COURSE SYLLABUS

Labor Economics

ECON 4616

Fall Semester 2000

Instructor: Jennifer Key
Phone Number: (303) 420-9777
e-mail: jennkey@earthlink.net
Office: ECON 103
Office Hours: Wed: 1:00 - 2:00, Fri: 11:00 - 12:00

Class Web Site:
www.home.earthlink.net/~jennkey/LaborClass


Topics:
1. Labor Supply
2. Labor Demand
3. Labor Market Equilibrium
4. Compensating Differentials
5. Human Capital
6. Labor Market Discrimination

Other topics will be examined as time permits.

INTRODUCTION

Each of us face a number of decisions concerning the supply of our labor. For example, we must decide whether to go to school and/or work in the labor market. If we choose to work in the labor market we must decide how many hours to work, where to work, etc. When making these decisions a number of factors influence our decisions including what type of work we would like to do, where we would like to live, our family responsibilities, market wages, future career goals, and the availability of government educational assistant, such as student loans.

Employers also face a number of decisions concerning the demand for labor. They must decide how many employees to hire, how much to pay each worker, what kind of benefits to offer workers, what type of skills they need from their employees, etc. The business’ short and long-term goals, market wages, obtainable information about potential workers, and government restrictions and laws, such as minimum
wage laws, are some of the factors that impact the labor demand decisions of employers.

This course examines the labor supply decisions of workers and the labor demand decisions of employers from the perspective of economics. I have designed this course with the idea that you have many experiences in your own life and in the lives of people you know that serve as a basis for exploring labor economics. Throughout this course we will be drawing from the classes' combined labor market experiences to understand the foundations of labor economics.

In the first part of this course we will explore the basic ideas of labor supply, labor demand and their interaction. In the second part of this course we will explore some specific topics in labor economics, which I believe, have particular relevance for students at the University of Colorado at Boulder. These include; compensating wage differentials, which addresses some important non-monetary aspects of working; human capital theory, which includes the decision to obtain a college degree; and labor market discrimination.

REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

In Class Discussions and Assignments

Class discussions will play a central role in our understanding of labor markets and labor economics. You are asked to check the class web site prior to each class to obtain the next discussion topic, class handouts, and relevant readings. I will also post several assignments, which we will discuss in class. Twenty percent of your final grade will be based on your participation in our class discussions and assignments. Participation does not always require one to speak out; thoughtfulness to the subject and attentiveness to the discussion at hand are important as well.

Examinations

There will be two examinations, one midterm (worth 25 percent of your final grade), and a final exam (worth 30 percent of your final grade). Prior to each exam I will post 8 to 10 essay questions on the class web site. Three or four of these questions will appear on the exam. The dates of the midterm and final are as follows:

Midterm: October 20 (essay questions available on October 13)

Final Exam: December 15, 7:30 PM to 10:30 PM (essay questions available by December 11)

Term Paper

For this paper you are asked to discuss your own labor market experiences in the context of labor economic theory. I will be providing further information in class and on the class web site. The term paper is worth 25 percent of your final grade and will be due on the final day of class.
There will be NO make-up examinations and NO late papers will be accepted.