high-effort satire. The mechanics of deliberate anti-humor.
- Practical Exercise: Searching personal memory caches and digging through old Turkish television archives (Flash TV halay footage, local news oddities) to match a specific emotional state.

Week 2: Early Internet History: From Usenet to Something Awful (1982-2006)

- Economics Concept: Tragedy of the Commons & Quality Dilution.
- Economic Principle: When access to a public digital commons is unrestricted, crowding degrades overall discussion quality (The 'Eternal September' rule).
- Historical Birth: In April 2007, Something Awful user OhSNAP!Tray vents frustration over repetitive forum jokes and officially coins the term 'shitposting'.
- YTMND (2004): Single-image audiovisual loops as the foundational ancestor of modern short-form video loops.

Week 3: Anonymous Boards & The Great Turkish 4chan Ban

- Economics Concept: Trade Embargoes & Autarky (Closed Markets).
- Economic Shock: What happens when an economy is isolated from global cultural trade? In the late 2000s, 4chan banned Turkish IP ranges following relentless brigading and flag-posting on /int/ and /b/.
- Market Outcome: Severed from global meme platforms, Turkish internet users operated under domestic import-substitution, establishing an insular, self-reliant meme culture.

Week 4: The Turkish Golden Age: Bobiler 'Monte' to İnci Sözlük 'Caps' (2005-2014)

- Economics Concept: High Production Costs vs. Zero Marginal Cost (Gresham's Law).
- Economic Comparison: Bobiler.org 'Monte' culture demanded labor-intensive Photoshop craftsmanship (high marginal cost). İnci Sözlük 'Caps' required only a red banner and simple text in Paint (near-zero marginal cost).
- Market Outcome: Just as bad money drives out good money (Gresham's Law), easily produced Caps quickly dominated the market.
- Coordinated Exploits: Live television trolling (Disko Kralı) and cross-border cultural arbitrage ('Athillas Thas').

Week 5: Platform Distribution: Vertical Video, Algorithmic Matching & the Growth Funnel — Term Project Launch

- Economics Concept: Market Design & Algorithmic Matching (Platforms as Two-Sided Markets).
- Economic Principle: Recommendation algorithms function as automated matching markets, pairing content supply with audience demand based on retention signals; vertical, full-screen formats maximize watch-time-per-swipe, the metric platforms optimize for.
- Growth Mechanics: Legitimate audience design — thumbnail and caption A/B testing, posting cadence, and format optimization — reframed as social engineering of the algorithm, not the audience.
- TERM PROJECT LAUNCH: Students formally launch their anonymous incubation account this week. The 60-day organic growth window (see Section 5, Term Project: Account Scaling) begins today and concludes at the Week 14 Final Audit.

Week 6: From Closed Communities to Cursed Images: Club Goods & Anti-Aesthetic Signaling (2014–Present)

- Economics Concept: Club Goods & Signaling Theory (Authenticity vs. Corporate Polish).
- Historical Bridge: As open platforms monetized, subcultures retreated into gated 'club goods' — closed Facebook syndicates (KGB, BGY, AOG — Amacına Ulaşan Geyikler) with exclusive vernacular and strict admission barriers, producing multi-layered post-irony (tamamahbapengelli, shitpostTC) to preserve subcultural exclusivity.
- Economic Insight: Highly polished corporate graphics are immediately recognized as promotional advertisements. Blurry, low-resolution, deep-fried MS Paint imagery signals uncommercial peer authenticity precisely because a firm could not have produced it.
- Practical Workshop: Deep-frying, intentional JPEG compression artifacts, and cursed image composition.

Week 7: Video Editing Lab: The 20-Second Shitpost Sprint

- Economics Concept: Price Elasticity of Demand for Attention.
- Economic Rule: Audience attention is hyper-elastic; failure to capture interest within the first 1.5 seconds drops quantity demanded to zero (the immediate swipe).
- Editing Mechanics: CapCut and Premiere. Soundboard integration, rapid jump cuts, and loop pacing.
- In-Class Practical Quiz (15%): A 60-minute live test in F-AUD. Students receive raw, unedited footage and must conceptualize, edit, and render a 20-second video within the hour.

Week 8: MIDTERM EXAMINATION (20%)

- In-class written examination covering Weeks 1 to 6 (Scarcity, production costs, the 4chan embargo, and information theory).

Week 9: Turkish Surrealism & The Cockroach ('Böcek') Phenomenon

- Economics Concept: Behavioral Economics & Psychological Coping Under Inflation.
- Economic Reality: When real purchasing power declines and economic mobility slows, youth resort to absurdist psychological coping mechanisms.
- Cultural Analysis: Young Turkish men depicting themselves as giant cockroaches performing ritual ablution (gusül), reporting for military service, or coping with financial dread. Franz Kafka's 'Metamorphosis' recontextualized as modern economic reality.

Week 10: Sadposts, Doomer Aesthetics & TOKİ Architecture

- Economics Concept: The Economics of Melancholy & Post-Graduate Stagnation.
- Economic Trend: Youth unemployment, credential inflation, and economic deceleration.
- Aesthetic Capital: Why do nocturnal walks, cigarette smoke, concrete TOKİ blocks, and slowed-down reverb audio accumulate millions of views? Students examine how youth turn economic stagnation into aesthetic cultural capital.

Week 11: Asymmetric Information & The Local Press Arbitrage

- Economics Concept: Asymmetric Information & Akerlof's Lemons Problem.
- Market Vulnerability: Resource-starved regional news outlets operate under near-zero verification budgets. Sensational, unverified claims outcompete factual journalism because they cost nothing to replicate and maximize click-through revenue.
- Extra Credit Briefing: Operational guidelines for the Local Newspaper Bounty.

Week 12: High-Risk Political Posting: Law & Economics of TCK 299

- Economics Concept: Gary Becker's Model of Crime (Expected Cost vs. Expected Benefit).
- Strategic Calculation: A provocative political meme may yield high visibility (benefit), but carries legal risks under TCK 299 (cost). Students study how multi-layered allegories, historical metaphors, and ironic ambiguity minimize expected legal exposure.

Week 13: Generative AI, Voice Synthesis & Content Hyper-Inflation

- Economics Concept: Positive Supply Shocks & 'AI Slop' Inflation.
- Technological Shock: When AI voice synthesis and generative video reduce marginal production costs to zero (MC = 0), the market experiences a hyper-inflationary content shock.
- Market Saturation: Cloned intellectual dialogues (e.g., Celal Şengör voice memes) and automated video generation devaluing individual post impressions.

Week 14: Memetic Financialization & The Dead Internet Equilibrium

- Economics Concept: Financial Speculation & Terminal Market Equilibrium.
- Macroeconomic Impact: Elon Musk's Dogecoin announcements, the WallStreetBets/GameStop short squeeze, and memecoins proving that memes can reallocate billions of dollars in capital.
- Terminal State: The Dead Internet Theory (synthetic algorithms producing content consumed by automated bot swarms).
- Final Project Audit: Formal verification of the 1,500 organic follower milestone (60 days post-launch).

5. GRADING & EXAM BREAKDOWN

Component	Weight	Description & Deliverables
Term Project: Account Scaling	35%	Launch an anonymous account in Week 5 (Platform Distribution) and reach at least 1,500 organic followers within 60 days. Supported by a short analytical report on audience retention and growth funnels.
Speed Editing Lab Quiz	15%	A 60-minute live test in F-AUD. Conceptualize, edit, and render a 20-second video from raw footage under strict time constraints.
Midterm Examination	20%	Written examination covering Weeks 1 to 6 (Scarcity, production costs, the 4chan embargo, and information theory).
Final Project Defense	20%	Formal presentation of your 60-day account metrics, audience analytics, best-performing posts, and strategic lessons.
Class Participation & Lurking	10%	Active seminar engagement, peer ratio critiques, and consistent, attentive lurking.

6. OFFICIAL EXTRA CREDIT INCENTIVES

Clause 6.1: The Local Newspaper Story (+10% on Final Course Grade)

Students who successfully engineer a harmless, absurd, fabricated news narrative and get it published in a legitimate local newspaper (print or regional online press) receive an automatic +10% added to their final course grade. Note: Stories that induce civil alarm, defame individuals, or cause public disruption will result in immediate course failure.

Clause 6.2: The 1 Million Views Bounty (+10 Raw Points on Final Grade)

Any single video or post on your incubation account that achieves 1,000,000 or more verified organic impressions/views automatically earns +10 raw points added directly to your final numerical grade.

7. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY & SPECIAL COURSE POLICIES

Zero Bot Policy: All 1,500 followers must be real individuals acquired organically. The purchase of bots, paid advertisements, or artificial engagement rings will result in an immediate FF grade.

Anti-Cringe Quality Standard: Submissions resembling boring corporate advertisements or unironic, outdated memes without post-ironic reframing will receive grade penalties.

Legal Compliance: Students are strictly responsible for abiding by domestic legal standards, including TCK 299. The Department of Economics assumes zero liability for student legal liabilities.

Emergency Grass-Touching Protocol: Students experiencing acute screen fatigue or digital burnout are granted an official 48-hour pass to step away from their devices and walk upon the Devrim grass.

8. INSTRUCTOR CONTACT

For all formal course inquiries, grade disputes, or to submit certified proof of your 1 million views bounty, contact instructor ODTUSHIKTISAT at: *info@iktisatarsiv.com*