

Economics 380

The Economics of Labor Relations

Ivan Suvorov

Fall 2023

Prerequisites: ECON 101 and one of ECON 310 or ECON 410

Credit Hours: 3 credits

Instructional Format: In Person

MWF 10:10-11:00 am, Gardner - Rm 0308

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Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the field of labor economics. The goal of the course is to gain insight into labor market behavior by applying concepts from microeconomic theory. Throughout the course, we will examine the economic theory behind workers' labor supply, firms' labor demand, and equilibrium in the labor market. The course also discusses different government policies in labor markets, discrimination problems, wealth inequality, the effects of immigration on the labor market, and human capital attainment. Though the focus of the course is on the U.S. labor market and applicable policies, the course discusses some labor market issues in developing nations for certain topics. During the course, students develop intellectual humility and the ability to question assumptions and norms that structure their worldviews. Students learn how to evaluate information, policies, and economic-related claims by examining the relationship between the evidence, arguments, and conclusions presented and by assessing consistency with existing knowledge from valid and reliable scientific sources.

Learning Objectives

At the end of a class, students 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.
- Read and analyze economics journal articles.

Required Materials

- **Textbook:** The recommended textbook is George Borjas, Labor Economics, 8th Edition. You do not have to purchase the most recent version of this textbook.
- **Poll Everywhere:** We will use Poll Everywhere for online polling in class. For more information, visit <https://poll.unc.edu/>.
- **Sakai** Slides and any additional material for my lectures will be posted on Sakai. Assignments will also be posted on Sakai. Please check Sakai regularly for updates.
- **Gradescope** Assignments will be submitted online using Gradescope. I will register you for Gradescope using your UNC email address.
 - You can only submit one pdf file. Make sure that pages are properly oriented and clearly indicate where each problem appears.
 - To submit an assignment, please follow instructions [here](#).
 - To view submissions and interpret the rubric, please follow instructions [here](#).
 - You will receive an email once an assignment has been graded.

It is your responsibility to make sure your submitted assignments are clear and easy to read

Class Expectations

- **Regular class attendance is expected and strongly encouraged!** During class you are expected to actively engage in class discussions and in-class polls.
- **As this is a 3-credit class, you should plan to spend between 9 to 10 hours per week on this class. This includes time spent before, during, and after class.** It is highly unlikely that studying “a lot” the week before the exam will make up for not studying enough in the weeks preceding the exam. Most ECON380 students realize that this just does not work in economics or with the way in which I teach and test. Consider adopting the study tips presented below on page 8.
- **Understanding both the material from class and solutions to the homework problems is only the first step in mastering the course material!** A major goal of this course is to teach you to think in a manner beyond fact recall, a manner that reflects a higher-order level of thinking. I want you to strive for a higher-order level of learning. I want you to develop strong critical thinking and writing skills. Please, follow the study tips on page 8.

Grading Policy

You can earn up to 100 points throughout the semester from the 4-course components explained below. I reserve the right to curve the scale dependent on overall class scores at the end of the semester. Any curve will only ever make it easier to obtain a certain letter grade. Your course grade will be calculated as the sum of your earned points, and letter grades will be assigned based on the following :

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+ 65–69

D 60–64

F < 60

- Class Participation: max 5 points

There will be 39 classes during which we will learn by solving and discussing poll questions. Each class will be graded on a pass/fail basis. To pass, you must take note of your attendance [here](#) before the start of the next class, attend the class, and answer the polls during the class.

- Homework assignments: max 20 points

There will be 8 homework assignments. Homework assignments are due at midnight (11:59 pm) on the assigned date. Points will be calculated based on your average score for all the homework assignments. You should write clearly, as assignments that are hard to read will not be graded and your grade will be 0. You may work with other students on these problem sets but sharing answers via group chat, using previous homework, and looking up answers online are all violations of the [UNC Honor Code](#). Additionally, you are expected to attempt each problem at least once before seeking help. Due dates are firm and no late homework will be accepted without prior approval.

- Essays: max 15 points

There will be two essays assigned during the semester. Essays are due at midnight (11:59 pm) on the assigned date. You must submit an electronic copy of the essay on Gradescope. You will choose a topic from the available list and write an essay. Your writing should be clear, concise, and well-organized, and your arguments should be based on the economic concepts and theories we discuss in this course and supported by empirical facts. Essay's format:

- 3-4 pages
- Double spaced
- 12 point font
- 1 inch margins
- Name and PID in the header
- References on a separate page at the end (does not count towards length requirement), citing at least 3 sources, 2 or more of which should be from peer-reviewed economics journals in Chicago Author-Date style.

- **Midterms: max 30 points**
There will be 3 closed book midterms, each worth 15 points. Your midterm score will be the sum of your two highest midterms. That is, I will automatically drop your lowest midterm. Each exam will cover material presented in class, readings scheduled outside of class, and homework assignments. The exam format will be provided a few days prior to a given exam. You should bring a non-graphing calculator with you to each exam. Unauthorized usage of previous exams is a violation of the [UNC Honor Code](#).
- **Final Exam: max 30**
The final exam is scheduled for 8 am on Thursday, 12/14/2023. The cumulative closed book final exam will be worth 30 points. Per UNC rules, you can only take the final exam at an alternative time only if you have an official exam excuse. In this case, you must notify me of an official excuse by the last day of the lecture, 11/30/2022. If you miss the final exam and do not have an excuse from the Dean, you will receive AB or FA depending on your overall performance. Unauthorized usage of previous exams is a violation of the [UNC Honor Code](#).

Course Policies

Attendance and Participation

Most classes will incorporate individual or small group work. These activities will require students to work together and individually to solve problems or answer questions. Participation in-class activities is highly encouraged. Regular attendance and participation are strongly recommended. You are responsible for any notes or class announcements that you may have missed. You should attempt to get these notes/announcements from one of your peers before seeing me. It is expected that you will respect your peers and the instructor with appropriate behavior while in class and that you will arrive at class on time. You should refrain from browsing the web, texting, etc. during class time. Cell phones should be silenced or turned off and stored out of sight during class. 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](#)).
- 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. If you know that you cannot refrain from multitasking, please sit in the back of the classroom out of respect for your peers.

Eating and drinking are allowed in class but please refrain from it affecting the course. Try not to eat your lunch in class as the classes are typically active.

E-mail Policy

Please feel free to contact me by e-mail if you have any questions about course policies or any personal concerns. My e-mail is listed on the first page of this syllabus. I will try to respond to emails promptly, but if you have not heard from me in 48 hours, please resend the e-mail, as

I may have not received your original message. Please use your UNC e-mail, as e-mails from other clients will most likely be sent to my spam folder. Please indicate in the subject of your e-mail that you are in ECON 380. For example, the subject of your e-mail might read, "ECON 380 question about office hours".

Late and/or Makeup Policy

All due dates are firm, and no extensions or makeups will be given. I completely understand and empathize with the fact that sometimes health and/or personal/family emergencies take priority. Making exceptions on a case-by-case basis leads to inequities in how students are assessed, and this is something I try to avoid. I know of no better way to treat students fairly and equally than by applying the same standards and policies to all. With that being said, I do make exceptions in the case of a severe and ongoing issue (i.e. where you must miss a week or more of classes). Please contact the Office of the Dean of Students and then communicate with me as soon as possible so that we can work out a plan for you together.

Makeup Exam Policy

If you miss a midterm and either have a [University Approved Absence](#) or documentation of a significant health and/or personal/family emergency, then you can choose to have that exam's weight transferred to the final exam (then final exam would then be worth 50 points). Please email me directly (ivan_suvorov@unc.edu) should you wish to pursue this reweighting option. A make-up final exam will be offered only if you miss a final exam and either have a [University Approved Absence](#) or the documentation of a significant health and/or personal/family emergency.

Regrade Requests

All regrade requests are expected to be made through Gradescope within 1 week of the date the assignment's grade is posted. Regrade requests for the final exam are expected to be made within 24 hours of the grade being posted.

Extra Credit

I do not offer extra credit. This is because if everyone knows about it, it's not really extra credit. It's just another assignment. If some people don't know about it (for instance, if a specific student asks for extra credit at the end of the semester), then I'm treating my students differently, which I make every attempt to avoid.

Policies on Incomplete Grades

If an extended deadline is not authorized by the instructor or department, an unfinished incomplete grade will automatically change to an F after either (a) the end of the next regular semester in which the student is enrolled (not including summer sessions), or (b) the end of 12 months if the student is not enrolled, whichever is shorter. Incompletes that change to F will count as an attempted course on transcripts. The burden of fulfilling an incomplete grade is the responsibility of the student.

Academic Integrity and Honesty

As a student of the University of North Carolina, you are expected to behave in accordance with the [UNC Honor Code](#). Plagiarism, forgery, unauthorized collaboration, and the use of unauthorized materials are only some of the behaviors that will not be tolerated 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.

Diversity Statement

I value the perspectives of individuals from all backgrounds reflecting the diversity of our students. I broadly define diversity to include race, gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, religion, social class, age, sexual orientation, political background, and physical and learning ability. It is important to me that all members of the class feel supported, respected, and included. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve. I appreciate the suggestions.

Title IX Resources

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking are encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Please contact the Director of Title IX Compliance (Adrienne Allison – Adrienne.allison@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

Accommodations for Disabilities

The University of North Carolina at 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 barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities. Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the [ARS Website](#) for contact information. Students registered through ARS should send me an email with their accommodations through the ARS portal. I will contact those who receive extended time on exams before the first exam to coordinate. For all other accommodations of which I should be aware, please email me at ivan_suvorov@unc.edu to discuss!

Resources

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.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center is located in the SASB 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](#).

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their [website](#) or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.

UNC Campus Health 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) right away.

Study Tips

- Come to class prepared! (If not prepared, better come than not come) Skim the relevant reading assignment before class so you will be familiar with the general idea of what is coming. After class, go back and read the chapter for a deeper understanding.
- When looking over your notes or the reading assignment, keep a pencil and scratch paper on hand, and try to work out the details of any argument that is not completely clear to you. Even if the argument is clear, it can be helpful to write it down again in a similar way, or a different way, in order to test and strengthen your understanding. Try to formulate questions. Take notes from your textbook within your class notes.
- Strive to understand the homework inside and out.
- Make a serious effort to complete each problem independently before conferring with others.
- Discuss concepts, seek feedback, and work problems with your classmates. Confer with others and compare your solutions, understand differences, and come to a consensus.
- Actively compare your solutions with the answer key and identify and understand any differences and fill in any missing holes.
- Actively compare homework assignments and practice question(s), seek to rectify any contradictions between problems, and anticipate variations in problems.
- Try to see the big picture!
- Don't just know what to do when solving a problem; understand why.
- Rework problems until you can teach them to someone else, and then do just that (even if "someone else" is a plant or invisible friend).
- Practice drawing graphs yourself until you can draw them without looking at your notes or book. Be able to explain what you are drawing.
- I promise you that the activities for this course were designed to meet the course's learning objectives. If you ever find that you are doing an activity in this class and you are not sure of its purpose, then please let me know.
- Learning happens gradually!
- Get adequate sleep. Your brain works best when well rested.
- Ask for help when you need it! I am passionate about helping you master the material in ECON380. Please visit my office hours or send me an e-mail. You can also seek help at the [Learning Center](#), [Writing Center](#) or [EconAid Center](#) (free peer tutoring).

Course Schedule

Date	Class	Readings	Assignment
8/21	1. Introduction to Labor Economics; Math Review	Syllabus; 1.1–1.3	
8/23	2. The U.S. Labor Force; Unemployment	2.1–2.2, 12.1–12.2	
8/25	3. Neoclassical Model of Labor Supply: Preferences	2.3	
8/28	4. Neoclassical Model of Labor Supply: Constraints	2.4	HW 1 Due
8/30	5. Labor Supply: The Hours Decision	2.5	
9/1	6. Labor Supply: The Participation Decision and Elasticity	2.6–2.8	
9/4	Labor Day — No Class		
9/6	7. Anti-Poverty Policy	2.10–2.11	
9/8	8. Labor Demand in the Short Run I	3.1–3.2	
9/11	9. Labor Demand in the Short Run II	3.1–3.2	HW 2 Part 1 Due
9/13	10. Labor Demand in the Long Run	3.3–3.4	HW 2 Part 2 Due
9/15	11. Minimum Wage	3.10	
9/18	Review Session		
9/20	Midterm 1		
9/22	12. Labor Market Equilibrium: Competitive Markets	4.1–4.3	
9/25	Well-being Day — No Class		
9/27	13. Immigration Impacts	4.5	
9/29	14. Noncompetitive Labor Markets	4.8	
10/2	15. Labor Markets and Development		HW 3 Due
10/4	16. Human Capital: Introduction	6.1	
10/6	17. Human Capital: The Schooling Model	6.2–6.3	
10/9	18. Human Capital: Returns to Schooling	6.4–6.5	
10/11	19. Human Capital: Signaling Model	6.9	
10/13	20. Human Capital and Development		
10/16	Review Session I		HW 4 Due
10/18	Review Session II		
10/20	Fall Break — No Class		
10/23	Midterm 2		
10/25	21. Income Inequality: Introduction	7.1–7.3	
10/27	22. Why is Inequality Rising?	7.4–7.5	
10/30	23. Inter-generational Inequality	7.6	Essay 1 Due
11/1	24. Labor Market Discrimination	9.1–9.3	HW 5 Due
11/3	25. Taste-Based Discrimination	9.4–9.5	
11/6	26. Statistical Discrimination	9.6	
11/8	27. Measuring Discrimination	9.8	
11/10	28. Discrimination Evidence	9.7, 9.9–9.11	
11/13	Review Session		HW 6 Due
11/15	Midterm 3		
11/17	29. Health and Health Care		
11/20	31. Labor Mobility	8.1–8.3	
11/22	Thanksgiving — No Class		
11/24	Thanksgiving — No Class		
11/27	32. Assimilation	8.4–8.5	Essay 2 Due
11/29	33. Decision to Migrate	8.6	
12/1	34. Economic Benefits from Immigration	8.7, 8.8	HW 7 Due
12/4	Review Session I		
12/6	Review Session II		HW 8 Due
12/14	Final Exam, 8AM–11AM		

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus. These changes will be announced ASAP.