



Course ECON 3100-003 Hybrid
Labor Economics
Spring 2014 - 3 Credit Hours
Fulfills University UI Requirement
Wednesday 6:00 – 9:00 pm OSH 202

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Course Text Ehrenberg and Smith, Modern Labor Economics: Theory and Public Policy 11th Edition (preferred - previous editions are acceptable, but homework assignments will come from the 11th Edition). Additional selected readings from published articles and texts will be available through Canvas. The text can be purchased through the campus bookstore or can be found very reasonably through various online book sellers.

Course Overview At its core, the discussion of Labor Economics is a discussion of microeconomic principles applied to labor markets and labor market policies in an effort to understand differences in outcomes experienced by various labor market participants. In other words, *labor economics simply seeks to explain why different people receive different wages.*

While the theoretical foundations, microeconomic mechanics, and appropriate application frameworks are all well suited to online delivery, the development of higher level intuitions and judgments are best formed through interactive discussion and application within a forum well suited to real-time response, challenge, assessment, and restatement – in other words, the classroom. This course seeks to combine the efficiency of online learning with the effectiveness of informed personal interaction in such a way as to deliver important qualitative and quantitative skills associated with Labor Economics, and at the same time allow for a forum through which intuition can be developed, judgment skills can be gained, challenged, and restated, and most importantly, passion for the discipline can be shared.

Since classroom time is limited, it is critical that readings, and assignments be completed before class. Though this isn't an unusual expectation for a university level course, in all practicality most students arrive in class unprepared but still hopeful to receive an above average grade. In this course, such a strategy will certainly end in disappointment. However, for those students willing to prepare and participate, this course becomes one of those rare opportunities to gain a comprehensive understanding of a market in which virtually everyone participates. In our classroom discussions we'll apply the science of economic decision making to workers and firms in such a way as to help you better understand the world in which we live... and work.

This course employs readings, discussions, quizzes, exams and analysis to drive home the concepts and applications of economics. The assigned readings and homework assignments

should be completed before class, will be discussed in class, and exam material will come from both the assigned readings and class discussions. Please note that you may be called upon in class and will be expected to participate. You will be required to work with other students in the preparation and presentation of a research project/poster due at the end of the term. There will be two mid-term exams and one comprehensive final exam. If you anticipate missing a test due to a time conflict, please notify me in advance. No make-up exams will be given if arrangements are not made before the exam dates.

There is a one classroom session each week during which we will seek to explore and answer a particular aspect of the course's core theme, "*why different people receive different wages*". We'll do this by reviewing select homework problems, working through one or more in-class quantitative problems (one of which will be turned in a graded), and discussing the microeconomic fundamentals behind the issue addressed. Participation in the classroom sessions is required; most sessions will include short, graded assignments, students will give their Focus Presentations, and Exams will be administered during these sessions.

There are no specific prerequisites for this class. However, some knowledge of microeconomics (at the principles level) and basic algebra will be very helpful. We'll spend a significant amount of time analyzing graphs and doing algebraic calculations.

Homework and In-Class Problems

Homework problems will be assigned each week and are to be turned in at the start of the class session during which the assigned material will be discussed. Select homework problems will be reviewed in class; completed homework answer keys will be available through Canvas after the assignments are due and turned in. A few, randomly selected problems will be scored from each assignment. In addition, there will usually be one graded In-Class problem assigned during each regular class session.

Quizzes

Graded quizzes are assigned with each text chapter and are administered through Canvas, must be submitted in the time period allocated, may not be made up if not taken as assigned, include five (5) questions chosen at random from a group of 30-45 questions, and may be taken up to three (3) times in an effort to receive a desired score (each time a new quiz is selected a newly selected group of questions will be presented). Quizzes will not be directly reviewed in class, but you are encouraged to ask questions in class that may result from quizzes taken or text materials read/reviewed.

Exams

There will be two mid-term exams (**2/12/2014 and 4/2/2014**) and a final (**4/30/2014**) administered during scheduled class sessions. There will also be optional exam review sessions scheduled for your benefit after the regularly scheduled class period before each of the exams. Each exam may include short-answer questions, multi-part problem sets and short essays. You are expected to be in class to take the exams on the given days. If you anticipate any unavoidable scheduling conflict, please see me immediately. Assigned readings from the text, additional required readings and topics discussed in class may be represented on the exams. Exams missed without express written permission will not be available for make-up.

Research Project

At the beginning of the term you will be assigned to work on a research project with 1-2 other students, with each topic being specific to one of the various concepts addressed in this course. Your project will culminate in the formation of a short presentation and research poster to be presented in the Economics Department on **Friday, April 11th** and will be considered for inclusion in the CSBS Student Research Day competition to be held on **Thursday, April 24th**.

These projects should display the assigned topic using contemporary and relevant data, examples, methods, and models in such a way as to highlight the issues associated with the topic as they relate to providing answers to the central question for the course, “Why do different workers received different wages?” Presentations and posters will be judged by a select group of professors and graduate students from the Economics Department, with the scores associated with the adjudication heavily influencing your overall score for the assignment. This set of assignments, progress points and adjudication score, will be comprise 15% of your grade for the course and are due as follows:

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|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Topic Assignment | 1/15/2014 |
| Papers and Models | 2/12/2014 |
| Contemporary Example | 3/05/2014 |
| Data Evaluation | 3/19/2014 |
| Draft Poster and Presentation | 4/02/2014 |
| Presentation and Poster Display | 4/11/2014 |

Reaction Papers

You will be required to write two (2) Reaction Papers due **2/2/2014** and **3/23/2014** through the Canvas assignment submission function. These papers should be used to assist you in your research project. For *each paper* you are required to find a published journal article specifically associated with your research topic. These papers are to be no less than 750 words in length, must include appropriate economic graphic representation of the issue being addressed and will be graded on content, grammar, syntax and proper use of graphs and charts. It is important to note that economic graphics (models) are not simply charts, tables or graphs presenting values associated with the issue, but are specifically formatted graphs designed to present economic models with their temporal or equational dynamics.

An excellent Reaction Paper (one that receives 18+ points) addresses a timely topic, points out strengths and weaknesses of the author(s) argument(s), includes at least one economic graphic representing the dynamics or effects of the issue being addressed, and offers your personal opinion, or reaction, in respect to the issue. Examples of excellent Reaction Papers can be found in Canvas.

Canvas Discussions

During the semester there will be four Canvas Discussions presented for your participation. Each discussion will include several articles, papers, etc. posted in Canvas’s Discussion forum for you comment on or to discuss. You are required to review these postings and enter into the discussion with specific and substantive comments in respect to the postings. You are also required to **separately** comment on the posting of another student, as such you will want to begin participating in each discussion well in advance of the assigned due date. Canvas Discussions are due as follows:

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|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| Canvas Discussion #1 – Minimum Wage | 1/26/2014 |
| Canvas Discussion #2 – Healthcare | 2/23/2014 |
| Canvas Discussion #3 – Education | 3/30/2014 |
| Canvas Discussion #4 – Immigration | 4/27/2014 |

| Course Schedule (tentative) | | | | |
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| | Week 1 | 1/8 | Why do different workers receive different wages? Introduction & Overview | Ehrenberg & Smith Chp 1&2 |
| | Week 2 | 1/15 | The Demand For Labor Evaluating and Graphing Economic Models Research Project - Topic Assignment | Ehrenberg & Smith Chp 3 |
| | Week 3 | 1/22 1/26 | Labor Demand Elasticities Canvas Discussion #1 Due | Ehrenberg & Smith Chp 4 |
| | Week 4 | 1/29 2/2 | Frictions in the Labor Markets Reaction Paper #1 Due | Ehrenberg & Smith Chp 5 |
| | Week 5 | 2/5 | Labor Supply Mid-Term Review (optional) | Ehrenberg & Smith Chp 6&7 |
| | Week 6 | 2/12 | Mid-Term Exam #1 Research Project – Papers and Models | |
| | Week 7 | 2/19 2/23 | Compensating Wage Differentials Canvas Discussion #2 Due | Ehrenberg & Smith Chp 8 |
| | Week 8 | 2/26 | Investments in Human Capital | Ehrenberg & Smith Chp 9 |
| | Week 9 | 3/5 | Worker Mobility, Migration & Turnover Research Project – Contemporary Example | Ehrenberg & Smith Chp 10 |
| | | 3/12 | Spring Break – No Class | |
| | Week 10 | 3/19 3/23 | Pay and Productivity Research Project - Data Evaluation Reaction Paper #2 Due | Ehrenberg & Smith Chp 11 |
| | Week 11 | 3/26 3/30 | Gender, Race and Ethnicity Mid-Term Review (optional) Canvas Discussion #3 Due | Ehrenberg & Smith Chp 12 |
| | Week 12 | 4/2 | Mid-Term Exam #2 Research Project – Drafts Due | |
| | Week 13 | 4/9 | Unions & the Labor Market Research Project – Posters/Display | Ehrenberg & Smith Chp 13 |
| | Week 14 | 4/16 | Unemployment | Ehrenberg & Smith Chp 14 |
| | Week 15 | 4/23 4/27 | Inequality and Earnings Final Exam Review (Optional) Canvas Discussion #4 Due | Ehrenberg & Smith Chp 15 |
| | | 4/30 | Final Exam | |

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| Grading | Research Project | 15% |
| | In-Class Problems | 10% |
| | Reaction Papers | 10% |
| | Canvas Discussions | 10% |
| | Homework | 15% |
| | Quizzes | 5% |
| | Mid-Term Exams | 25% |
| | Final Exam | 15% |

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| Grading Scale | A | 94-100% | B- | 80-83.9% | D+ | 67-69.9% |
| | A- | 90-93.9% | C+ | 77-79.9% | D | 64-66.9% |
| | B+ | 87-89.9% | C | 74-76.9% | D- | 60-63.9% |
| | B | 84-86.9% | C- | 70-73.9% | E | 0-59.9% |

Grades will be determined in accordance with the University of Utah's grading policies. Written feedback will be provided on some assignments and more detailed feedback will be provided at any time upon request. If you believe you have received an incorrect grade on any assignment for this class, please bring it to my attention immediately.

Expectations **You can expect me to:**

- Treat students and others with respect, expect that as adults we are each responsible for our decisions and actions, and ask "why" often.
- Grade and provide feedback on assignments within one week of the date they are submitted.
- Return email messages, texts and phone calls within 24 hours.
- Use Canvas to enhance student learning, communication, and convenience.
- Follow the syllabus and hold each class session as scheduled. In the event of an unsolvable conflict or emergency, I will make every effort to arrange for a qualified substitute to teach the class.
- Be readily available to meet with students, either during regularly-scheduled office hours or at any other time that works for both of us.
- Complete final grades and provide students with feedback on final grades within two weeks of the date the last course assignment is submitted.
- Bring drinks or some suitable recompense when I screw up in front of the class

I expect you to:

- Actively communicate and use Canvas regularly.
- Complete reading and homework assignments, take all quizzes and exams, participate in class discussions and ask "why" often.
- Attend each class session. In the event that you must miss a class, please notify me in advance and assume responsibility for the material you missed.
- Read the course syllabus, ensure you have a clear understanding of the course requirements and evaluation methods used in the course, and fulfill the course requirements.

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- Come to class prepared and participate fully, honestly, and professionally in class discussions and online class activities.
 - Learn about and abide by the University of Utah's academic honesty policy. Specifically, I expect you to not engage in cheating, plagiarism and furnishing false or misleading information to any faculty or staff member.
 - Immediately notify me in the event of an emergency that prevents you from submitting an assignment or completing the course.
 - Ask questions if any expectations or assignments are unclear.
 - Be courteous of others when using technology. Always give speakers your full attention and make sure that any use of technology during class enhances your learning and does not distract you or others from course content.

Class Participation

This course is designed to be highly participative and participation in class discussions is required. We will take time during most classes to discuss current domestic and international labor market issues. **There will be material covered in class that will not be part of the reading or homework assignments, but for which students will be responsible on Mid-Term and/or Final exams.**

Additional Readings

There will be two kinds of additional readings posted on Canvas: required and optional. We will discuss these readings in class and material from the required readings may be represented on exams. The list of readings will be updated throughout the semester, and the addition of new readings will be announced in class.

Late Assignment Policy

Late assignments will not be accepted for credit without prior permission.

ADA statement

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Union Building, 801-581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. (www.hr.utah.edu/oeo/ada/guide/faculty/)

Syllabus changes

This syllabus is subject to change. Potential changes will be discussed in class and may be posted in Canvas.
