

ECON 4616 - Labor Economics

Fall 2026

MWF 10:10-11:00AM ECON 119

Instructor: Professor Richard Mansfield

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Office Hours: M 1:00PM - 2:30PM, W 2:00PM - 3:30PM

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1 Course Overview

The first objective of this course is to expose students to basic economic theory governing the determination of the level of wages and employment in the labor market. Thus, the course will begin with the classic models of labor supply and labor demand, and will then address more recent developments regarding job search frictions, welfare systems, human capital development, performance incentives, non-wage benefits, and automation/AI.

The second objective of this course is to develop students' ability to test the theories presented in class using labor market data. Thus, considerable attention will be focused on how to formulate an economic model, isolate its testable predictions, and select and transform data so that such predictions can be evaluated.

2 Prerequisites

The prerequisite for this course is Economics 3070 (Intermediate Microeconomic Theory)

3 Assignments and Grading

Weekly problem sets will be posted on Canvas that are designed to reinforce and expand upon the topics covered in class. These problem sets will not be graded, and solutions will be posted at the same time as the problem sets themselves. However, in-class quizzes based on these problem sets will occur each week (usually Monday) starting the second week of class. Scores on these in-class quizzes will comprise 10% of each student's grade. Quizzes may not be made up, but each student's lowest score over the course of the semester will be dropped.

There will be three in-class midterm examinations (tentative dates: Wednesday, September 16th, Monday, October 12th, and Monday, November 9th). Each midterm will comprise 16.66% (1/6) of each student's grade, so that the midterms collectively will account for 50% of the grade. Makeup midterm exams are offered for those with sickness or major conflict, but will be harder than the original exam.

The final exam will comprise 25% of the student's grade. The final exam will be comprehensive, but will focus primarily on untested content from the final quarter of the semester. The final exam will last 2.5 hours, and will take place on December 11th from 10:30-1:00PM. Programmable calculator use is prohibited on quizzes and exams. The final 15% of each student's grade will be based on lecture attendance (5%), scores on in-class iClicker questions (5%), and oral class participation (5%).

Each student's weighted average score will be calculated, and a final letter grade will be computed based on a curve that ensures that the distribution of grades will be similar to that observed in 4000-level courses in economics.

4 Textbook

The primary textbook for the course is Modern Labor Economics, 11th edition, by Ronald Ehrenberg and Robert Smith. While the content and sequence of lectures will generally follow the textbook, not all lecture material will be covered in the textbook, and not all textbook material will be covered in class. All problem sets and exams will be based only on the content covered in lecture. Thus, purchase of the textbook is not explicitly required. However, because the course follows the book fairly closely, buying the textbook is *extremely*

strongly encouraged. Later or earlier editions will likely suffice, though they may not be perfectly aligned with the material in the 11th edition.

5 Course Website

Students must enroll in this course's Canvas webpage. This syllabus will be posted there, along with problem sets, lecture recordings, announcements, and grades.

6 iClicker Student App

Students are required to purchase an iClicker Student App subscription for this class. iClicker information will be used to help determine your attendance and participation grade. You are responsible for setting up the iClicker Student App application by the first day of class, August 21st. Information on how to register for an account is available at <https://oit.colorado.edu/tutorial/cuclickers-set-up-your-iclicker-student-account>. Information on how to add this course to your iClicker Student App account and how to use the application during class is available at <https://oit.colorado.edu/tutorial/cuclickers-using-iclicker-student-app-class>.

7 Makeup Exams

If you communicate to me prior to the day of the exam that you will need to miss an exam due to a religious holiday or due to illness, a makeup exam may be scheduled with the professor. If the makeup is taken after the originally scheduled exam, then the makeup exam will be more difficult than the original exam due to the additional time you will have to study.

8 Administrative Drops

Students who do not attend at least two of the first three classes may be administratively dropped from the course in favor of students on the wait list.

9 Course Schedule

A tentative schedule of lecture topics, textbook reading assignments, and exam dates is provided below. The chapters listed refer to Ehrenberg and Smith's *Modern Labor Economics*, 11th edition. Note that there will be no class on Labor Day (September 7) nor during Fall Break (November 23th, 25th, and 27th). The dates of these classes are replaced with "NC" for "no class" on the course schedule below.

Week	Topics	Book Chapters
Aug 21	Introducing the Economic Model	Ch. 1
Aug 24/26/28	Perfect Competition & Intro. to Labor Demand	Ch. 2 & 3
A/S 31/2/4	Labor Demand with Competitive Markets	Ch. 3 & 4
Sep NC/9/11	Imperfect Competition	Ch. 5
Sep 14/16/18	1st Midterm Exam & Automation	Ch. 5
Sep 21/23/25	Worker Utility Max.	Ch. 6
S/O 28/30/2	Labor Supply	Ch. 7
Oct 5/7/9	Review & 2nd Midterm Exam	Ch. 7
Oct 12/14/16	Welfare Policy	Ch. 7
Oct 19/21/23	Occupational Sorting	Ch. 8
Oct 26/28/30	Educational Investments & Signalling	Ch. 9
Nov 2/4/6	3rd Midterm Exam & Contracts	Ch. 11
Nov 9/11/13	Performance Incentives	Ch. 11
Nov 16/18/20	Job Search & Unemployment	Ch. 14
Nov NC/NC/NC	Fall Break	None
N/D 30/2/4	COVID's Impact & Review	Ch. 12
Dec 11	Final Exam	

10 University Policies

10.1 Classroom Behavior

Students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment in all instructional settings, whether in person, remote, or online. Failure to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, marital status, political affiliation, or political philosophy.

For more information, see the classroom behavior policy, the Student Code of Conduct, and the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance.

10.2 Accommodation for Disabilities, Temporary Medical Conditions, and Medical Isolation

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the Disability Services website. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or DSinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition, see Temporary Medical Conditions on the Disability Services website.

10.3 Preferred Student Names and Pronouns

CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information does not always align with how they identify. If you wish to have a name other than your legal name appear on your instructors' class rosters and in Canvas, or if you wish to choose pronouns to appear on your instructors' class rosters and in Canvas, visit the Registrar's website for instructions on how to change your personal information in university systems.

10.4 Honor Code

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code may include but are not limited to: plagiarism (including use of paper writing services or technology [such as essay bots]), cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. Understanding the course's syllabus is a vital part of adhering to the Honor Code. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution: StudentConduct@colorado.edu. Students found responsible for violating the Honor Code will be assigned resolution outcomes from Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution and will be subject to academic sanctions from the faculty member. Visit Honor Code for more information on the academic integrity policy.

10.5 Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation

CU Boulder is committed to fostering a productive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. University policy prohibits protected-class discrimination and harassment, sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner abuse (dating or domestic violence), stalking, and related retaliation by or against members of our community on- or off-campus. Denial of an approved accommodation for disability, religious observance, or pregnancy or pregnancy related medical conditions may be discriminatory. The Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) addresses these concerns, and individuals who have been subjected to misconduct can contact OIEC at 303-492-2127 or email OIEC@colorado.edu. Information about university policies, OIEC reporting options, and OIEC support resources including confidential services can be found on the OIEC website.

10.6 Religious Accommodations

Instructional faculty members must make every reasonable effort to accommodate all students who have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignment deadlines or required attendance due to a religious observance. If you expect to miss an exam in order to observe a religious holiday, you must communicate this request to the professor prior to Friday, August 28th.