

**ECON480: Labor Economics**  
**University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill**  
**Department of Economics**  
**Fall 2015**

Instructor: Kalina Staub  
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Office: Gardner 207  
Office Hours: MW: 3:30pm-4:30pm  
5-minute introductory appointments (week prior to and first week of classes) and 15-minute appointments (all semester) bookable at alternative times at: <http://calendly.com/staub>  
Class: MWF 10:10-11:00am (Section 1)  
MWF 11:15-12:05pm (Section 2)  
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: ECON101 and ECON410 (or equivalent courses)

### **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. All assignments are to be completed on your own unless specifically stated.

- *Participation and Assignments (10%)*  
I will not take attendance, but I do not accept late assignments and you are responsible for all material covered in class. If you choose to show up to class, I expect you to be on time, have completed the assigned readings, and actively engage and participate in the classroom activities. 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.
- *Quizzes and Problem Sets (20%)*  
There will be six problem-sets assigned during the course of the semester, which you are encouraged to work on in groups. On the problem set due date, you WILL NOT have to hand in your problem set, but you WILL take a one-question, closed note, closed book quiz directly from the problem set questions, so make sure you understand each question enough to answer them on your own even if you work in groups. The best 5 of your 6 scores will count towards your final grade in the course (i.e. you can complete all problem sets and drop the lowest score or you can choose not to complete one of the problem sets and drop the zero). The problem sets will be posted on Sakai no later than one week before the due date.

- *Policy Memo and Presentation (15%)*  
You will write one 4-6 page memo to the US Congress examining a labor market policy (see list posted on Sakai) from an economic perspective. You should use at least two scholarly journal articles, and no fewer than 4 total sources. Your memo should explain the current state of the policy and make recommendations (supported by economic theory) to improve the policy. You will turn in an outline with sources and a paper summary of one of your sources followed by a rough draft, which will be reviewed by one of your peers, and a final draft. You will briefly present your findings on the last two days of class. More detailed guidelines and a rubric will be posted on Sakai and discussed in class. I am available to discuss potential topics anytime.
- *Midterm Exam (25%)*  
The Midterm Exam will take place on October 5, 2015 and will cover all material covered in class through October 2, 2015.
- *Final Exam (30%)*  
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).

### Grading

This table shows the minimum grade you can achieve for each raw score. 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
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	60-66
F	59 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.

### 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.

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 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. 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 to schedule a make-up exam. 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)).

### **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."

### **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.

Week	Dates	Topics	Readings	Assignments
1	8/19 8/21	Introduction Introduction/Data	Syllabus B 1	Syllabus Quiz
2	8/24 8/26 8/28	Using and Interpreting Data Labor Force and Unemployment Labor Supply: Overview	B 1 Appendix B 2.1, 12.1-12.2 B 2.2-2.3	
3	8/31 9/2 9/4	Labor Supply: Number of Hours Labor Supply: To Work or Not Labor Supply Elasticities	B 2.4-2.5 B 2.6-2.7 B 2.8	
4	9/7 9/9 9/11	Labor Day – No Class The Family and Household Production Cont.	B 2.9-2.13	PS1/Quiz 1
5	9/14 9/16 9/18	Labor Demand: SR Labor Demand: LR Labor Demand Elasticities	B 3.1-3.2 B 3.3-2.4 B 3.5-3.8	
6	9/21 9/23 9/25	Labor Market Equilibrium Cont. Noncompetitive Labor Markets	B 4.1-4.7 B 4.8	
7	9/28 9/30 10/2	Compensating Wage Differentials Cont. Cont.	B 5.1 B 5.2-5.3 B. 5.4-5.6	PS2/Quiz2
8	10/5 10/7 10/9	Midterm Exam Human Capital: Education Cont. Visit from UNC Libraries	B 6.1-6.4 B 6.5-6.9	Midterm Exam
9	10/12 10/14 10/16	University Day – No Classes Human Capital: Training Fall Break – No Classes	6.10-6.13	Policy topics due on Sakai by 11:59pm
10	10/19	Income Inequality: Facts and Measurement	B 7.1-7.3	PS3/ Quiz 3

	10/21 10/23	Income Inequality: Causes and Applications Policy Memo Work Day	B 7.4-7.6	Policy memo outline, potential sources, and article summary due on Sakai by 11:59pm
11	10/26 10/28 10/30	Worker Mobility: Migration Worker Mobility: Immigration Worker Mobility: Turnover	B 8.1-8.3 B 8.4-8.9 B 8.10-8.13	
12	11/2 11/4 11/6	Discrimination: Types Discrimination: Measurement and Evidence Cont.	B 9.1-9.6 B 9.7-9.11	PS4/Quiz 4
13	11/9 11/11 11/13	Compensation Cont. Cont.	B 11.1-11.2 B 11.3-11.5 B 11.6	Policy memo rough draft due online and in class
14	11/16  11/18 11/20	Unemployment Reasons  Unemployment Policy Unions: Facts	B 12.4, 12.6- 12.9 B 12.5 B 10.1-10.4	PS5/Quiz 5  Policy memo peer- review due in class
15	11/23 11/25 11/27	Unions: Effects Thanksgiving – No Classes Thanksgiving – No Classes	B 10.5-10.9	PS6/Quiz 6
16	11/30  12/2	Policy Memo presentations  Policy Memo presentations		Policy Memos final draft due online and in class
Exam	12/4 12/11	Exam from 12:00pm – 3:00pm (Section 2) Exam from 8:00am – 11:00am (Section 1)		