

**ECON480: Labor Economics**  
**University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill**  
**Department of Economics**  
**Fall 2017**

Instructor: Kalina Staub  
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Office: Gardner 200G  
Office Hours: Tuesday 5-6pm in GA200G and Wednesday 2-3pm in the EconAid Center (GA009)  
5-minute introductory appointments (week prior to and first week of classes) and 15-minute office hour appointments (all semester) bookable at alternative times at: <http://calendly.com/staub>  
Class: TTR 2:00-3:15pm (Section 002)  
TTR 3:30-4:45pm (Section 003)  
Text: "Labor Economics" 7<sup>th</sup> Edition by George Borjas (You may use an older edition, but it is your responsibility to make sure topic coverage, page numbers and problem content aligns)  
Prerequisites: ECON400 and ECON410 with a grade of "C" or higher

### **Course Description**

This course serves as an introduction to the field of labor economics. We will examine the economic theory behind workers' labor supply, firms' labor demand, and equilibrium in the labor market. In addition, we will examine the role of government in labor markets, the effect of immigration on labor markets, human capital attainment, and incentives and compensation schemes.

### **Course Objectives**

During the semester, you will be expected to:

- Explain how labor markets function
- Apply economic theory to analyze and predict changes in the labor market
- Analyze, present, and interpret microeconomic data
- Craft an argument and support it with appropriate evidence
- Develop skills for reading and analyzing economics journal articles
- Develop critical thinking, writing, and presentation skills
- Participate actively and substantively in class discussions

### **Course Components**

Your performance in this course will be evaluated based on the following assignments. You will have 2 options for grading in the course: Option A involves more homework assignments designed to prepare you for exams and less weight on exams while Option B involves fewer out of class assignments but more weight on the exams. You will choose one option by the second week of class, but may change your choice at any point during the semester (though any missed assignments will still be zeros). All assignments are to be completed on your own unless specifically stated.

- *Participation and Assignments (Option A: 5% or Option B: 5%)*  
Attendance is expected in this class; however, I will not take attendance every class. I expect you to be on time, have completed the assigned readings, and actively engage and participate in the classroom activities. I do not accept late assignments, and you are responsible for all material covered in class; Powerpoint slides from lectures will NOT be posted, but I do provide lecture outlines that I suggest you use. This portion of your grade will be based on making substantive, relevant, and respectful contributions to lectures and discussions as well as completing a variety of small in-class and out-of class activities assigned in class or on Sakai throughout the semester. You are expected to check your university email and Sakai regularly to guarantee you do not miss announcements or assignments. Inappropriate chatting or electronics use will negatively impact your participation grade in this course. Because I understand that issues may arise during the semester that prevent you from attending every lecture, your two lowest grades in this category will be dropped.

- *Reading Assessments (Option A: 4% or Option B: 0%)*  
 Each week you will have an assessment on Sakai due by 2pm on Tuesday (posted on Fridays) covering the upcoming week's readings. These will be 5 questions, untimed, and address your general familiarity with the topics we will cover that week (lower-order learning outcomes such as recalling definitions or facts). You will have two attempts at each reading assessment. You may use your notes and textbook, but you must work individually on these assessments. You may drop your lowest grade.
- *Quizzes (Option A: 8% or Option B: 0%)*  
 Each week you will have a quiz on Sakai due by 2pm on Tuesday (posted on Fridays) covering the past week's material. These are designed to prepare you for the multiple-choice sections of the midterm and final. These questions will address higher order learning outcomes such as your ability to apply course concepts and analyze information (i.e. they will be more difficult than the reading assessments). These will be 8 questions; you will have 25 minutes per attempt and two attempts. You may use your notes and textbook, but you must work individually on these assessments. You may drop your lowest grade
- *Problem Sets (Option A: 8% or Option B: 0%)*  
 There will be five problem-sets assigned during the term, which you are encouraged to work on in groups, though these are your preparation for the exam, so everyone should be attempting the problems on their own and you should NOT be dividing the work. On the problem set due date, you will submit via Gradescope one problem set per group, and it will be graded 75% based on completion and 25% based on correctness of one randomly chosen problem. The best 4 of your 5 problem set scores will count towards your final grade in the course. The problem sets will be posted on Sakai no later than one week before the due date.
- *Valuing Your UNC Degree Project (Option A: 12% or Option B: 12%)*  
 In this project you will map out a hypothetical career path, use salary data from recent university graduates to estimate the rate of return to your UNC degree, and present your findings in a short report. More detailed guidelines and a rubric will be posted on Sakai and discussed in class. You may discuss the excel portion of the assignment with your classmates, but every student must do their own research, make their own spreadsheet, and write their own assignment.
- *Policy Debate and Memo (Option A: 13% or Option B: 13%)*  
 We will have 4 in-class debates over the course of the semester. Each debate will last roughly 45 minutes. In the beginning of the semester, topics and sides will be assigned. When it is your turn to debate, your group will research the topic and prepare arguments (arguments should be based on the economic concepts and theories discussed in class and supported by the empirical evidence you find) in advance of the debate. Within one week of the in-class debate, each group member will write a roughly 3 page policy memo to the president explaining why he should support or oppose the chosen policy reform (you do not have to argue for the same side you argued in the debate). Your grade will be based first and foremost on your memo with a small portion of the grade coming from your groupmates' evaluation of your contributions to the debate prep and your participation in the debate. There will also be a small bonus awarded to the winning (as judged by your peers) group.
- *Midterm Exam (Option A: 20% or Option B: 30%)*  
 The Midterm Exam will take place on October 11, 2016 and will cover all material covered in class through October 6, 2016. There will be no make-up for the midterm exam (see Late Work Policy below).
- *Final Exam (Option A: 30% or Option B: 40%)*  
 The final exam will be cumulative and cover all material covered in the course. The date and time of the final exam will be set by the University Registrar. There are no make-up exams (see Late Work Policy below).

## Late Work Policy

Due dates and times of assignments are firm. No late work will be accepted after the due date; however, you are always welcome to turn in your assignments early to the instructor directly or to her mailbox in the main Economics Department office.

If you miss a quiz, online assignment, or in class assignment, you will receive a zero with NO exceptions regardless of whether the absence is for an “excused” or “unexcused” reasons. For all assignments and quizzes (EXCEPT the midterm, writing projects, and final) you have a certain number of drop grades to account for the occasional illness etc. In the case of a severe and ongoing issue, please speak with the instructor as soon as possible so that possible accommodations may be discussed.

If you are unable to attend class and miss the midterm due to severe illness, religious reasons, death in the family, or University-sponsored events, you are required to provide appropriate, original documentation to the instructor within five days of the test. If the instructor is not on campus, you can also submit it to her mailbox in the Economics Department office. If you are unsure of anything, please see the instructor before the exam, or before the submission deadline.

In the event of illness, appropriate documentation must include a signed doctor’s note. The date on the doctor’s note should indicate that you visited the doctor **prior to or on the day of** the midterm and must indicate that your condition is severe enough to warrant missing a midterm. Doctor’s notes dated **after** the midterm date will not be considered appropriate documentation and neither will the generic letter from Student Health indicating that you showed up for an appointment. If you fail to present the appropriate documentation on time, you will receive a zero for the midterm.

If all of the requirements described above have been met, you will be excused from the midterm and the weight will be shifted proportionally to your other term work. There are no make-up exams.

If you must miss the final exam for any excused reason, it is your responsibility to alert your instructor and Dean as soon as possible. The make-up option for this course is taking the final with the other section, and you may only take the make-up exam with an official university exam excuse. Please see the University policy regarding final examinations ([http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/procedures1.html#final\\_exams](http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/procedures1.html#final_exams)).

## Grading

This table shows the minimum raw score you must achieve for each grade. I reserve the right to curve grades up if I see fit. This means that a 69% will never earn you less than a D+, but I might decide that students with a 69% actually deserve a C- or a C.

Grade	Percent Range
A	93 and above
A-	90-92.99
B+	87-89.99
B	83-86.99
B-	80-82.99
C+	77-79.99
C	73-76.99
C-	70-72.99
D+	67-69.99
D	60-66.99
F	59.99 and below

If you feel that your work has been graded unfairly, you may submit it for a re-grade within one week of your work being handed back. In order for your re-grade request to be considered, you must submit the original work with NO additional markings or changes along with a detailed description of what you believe was graded unfairly and why you think you deserve additional points. Please keep in mind that I reserve the right to re-grade any and all parts of the work which is submitted for re-assessment, and your grade may increase, decrease, or stay the same as a result. For assignments graded on Gradescope, you should use the online regrade request form within one week of the assignment being returned.

## **Academic Integrity**

As a student of the University of North Carolina you are expected to behave in accordance with the school's honor code. Plagiarism, forgery, unauthorized collaboration and the use of unauthorized materials are only some of the behaviors that I will not tolerate in this course. If you have any uncertainties about any of your work, please approach me before an assignment's due date. I take academic integrity very seriously and will not hesitate to report any instance where I feel academic integrity has been compromised, either intentionally or unintentionally.

The Instrument of Student Judicial Government can be found here:

<https://studentconduct.unc.edu/sites/studentconduct.unc.edu/files/documents/Instrument.pdf>

## **Computers and Cell Phones**

Cell phones should be silenced or turned off and stored out of sight during class. I reserve the right to confiscate any cell phones that I see out during class.

You may use a computer or tablet during class if you feel this is the most effective way to take notes. However, I request that you sit in the last row of the classroom to avoid distracting your peers, and I reserve the right to confiscate your computer until the end of class if your computer use is causing any distraction or disruption to others or myself.

Additionally please keep the following in mind:

- In general, note-taking by hand (on paper or on a tablet) leads to higher retention than typing notes on a computer (see the following article from *The Atlantic*: <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/05/to-remember-a-lecture-better-take-notes-by-hand/361478/>).
- Multitasking on an electronic device during lectures has been shown to decrease grades of the multitaskers, but more importantly the grades of the people seated around them: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/laptop-use-lowers-student-grades-experiment-shows-1.1401860>. If you know that you cannot refrain from multitasking, please sit in the back of the classroom out of respect for your peers.

## **Email Policy**

Please feel free to contact me by email if you have any questions about course policies or any personal concerns. My email is listed on the first page of this syllabus. I will try to respond to emails promptly, but if you haven't heard from me in 48 hours, please resend the email, as I may have not received your original message. Please use your UNC email, as emails from other clients will most likely be sent to my spam folder. Please indicate in the subject of your email that you are in ECON480. For example the subject of your email might read, "[ECON480] question about office hours."

## **EconAid Center**

The EconAid Center is located in GA009. It will be open from 8am to 8pm every weekday and will have occasional weekend hours as well. This is where the TAs, ULAs, and instructors for the core courses in the major will hold their office hours during the semester; however, this center also offers students a great space to work on their economics coursework individually or in groups. There will usually be someone who is quite knowledgeable hanging around, so feel free to ask questions and make friends. I hope you will make use of this invaluable resource!

## **Accessibility Resources and Service Office**

The University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities.

All accommodations are coordinated through the Accessibility Resources and Service Office. In the first instance please visit their website <http://accessibility.unc.edu>, Tel: 919-962-8300 or

Email: [accessibility@unc.edu](mailto:accessibility@unc.edu). A student is welcome to initiate the registration process at any time; however, the process can take time. ARS is particularly busy in the run-up to Finals and during Finals. Students submitting Self-ID forms at that time are unlikely to have accommodations set until the following semester. Please contact ARS as early in the semester as possible.

## The Learning Center

The UNC Learning Center is a great resource both for students who are struggling in their courses and for those who want to be proactive and develop sound study practices to prevent falling behind. They offer individual consultations, peer tutoring, academic coaching, test prep programming, study skills workshops, and peer study groups. If you think you might benefit from their services, please visit them in SASB North or visit their website to set up an appointment: <http://learningcenter.unc.edu/>

## The Writing Center

The Writing Center is located in the Student and Academic Services Building and offers personalized writing consultations as well as a variety of other resources. This could be a wonderful resource to help with your writing assignments in this course (and any assignments in your other courses). You do not need a complete draft of your assignment to visit; they can help you at any stage! You can chat with someone in the writing center or set up an appointment on their website: <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/>

## Medical and Counseling Services

If you are having any mental, physical, or other personal problems that are interfering with your ability to focus on your coursework, please contact the UNC Campus Health Services (919-966-2281 or <https://campushealth.unc.edu/>) right away.

## Tentative Course Outline

Below is a tentative weekly schedule with suggested readings from the textbook. All non-textbook reading will be made available in PDF format through the course Sakai site at least one class period before it is discussed in class. Please note that this schedule is subject to change, though due dates will never be moved up.

Week	Dates	Topics	Readings	Assignments
1	8/22 8/24	Introduction Introduction/Data	Syllabus B 1 + App	
2	8/29  8/31	Labor Force and Unemployment  Labor Supply	B 2.1, 12.1- 12.2  B2.2-2.6	Q1, RA1, Syllabus Quiz and Academic Integrity Quiz due
3	9/5 9/7	Labor Supply Continued	B 2.7-2.13	Q2, RA2
4	9/12 9/14	Labor Demand	B 3.1-3.7	Q3, RA3, PS1 due
5	9/19 9/21	Labor Demand Continued Debate 1: NIT v. EITC	B 3.8-3.12 See Sakai	Q4, RA4
6	9/26 9/28	Labor Markets	B 4.1-4.7	Q5, RA5 Memo 1 due
7	10/3 10/5	Labor Markets	B 4.8	Q6, RA6, PS2 due Q7 (due Sunday 10/8)
8	10/10 10/12	Midterm Exam Human Capital I	B 6.1-6.7	RA7*
9	10/17 10/19	Debate 2: Minimum Wage Fall Break (No Class)	See Sakai	Q8
10	10/24 10/26	Human Capital II Worker Mobility I	B 6.8-6.13 B 8.1-8.3	RA8, Memo 2 due PS3 due
11	10/31 11/2	Worker Mobility II Compensating Differentials I	B 8.4-8.9 B 5.1-5.3	RA9, Q9
12	11/7 11/9	Debate 3: Immigration Debate Compensating Differentials II	See Sakai B 5.4-5.6	RA10, Q10
13	11/14  11/16	Income Inequality  Incentive Pay	Ch. 7  Ch. 11	RA11, Q11, Memo 3 due PS4 due
14	11/21 11/23	Discrimination I Thanksgiving (No Class)	B 9.1-9.6	RA12, Q12, Project due
15	11/28	Discrimination II	B 9.7-9.11	RA13, Q13

	11/30	Debate 4: Income Tax Debate	See Sakai	
16	12/5	Catch-Up Day		Q14, PS5 due Memo 4 due (by 12/7)
Exam	12/9 12/14	Exam from 12:00pm – 3:00pm (Section 001) Exam from 4:00pm – 7:00pm (Section 002)		

### Using Gradescope

Your instructor will automatically register you for Gradescope using your official UNC email address during the second week of classes.

It is your responsibility to make sure your submitted assignments are clear and easy to read. This means that you should use pen or dark pencil and make sure that your ink does not bleed through to the back of the page if you are writing on both sides. When taking photographs or scanning a document, make sure the pages are properly oriented and clearly indicate where each problem appears.

- To submit an assignment, please follow instructions here: <https://gradescope.com/help#help-center-item-student-submitting>
- If you do not have a scanner, the libraries have free scanners that students can use, or you can use your tablet or smartphone by following the directions here: <https://gradescope.com/help#help-center-item-student-scanning>
- You may submit problem sets in groups of up to 4 students. To submit an assignment as a group, please follow the instructions here: <https://gradescope.com/help#help-center-item-student-group-members>
- Viewing submissions and interpreting the rubric: <https://gradescope.com/help#help-center-item-assignments-submissions-show>
- You will receive an email once an assignment has been graded and returned, and within one week of receiving this email, you may use Gradescope to submit a regrade request by following the procedures here: <https://gradescope.com/help#help-center-item-student-regrades>