

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON
EC 450 LABOR ECONOMICS

Summer 2020

Instructor: Robert McDonough	Time: Asynchronous. See below
Email: rmcdono2@uoregon.edu	Place: Canvas & Zoom

Course Page: UO Canvas page (link provided here once I publish the course)

COVID-19 Impacts As you all know, this course has been moved online due to the impacts of COVID-19. Please know that I am committed to making this course as useful and accessible as possible. Indeed, these extraordinary times only highlight the importance of understanding labor market issues. According to the most recent official statistics, the U.S. unemployment rate stands at 11.1%, higher than during the Great Recession. My goal is to make this course as useful to you as possible, which includes creating opportunities to talk about this crisis constructively in terms of its magnitude, its long-term impacts, and also its distributional consequences. In order to do so compassionately, your feedback, positive or negative, is always appreciated.

This is a stressful time. None of us has lived through anything like this. Please reach out if you need anything over our course. Nothing we learn in class will be useful without your physical and mental health!

Course Objectives: This course is designed to provide you with a good foundation for the study of labor and labor markets. Over the 4 weeks, we will build on the principals of micro theory developed in EC 311 to familiarize ourselves with theories of labor supply, wage determination, human capital, unemployment, gender and race discrimination, and work incentives. From this theoretical foundation, students will explore key developments in the United States labor market over the past few decades regarding inequality, immigration, globalization, de-industrialization, unionization, the computer revolution, labor-force participation and welfare reform.

Recorded & Live Lecture: In order to make this course available to as many students as possible, all course material will be available asynchronously. I will present material in the form of lectures 4 times per week. There will be two methods to access these lectures. (1) I will record lecture using Zoom meetings scheduled on Canvas. Students are welcome to attend and participate as they would during a 'live' digital class. **Lecture recordings will take place on Zoom at 2:00-3:50 PM, Pacific Time** (2) As soon as possible after lecture ends, lecture recordings will be uploaded to canvas for viewing at any time.

Interaction in the classroom fosters academic success, and also improves the general quality of the course. To replicate this public good online, extra credit will be given to those attending the live lecture regularly. **Students attending at least 10 lecture recordings will receive 2% extra on their final grade.** Entering the Zoom meeting for a few minutes then leaving does not count. You need to stay for at least half of the lecture and participate to count as having attended.

Office Hours: Office hours will be held Monday through Thursday before lecture recording at 11:00-11:55 AM, Pacific Time. You will also have the option to post questions on canvas discussions. You should also feel free to email me to make appointments outside of these times. One of the few unmitigated benefits of digital classes are that short Zoom meetings can be scheduled very quickly, so please take advantage of this option when needed.

Textbook: The recommended text is Ronald G. Ehrenberg and Robert S. Smith, *Modern Labor Economics: Theory and Public Policy* (Addison-Wesley-Longman). I have listed the 13th Edition on the bookstore,

but the 12th and 11th Editions are very similar and will also work well. Note that these older editions are available for a much cheaper price online. Digital versions of these additions are also available and acceptable. While we will follow the text quite closely, I do reserve the right to amend the reading list as we progress through the course. As supplemental to the required text, consider consulting *Contemporary Labor Economics* by McConnell, Brue and Macpherson or *Labor Economics* by George Borjas or *The Economics of Work and Pay* by Filer, Hamermesh and Rees. For a primer in the prerequisite economics consider the intermediate microeconomics text you used in 311 (which you should not have sold, of course).

Prerequisites: As indicated in the course catalog, EC 311 and EC 320 and/or 423 are required pre-reqs.

Problem Sets: There will be 4 problem sets due during our course, one per week. Problem sets will be worth 7.5% of your final grade each. They will include exercises from our textbook, additional problems, and short answer questions based on lecture. Unless otherwise stated, you are allowed to collaborate in small groups on these assignments (up to 5 people). Each student must turn in their own work and must identify other students with whom they worked. Collaboration on these assignments is encouraged, word-for-word copying is not, and will be penalized with a lower grade. Problem sets will generally be due at the end of each week, and you can find the exact due date for each problem set on Canvas. Late problem sets will not be accepted after the due date. If you know in advance that a particular homework due date will cause difficulty, you may submit a typewritten petition explaining why it will be difficult for you to submit the homework by the deadline, and your suggestion for an alternate due date. **Petitions must be submitted at least 2 days before the due date.** This process is designed to help overcome true conflicts, not poor planning. I reserve the right to accept or deny petitions based on your specific circumstances. If accepted I will provide a different due date that I deem to be fair *based on the information provided to me*. I may also modify the assignment as necessary.

Since this course is taking place during a truly chaotic time, I recognize that a legitimate reason why you cannot complete a problem set may come up at the last minute. Consequently, each student may choose to not submit one of the four problem sets, and instead have a different problem set count for double the weight (15% of the course grade). No explanation needs to be provided for doing this. You must send me an email stating which problem set you have not completed, and which problem set you want to receive double weight. Failure to send me this email within 5 days of the missed problem set will result in a grade of 0 on that problem set.

Quizzes: There will be one quiz per week for a total of 4 quizzes. Each quiz will be worth 2.5% of your final grade. Quizzes will be available on Wednesday as soon as the recorded lecture for Wednesday is finished and posted, and will remain available until the start of our next lecture recording on Thursday. Quiz questions will be a mix of questions on recent assigned readings, as well as short practice problems. Students are not allowed to communicate with each other about quizzes or assist each other in completing a quiz under any circumstances. Doing so will constitute academic dishonesty and will result in a grade of 0 on that quiz.

Midterm & Final: There will be both a midterm and final for this course, administered via Canvas. The final will be comprehensive. These exams will be open book/open notes. The exams will be available to complete over two days. The exams will not be timed, so you may spend as much time as you see fit to complete them. Please note that I am designing the exams so that you complete them within roughly two hours; I am not expecting anyone to spend two full days working on them. Given the switch to online instruction, I reserve the right to modify the above timing and structure of the exams to give us some flexibility. Dates for the midterm and final are given below. Students are not allowed to communicate with each other about the exam or assist each other in completing the exam under any circumstances. Doing so will constitute academic dishonesty and will result in a failing grade on that test.

No makeup exams will be given for any reason. If you cannot make one of the below examination periods you should drop the class. In the unforeseen event that the midterm is missed due to serious injury or illness, or a death in the family, a typewritten petition explaining and documenting why the exam is

missed must be submitted within three days of the exam. If the petition is approved, the weight of the midterm will be added to the weight of the final exam. The alternative is a score of zero points for the missed exam.

Important Dates:

Midterm August 2nd - August 3rd
 Final Exam August 15th - August 16th

Grade Appeals: Any requests for re-grading on a test or homework must be submitted in writing within three days of when grades and comments for the assignment are returned. A re-grading request should include an argument for why you feel your answer was correct. I will re-grade the entire question when a re-grade request is made.

Grading Policy: The traditional grade scale (90-100% → an A of some kind, 80-89% → a B of some kind, et cetera, modified by + and - where applicable) will be used as a baseline when determining course grades. The letter grades will never be worse than the traditional grade scale would imply, but a curve favorable to students may be applied depending on the overall performance of the class. Grades will be based on assignments and/or quizzes conducted throughout the term, a midterm, and a final exam using the weights shown below:

30%- Problem Sets

10%- Quizzes

25%- Midterm Exam

35%- Final Exam

Those students taking this course pass/fail must earn a “C-” in the course in order to receive a passing grade. A necessary but not sufficient condition for requesting a grade of “Incomplete” is a “B-” on all completed tasks. You will receive no grade in this course if it is found that you have not received a “C-” or better in the prerequisite EC311. Further, if you are not able to write the final exam for any reason, drop the course now (i.e., the “no makeup” policy is not negotiable.)

Academic Integrity The University Student Conduct Code defines academic misconduct, which includes unauthorized help on assignments and examinations and the use of sources without acknowledgment. Academic misconduct is prohibited at UO. I will report misconduct to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards—consequences can include failure of this course. As noted above, collaboration is allowed on homework but **not** on exams. I will ask you to certify that your exams are your own work. In order to ensure that each student is evaluated fairly, I will be very strict in the enforcement of the Student Conduct Code, which is published in the Schedule of Classes each term. Exams are administered via Canvas. I have designed them with the expectation that you will have access to course materials and the Internet when you take them—and that’s just fine. I will be looking to see evidence of critical thinking and your ability to put the concepts we’re working on into action in response to the exam prompts.

Accessibility and Special Accommodations The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. If you are uncomfortable discussing these issues with me, or if you require special accommodations of any kind due to a documented disability, you are encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.