**Econ480 Fall 2020 Syllabus**

**Course Overview**

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.

Prerequisites for this course are: ECON101, ECON410, and ECON400 with a grade of C or better.

**Course Goals**

By the end of this course, you will be able 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
* Participate actively and substantively in class discussions
* Read and analyze economics journal articles
* Effectively present your ideas to a group

**Your Instructor**

**Instructor**: [Kalina Staub](mailto:Kalina.staub@unc.edu)

**Department**: Department of Economics​

**Office Hours:** I am always available during class time on Zoom or, 15-minute office hour appointments are bookable at alternative times at: <http://calendly.com/staub>

**Required Materials**

**Textbooks**

The following texts are required:

* George Borjas. 2019. *Labor Economics, 8th Edition.* McGraw-Hill Publishing.

You are responsible for purchasing the correct edition and materials for this course. I will make a pdf of the text available for you to use on Sakai until you are able to obtain your own copy. Other readings specific to each lesson are listed on the Lesson pages. Any readings not found in the required textbooks are available through links to free online versions.

**Materials and Technology**

* Calculator
* **Zoom**. You will need Zoom to join our lectures and to access my office hours. Zoom is freely available to you and you can sign up here (unc.zoom.us). You can access the live Zoom sessions with your phone, computer, or tablet. If you have any issues with Zoom (or Sakai), you should contact [ITS](http://its.unc.edu/).
* **Gradescope**. You will submit most of your graded work to Gradescope. You can register for gradescope and enroll in the course by clicking the link on the left-hand side of the Sakai site.. 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 ordered numerically, and clearly indicate where each problem appears. See [here](https://www.gradescope.com/help#help-center-item-student-submitting) for more information on how to [submit homework to Gradescope](https://www.gradescope.com/help#help-center-item-student-submitting) and other frequently asked questions.

**Library Services and Course Reserves**

Students enrolled in Carolina Courses Online have access to the UNC Library System. Visit [Distance Education Library Services](http://library.unc.edu/services/de/) to access a wide array of online services and resources including Course Reserves, online databases, online journals, online books, and live help with research and library access. **Most online resources require you to log in with your Onyen and password.** If you have any trouble finding the resource that you need or logging in to a resource, you can contact the library through the contact information at Distance Education Library Services. You can chat live about your problem or send an email to request assistance.

Additionally, The [UNC Libraries](https://library.unc.edu/) offer support for research. Nancy Lovas, the economics librarian, is your point of contact. You can email or meet with her to talk about developing a research question, identifying databases, how to search for information, literature reviews, finding datasets, and more. Make an appointment with Nancy at <https://calendar.lib.unc.edu/appointments/business> or contact her via email at [nancy64@email.unc.edu](mailto:nancy64@email.unc.edu)

**Recommended Twitter Feeds**

**@BetseyStevenson  
@ShellyJLundberg  
@Kearney\_Melissa  
@JustinWolfers  
@JenniferDoleac  
@HShierholz  
@nomaDJ1s  
@MarieTMora**

**Course Expectations and Format**

This course is 100% online with both synchronous and asynchronous work. While we will not meet on Zoom everyday, there are readings and videos for you to read and watch by Tuesday each week with accompanying reading assessments on Sakai. Problem sets are due every Friday, and we will meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays for you all to synthesize course material and work on the problem sets together. Please take the time to read this syllabus carefully and use the Sakai Forums link to ask general questions or email me directly for more personal questions.

**Expected Work Load**

* This is a 3 hour course, so I expect that you are spending an average of about 9 hours per week on this course or about 6 hours per week outside of the time spent in class.

**Course Components**

Your performance in this course will be evaluated based on the following assignments. Please read the "Grading" section on this syllabus for information on how each assignment will impact your course grade. All assignments are to be completed on your own unless specifically stated.

**Reading Assessments**

I will provide sets of questions to check your comprehension of the readings each week. They are due on Sakai each Tuesday by 3pm. Be sure to check Sakai frequently to stay on top of the course readings and reading guides. These assignments are designed to make sure you are keeping up with the readings and focusing on the important aspects of the reading. Reading assessments are to be completed individually, but they are open note and open book. To receive a passing grade on a reading assessment, you must receive an 80%.  You will have two attempts for each reading guide, and the questions may change between attempts.

**Problem Sets**

Each Friday you will have problem sets due at 11:55 pm. These problem sets are designed to be completed in small groups, and during class time on Tuesdays and Thursdays we will meet for you to discuss and ask questions about these problems in small groups. The problem sets are designed to prepare you for the short answer questions on the exams and will be submitted on Gradescope.  Problem Sets will be graded based on completion and effort.  You must attempt all problems to receive a passing score.

**Weekly Quizzes**

Each Friday you will also have a quiz due on Sakai.  These quizzes are designed to prepare you for the multiple choice portion of the exams and will be more challenging than the questions on the reading assessment.  You must score at least a 75% on the weekly quizzes in order to pass.  You will have two attempts for each quiz, and the questions may change between attempts.  You may use your notes and textbook to complete these quizzes and you may discuss the questions with your classmates or peer tutors, but keep in mind that getting the answers from other people will defeat the purpose of using these assignments as a learning tool to prepare you for the exams.

**Discussion Forums**

For questions that arise outside of our meeting times, I have set up a Discussion Forum on Sakai. Feel free to post any course-related questions there. You can bump your course grade up by half a letter grade (e.g. a B to a B+) by contributing regularly to the discussion board. Regular contribution is defined as asking at least one thoughtful question that arose while reading/watching the course material by Friday each week AND making at least 2 posts by Sunday each week that fall into one of the following categories for at least 10 of the 15 weeks of class:

1. A thoughtful response of at least 100 words to a question posed by myself or one of your classmates
2. An interesting observation or application of course material to your life or to a current event. This should also be at least 100 words.

**Valuing Your UNC Degree Project**

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. Guidelines and a detailed rubric will be provided on Sakai after the first midterm. The purpose of this assignment is to help you apply the theory for class and give you practice with Excel

**Presentations**

Over the course of the semester, you will put together 1-3 presentations on interesting Labor Economics Topics and record them on Zoom. All presentations will be completed in groups of 4-5 students; some groups will remain consistent and some groups will change between the presentations as not all students will choose to complete all presentations. The purpose of these presentations is for you to practice applying the theory from class to real-world situations, for you to learn how to read peer-reviewed economics papers, and to practice your research and virtual presentation skills. The presentation topics are as follows:

1. You will present the background and labor market effects of one of the following: The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), The Minimum Wage in the US, or a Guaranteed Minimum Income.
2. You will pick an industry and explore the short-term and potential long-term effects of COVID-19 on both labor supply and labor demand in that industry.
3. You will present on a Labor Economics topic that is interesting to you.  Some ideas include:
   * The role of labor unions in the US and abroad and the effect of labor unions on labor market outcomes
   * The effects of enacted or proposed labor market policies in response to COVID-19 either in the US
   * Compare and contrast labor market policy responses to the pandemic in the US and abroad
   * Progressive income taxes versus flat taxes
   * How will the pandemic affect racial or gender inequality
   * Compare and contrast the labor market effects of the Great Depression, the Great Recession, and the Covid-19 pandemic
   * Summarize the empirical evidence on a type of discrimination other than race or gender discrimination (e.g. age, sexual orientation, beauty, religion, national origin, etc.)
   * Any other relevant topic you find interesting

**Midterm Exam (100 points)**

The midterm exam will take place during class time on 9/24 and be proctored on Zoom, it will be open book and open note and cover all material covered in the course through 9/20. There are no make-up midterms (see Late Work Policy below).

**Final Exam (160 points)**

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. The final exam will be open book and open note and take place on Sakai.

**Grading**

Except for the midterm and final exams, assignments in this course will not be graded in the typical “point” fashion. Instead, each assignment will be graded pass/fail. I will specify my expectations for a “passing grade” on each assignment either on the syllabus or on rubrics posted on Sakai. The number of assignments that you pass and your performance on the exams will determine your course grade.

| **To earn a D, students must be able to remember, understand, and apply a minimum number of concepts. This will be demonstrated by:** |
| --- |
| * Passing 8 of 14 reading assessments by the deadlines. * Completing 6 of 10 Problem Sets by the assigned deadline. * Passing 7 of 11 Quizzes * Completing 1 of 3 group presentations * Attend the Library Information Session in its entirety and the 2 classes during the week your presentation is due. * Earning at least 120 points across the midterm and final exams |
| **To earn a C, students must be able to remember, understand, and apply more of the concepts. This will be demonstrated by:** |
| * Passing 9 of 14 reading assessments by the deadlines. * Completing 7 of 10 Problem Sets by the assigned deadline. * Passing 8 of 11 Quizzes * Passing 2 of 3 group presentations. * Attend the Library Information Session in its entirety and the 4 classes during the weeks your presentations are due. * Earning at least 160 points across the midterm and final exams |
| **To earn a B, students must be able to remember, understand, apply, analyze, and evaluate the concepts. This will be demonstrated by:** |
| * Passing 10 of 14 reading assessments by the deadlines. * Completing 8 of 10 Problem Sets by the assigned deadline. * Passing 9 of 11 Quizzes * Passing 3 of 3 Presentations * Attend the Library Information Session in its entirety and the 6 classes during the weeks your presentations are due. * Earning at least 190 points across the midterm and final exams |
| **To earn an A, students must be able to remember, understand, apply, analyze, and evaluate more of the concepts. This will be demonstrated by:** |
| * Passing 11 of 14 reading assessments by the deadlines. * Completing 9 of 10 Problem Sets by the assigned deadline. * Passing 10 of 11 Quizzes * Passing 3 of 3 Presentations * Attend the Library Information Session in its entirety and the 6 classes during the weeks your presentations are due. * Passing the Valuing Your UNC Degree project * Earning at least 220 points across the midterm and final exams |

**Students must meet all requirements for each category to earn their grade.**

**Tokens**

You will each have three tokens each of which can be used to resubmit a project or presentation that was submitted but not passed within 48 hours of that assignment being returned or which can be used to obtain an extra attempt on a quiz or reading assessment if requested before the assignment deadline.  Tokens cannot be used on problem sets or exams.  If your group does not pass a presentation all group members will need to use a token to resubmit it.  Any unused tokens may be converted to 5 points on the final exam.

**Course Policies**

**Regrade Policy**

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.

**Late Work/Missed Work Policy**

All due dates of assignments are firm. Flexibility has been built into the course by not requiring you to complete all assignments and giving you opportunities to incorporate feedback and resubmit assignments using tokens.

If you are unable to complete the midterm exam due to severe illness, religious reasons, death in the family, or University-sponsored events, you are required to contact the professor BEFORE the exam begins (via email is fine) AND provide documentation of the absence or to the Office of the Dean of Students ASAP to receive a University Excused Absence. If you are unsure of anything, please contact the instructor before the exam.

If all of the requirements described above have been met, you will be excused from the midterm and the weight will be shifted to the final exam.  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.  Please see the University policy regarding final examinations (<http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/procedures1.html#final_exams>).

**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>

**Email Policy**

Please feel free to contact me by email if you have any questions about course policies or any personal concerns. I will try to respond to emails promptly. If you haven’t heard from me in 48 hours, please ask yourself if your question has already been answered in the syllabus or on Sakai.  If not, 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 ECON486.  For example the subject of your email might read, “[ECON486] question about office hours.”

**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](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 as 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 Schedule

Below is a tentative (i.e. subject to change) weekly schedule with suggested readings from the textbook.

Key: RA = Reading Assessment; Q = Quiz; PS = Problem Sets; FP=Forum Posts

| **Week** | **Dates** | **Topics** | **Readings from Borjas 8th ed.** | **Assignments Due** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | 8/10 - 8/16 | * Lesson 1: Introduction and Regression Review   Attendance required during class time this week or you will be dropped from the course | * Syllabus & Schedule * Ch. 1 + Appendix | * RA1 (8/11) * Q1 (8/14) * PS1 (8/14) * FP1 (8/16) |
| **2** | 8/17 - 8/23 | * Lesson 2.1: Labor Force, Unemployment, and Labor Supply Part One | * Ch. 2-1 to 2-6 * Ch. 12-1 and 12-2 | * RA2 (8/18) * Q2 (8/21) * PS2 (8/21) * FP2 (8/23) |
| **3** | 8/24 - 8/30 | * Lesson 2.2: Labor Supply Part 2 * Library Information Session 8/25 (attendance required) | * Ch. 2-7 to 2-14 | * RA3 (8/25) * Q3 (8/28) * PS3 (8/28) * FP3 (8/30) |
| **4** | 8/31 - 9/6 | * Lesson 3: Labor Demand | * Ch. 3 | * RA4 (9/1) * Q4 (9/4) * PS4 (9/4) * FP4 (9/6) |
| **5** | 9/7 - 9/13 | * Lesson 4: Labor Markets | * Ch. 4 | * RA5 (9/8) * Q5 (9/11) * PS5 (9/11) * FP5 (9/13) |
| **6** | 9/14 - 9/20 | * Presentation 1: EITC, Minimum Wage, and Guaranteed Minimum Income   (attendance required this week if completing this presentation) | *See Sakai* | * RA6 (9/15) * Presentation 1 (9/17) * FP6 (9/20) |
| **7** | 9/21 - 9/27 | * Midterm (9/25 during class time, must be logged in to Zoom) |  |  |
| **8** | 9/28 - 10/4 | * Lesson 5: Education | * Ch. 6 | * RA7 (9/29) * Q6 (10/2) * PS6 (10/2) * FP7 (10/4) |
| **9** | 10/5 - 10/11 | * Lesson 6: The Wage Distribution | * Ch. 7 | * RA8 (10/6) * Q7 (10/9) * PS7 (10/9) * FP8 (10/11) |
| **10** | 10/12 - 10/18 | * Presentation 2: The Impacts of COVID-19 on Labor Markets   (attendance required this week if completing this presentation) | *See Sakai* | * RA9 (10/13) * Presentation 2 (10/15) * FP9 (10/18) |
| **11** | 10/19 - 10/25 | * Lesson 7: Compensating Differentials | * Ch. 5 | * RA10 (10/20) * Q8 (10/23) * PS8 (10/23) * FP10 (10/25) |
| **12** | 10/26 - 11/1 | * Lesson 8: Labor Mobility | * Ch. 8 | * RA11 (10/27) * Valuing Your UNC Degree Project (10/29) * Q9 (10/30) * PS9 (10/30) * FP11 (11/1) |
| **13** | 11/2 - 11/8 | * Lesson 9: Labor Market Discrimination | * Ch. 9 | * RA12 (11/3) * Q10 (11/6) * PS10 (11/6) * FP12 (11/8) |
| **14** | 11/9 - 11/15 | * Presentation 3   (attendance required this week if completing this presentation) | * Ch. 8 * Ch. 9 | * RA13 (11/10) * Presentation 3 (11/12) * FP13 (11/15) |
| **15** | 11/16 - 11/17 | * Lesson 10: Incentive Pay | * Ch. 11 | * RA14 (11/17) * Q12 (11/17) * PS12 (11/17) |
| **Exam** | 11/18 - 11/24 | Attendance required during exam slot |  | Exam |