

Summer 2024

ECON 350

Labor Market Issues

CRN: 41728 - Asynchronous

Instructor:

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Office Hours: **Check Canvas** and by appointment

Office hours will be held on zoom

COURSE OVERVIEW

Economics is the study of how individuals and societies make rational choices when confronted with scarce resources and an uncertain environment. Labor is, of course, one of society's scarce resources and a requirement to produce many of the goods that you and I wish to consume. Labor Economics specifically examines the structures, operation, and outcomes of labor markets, focusing on the behaviors and interactions of workers and employers, as well as the impact of public policies and institutions. We will ask many questions in this course. Why do people work? Why are different people willing to work the same job but get paid different wages? Why are there people who want jobs, but can't find them? How do we identify and combat discrimination in the labor market? How valuable is education? How can government policy and unions impact labor markets? In order to investigate these questions and more, we will employ a combination of theoretical models and empirical evidence. This course will cover topics including labor supply, labor demand, education, discrimination, and unionization. Emphasis is given to the labor force participation of historically underrepresented groups, earnings, wage distributions and inequality, and analyzing government interventions.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Learning Objectives are expectations of what students should know or be able to do, how and under what conditions this knowledge or skill will be demonstrated and the criteria to determine success.

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

- Explain the decisions of workers and employers that provide the foundation for the labor supply and demand framework
 - Examine labor market statistics to provide insights into the current state of the labor market
 - Describe the pros and cons of different compensation structures
 - Address issues related to wage determination, labor market discrimination, and employment.
 - Explain the basic structure of government policies designed to influence labor markets
 - Examine the role of institutions, including unions and government policies, in shaping labor market dynamics.
 - Analyze labor market behavior using theoretical models and empirical evidence
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COURSE TEXT

Required: McConnell, C. R., Brue, S. L., & Macpherson, D. A. (2020). *Contemporary labor economics* (12th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.

CLASS STRUCTURE

This class is designed to avoid placing additional costs on students relating to textbooks or online homework programs to be more inclusive. The class consists of five components: Practice Problem Sets, Reading Quizzes, Application and Mastery Assignment, and a Research Project.

Practice Problem Sets (20% of Course Grade)

- Assigned problem sets will be a combination of questions that are aimed at developing student competencies of content-based course objectives.
 - Problem sets will be submitted on canvas in a pdf format.
- For each problem set, I will randomly select questions to grade and provide feedback on, and the remaining questions will be graded based on completion.
- An answer key will be posted upon submission of your problem set.

Reading Quizzes (15% of Course Grade)

- I will ask you to complete reading quizzes before watching each lecture to ensure that you are seeing the content for this class multiple times. This aims to help improve your retention of material in this course and provide you with multiple explanations of the same concepts. (I really like this book, so I hope you do too!)

Participation (5% of Course Grade)

- Participation in this course is determined by your activity in this course. This includes watching lectures, responding to emails, and checking the canvas page regularly.
- Additionally, I **require that you attend an office hour at least once during the term**. This is so I have an opportunity to get to know you and check in with you about the course. You do not need to come to the whole office hour. I am happy to work with students who cannot make the office hours I have set (which will be different each week to try and accommodate many summer schedules).

Application and Mastery Assignments (20% of Course Grade)

- These assignments aim to substitute exams in the course.
- Questions in this assignment will assess your ability to extend concepts learned in this course. These questions will largely consist of modeling situations and explaining your rationale for decisions made. "Apply" questions in the problem sets will better reflect questions you will see in this assignment.
- This assignment will be assigned towards the end of the term. I will be available to help answer questions and guide you when you get stuck!

Research Project (40% of Course Grade)

- You will research a policy issue relevant to labor economics. Using concepts from class and empirical evidence, students should describe and analyze the issue as it relates to the labor market.
- This project consists of several parts which will be due throughout the term. You will receive feedback after each part which you either need to provide a response or incorporate. The details of this assignment will be provided in entirety in a separate document you can find on canvas.

This project consists of:

1. Research Idea and Motivation (5% of Course Grade)

- **Objective:** Identify a labor economics policy issue that interests you. This should be a topic that has significant implications for the labor market and is supported by existing literature or empirical evidence.
- **Actions Required:** Submit a brief proposal (1-2 pages) outlining your chosen topic, its relevance, and your motivation for selecting it. Explain why this issue is important and what you hope to learn from researching it.

2. Data and Literature Review (10% of Course Grade)

- **Objective:** Find a data source to help describe your question and review existing literature on your chosen topic. This will form the foundation for your analysis.
- **Requirements:** Provide a literature review (3-5 pages) summarizing key studies, news articles, and other commentary related to your topic. In this part of the assignment I will ask you to find one or multiple sources of data to help better describe your question. The data needs to be in a format that you will be able to analyze through your preferred method. Ensure you cite all sources in a consistent format.

3. Analysis (10% of Course Grade)

- **Objective:** Apply the concepts learned in class to analyze your data and derive conclusions about your research question.
- **Requirements:** Conduct an analysis (4-6 pages) of your data. As there is no math prerequisite on this course, the analysis you choose should be in line with your current knowledge. In other words, if you haven't taken econometrics then you should not feel like you need to learn regression analysis for this paper. Present your findings clearly, discussing their implications for the labor market. Include tables, graphs, and other visual aids to support your analysis.

4. Conclusions and Final Paper (15% of Course Grade)

- **Objective:** Compile all parts of your research project into a cohesive final paper.
- **Requirements:** The final paper (10-12 pages) should include an introduction, literature review, data description, analysis, conclusions, and policy recommendations. Ensure that your paper is well-organized, clearly written, and free of grammatical errors. All sources should be properly cited in a consistent format of your choosing. If you only

turn in a final paper and do not submit other components for feedback the maximum you can earn on the paper is 70%.

PROBLEM SETS

After each topic (one or multiple lectures), students will work on a problem set. They will be available on canvas as a pdf and must be submitted as a pdf. Answers will be posted once the deadline has passed for those who submitted their problem sets.

Questions on the homework may challenge your understanding of the material and take longer than a question you would see on a typical exam as we will not have exams in this course.

GRADING

Late Policy

Deadlines are an important aspect of the class and ensure that we cover all material. Life has a way of being unpredictable and missing a deadline (or several) should not prevent success. For this reason, problem sets may be turned in late at any time in the term **prior to the Thursday of the last week of class for a penalty.**

Due to the increased pace of the summer, assignments which are turned in late will **receive a 10-percentage point penalty for every 3 days that they are late** up to a maximum of penalty of 50-percentage points. I allow for a **two-day** late submission **grace period** where no penalty will be assigned. *E.g., This means that if you turn an assignment in 2 days late you will receive no points off, but on the third day you'll receive 10-percentage points off prior to the grading of the assignment.*

Please remember turning in an assignment late and looking at the answer keys prior to submitting is an act of academic dishonesty and will be reported utilizing proper channels.

If you fall behind, please reach out sooner than later as I can help you create a plan to catch up!

Exceptions to Late Policy

1. If you are late turning in your research idea, you may not turn in the next part of your paper until the research idea is approved by me.
2. Final papers or Application/Mastery Assignments turned in late will not be accepted!

Grading Scale

Students earn the grade determined by the standard:

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Letter Grade | A+ | A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C+ |
| Percent Score | [100,98] | (98,93] | (93,90] | (90,87] | (87,83] | (83,80] | (80,77] |

| | | | | | | |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----|
| Letter Grade | C | C- | D+ | D | D- | F |
| Percent Score | (77,73] | (73,70] | (70-67] | (67,63] | (63,60] | <60 |

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This course incorporates materials collected from many locations and courses. The collection and disbursement of knowledge cannot be done alone. I want to thank Emily Arnesen, Robert McDonough, and Mike Kuhn who provided me wonderful resources or guidance in developing this course.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

REACH OUT

Many students, particularly those in their first year at the University of Oregon, find EC 201 to be challenging. The material is difficult, the pace is high, and it can be easy to fall behind and become overwhelmed. If you are concerned about your grades, it is imperative that you contact us as soon as possible. I, as well as the entire faculty of the Economics Department, are invested in your success, but you must take the first step and reach out when you encounter difficulties.

In addition to office hours, there are a number of other resources available to help you master the course material. Please contact us to learn more.

If outside circumstances are impacting your ability to succeed in this course, please contact me as soon as possible. Alternatively, you may wish to contact the Office of the Dean of Students (<http://uodos.uoregon.edu/>) or an Academic Adviser (<https://advising.uoregon.edu/>).

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

University Health Services help students cope with difficult emotions and life stressors. If you need general resources on coping with stress or want to talk with another student who has been in the same place as you, visit the Duck Nest (located in the EMU on the ground floor) and get help from one of the specially trained Peer Wellness Advocates. Find out more at <https://health.uoregon.edu/ducknest>.

University Counseling Services (UCS) has a team of dedicated staff members to support you with your concerns, many of whom can provide identity-based support. All clinical services are free and confidential. Find out more at counseling.uoregon.edu or by calling 541-346-3227 (anytime UCS is closed, the After-Hours Support and Crisis Line is available by calling this same number)."

RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

You can expect to be treated with respect in this course. Both students and your instructor(s) enter with many identities, backgrounds, and beliefs. Students of all racial identities, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, national origins, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, citizenship statuses, ability and other visible and non-visible differences belong in and contribute to this class and this discipline. All students are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment for every other member of the class.

Class rosters are provided to instructors with students' legal names. Please let me know if the name or pronouns I have for you are not accurate. It is important to me to address you properly. This course can offer unique challenges for international students. As such, there are some resources designed to help international students who are struggling. Please contact the International Student & Scholar Services office for more information (<https://international.uoregon.edu/iss>).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The University Student Conduct Code (available on the Student Conduct Code and Procedures webpage) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students' obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at the Libraries' Citation and Plagiarism page.

ACCESS AND ACCOMMODATIONS

The University of Oregon and I are dedicated to fostering inclusive learning environments for all students and welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Accessible Education Center (AEC) assists students with disabilities in reducing campus-wide and classroom-related barriers. If you have or think you have a disability (<https://aec.uoregon.edu/content/what-disability>) and experience academic barriers, please contact the

AEC to discuss appropriate accommodations or support. Visit 360 Oregon Hall or aec.uoregon.edu for more information. You can contact AEC at 541-346-1155 or via email at uoaec@uoregon.edu.
