

University of Colorado at Boulder
Department of Economics

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Economics 8686: Graduate Labor 2, Spring 2015
Syllabus and Schedule
Office Hours: MW 10:00-11:00
Economics 208D
Other times by appointment

Course Description:

The primary goal of this course is to prepare students for original research within the field of Labor Economics. Although we will focus on only a subset of topics, the skills you will learn will prepare you for work across numerous subfields. You will learn to recognize what makes a good paper, and you will gain an appreciation for the type of research being done on the frontier of the discipline. The course meets in Econ 5, each MW (8/28-12/13) from 12:00 PM – 1:15 PM, with the exception of Labor Day (9/4) and Fall Break (11/20, 11/22).

Prerequisites:

To enroll in this course, you must have completed graduate level work in microeconomic theory and have exposure to some econometric training, at the equivalent level of the first year graduate sequence. Many of the papers we will read use applied econometric methods beyond those covered in the first year sequence. Although not strictly required, I strongly recommend previous or concurrent exposure to such methods through either Econ 8676 or Econ 8848.

Course Materials:

There is no required textbook for this course, although students who have not had an undergraduate course in Labor Economics may find it useful to acquire an undergraduate textbook such as Borjas or Ehrenberg and Smith. The material to be mastered will be covered in lecture notes and the assigned articles, all of which will be posted or linked on the Desire2Learn website.

Requirements and Grading:

Your grade will depend on your performance on a number of assignments, according to the chart below:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Weight</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
Class Participation/Readings	15%	Each class meeting with a paper
1 Referee Report	15%	TBA
Class Presentations	10%	Various dates throughout the semester
Research Proposal/“Kill an Idea”	20%	12/15, 5 PM
Midterm Exam	20%	10/18 In Class (tentative)
Final Exam (Second Midterm)	20%	Sunday 12/17 1:30-4:00 PM

Class Participation/Readings You should read the articles assigned prior to coming to class and be prepared to answer questions and participate in discussions. The reading list will be posted on D2L, and it will include links to the papers, which can be accessed from any computer on the

University's network. Bring a copy (either paper or electronic) of the papers we are discussing with you to class. In addition, please prepare a ½ page summary of each paper and bring it with you to class on the day that we discuss the paper. Your summary should include the following: the main research question, the model/conceptual framework that guides the analysis, the data used, the primary methodology including the identification strategy/central comparison, and any major limitations that you see in the paper. Part of this grade will come from successfully turning in a summary for each paper. The other portion will come from a careful review of a random sample of your summaries.

Class Choice Papers will be selected by a nomination and voting process. I encourage you all to set up an e-mail alert for new NBER working papers in your areas of interest, including labor. I'd be happy to read and discuss a paper or two released during the semester. Alternatively, if there's a topic you're particularly interested in, let me know and we'll see if we can find a paper to read together. I considered including papers on labor market adjustments to trade shocks, environmental effects on the labor market, newer work on tasks/automation, among others.

A Referee Report will be assigned once during the semester as I find an appropriate article. I anticipate assigning a paper from our seminar series or another working paper I find related to topics we are studying. You will be required to write a brief summary of the paper's methods and conclusions, followed by an analysis of the paper's strengths and weaknesses. You will receive specific instructions when I have selected the paper.

Class Presentations will occur at various times throughout the semester. You will be able to work in groups of two, and the number of presentations required will depend on the total enrollment in the course – with small classes, I may ask you to present multiple times. In each presentation, you will lead the class's discussion of one of the papers from the reading list marked with *** for approximately 35-40 minutes. In the first 25-30 minutes, you will present the research as if it were your own, detailing the motivation, methodology, and results of the paper. In the remaining time, you will lead a discussion critiquing the paper and providing suggestions for how the paper could have been improved.

Research Proposal/"Kill an Idea": The goal of this course is to train you to be able to perform original research in Labor Economics. Two of the most difficult skills to acquire are 1) Coming up with original research ideas and 2) Knowing when to stop working on an idea. In order to help you hone these skills, you will select an original research idea, and attempt to "kill it". It may help to imagine that there is a deadline for a conference approaching and that you are trying to decide whether to submit an abstract and to commit to working on the project in earnest for the next several months. A successful project will accomplish the following things: motivate an original research question, identify and acquire data, formulate an identification strategy, and perform initial analysis to determine whether the project deserves continued work. In the best-case scenario, your idea will survive this initial testing, and you will continue to work on it beyond this course. However, you will not be graded on whether your idea "works". Instead, you will be graded on how well you have determined whether it is worth continuing to work on. The project need not relate to the topics we discuss in class. It could be based on material from 8676, or from a portion of Labor Economics beyond the scope of either course. In the end, I will be looking for a brief (5-8 pages) write-up of your work on the project. In general, this should be a new project that you have not previously worked on for another class (including the third year

paper class). Also, for anyone enrolled in Econ 8848 previously, this should be a separate project from your replication for that class.

The Midterm will cover the material on labor demand theory, immigration and migration, and the minimum wage. It is tentatively scheduled for October 18 during the regular class meeting time, although we may move the exam depending on how quickly we progress through the material.

The Final Exam will cover all of the material after the first midterm. Our assigned time from the Registrar is 1:30-4:00 PM on Sunday, December 17, 2017. University policy provides students with three or more exams on the same day the right to reschedule exams following the first two.¹ Any student wishing to invoke this right should notify me as soon as possible and no later than September 15.

Final Letter Grades will be a weighted average of each of the components listed above. Prior to averaging, I will assign letter grades to each component based on the scores a good student at this level could reasonably be expected to attain.

Seminar Series: You are strongly encouraged to attend the seminar series, especially when the speaker presents on an applied micro topic. Learning to conduct and present original research is a key to your success in the discipline. These seminars are an excellent resource for you in that endeavor. There is a decent chance that I will assign a referee report based on one of the working papers presented in the seminar series.

Late Assignments/ Missed Examinations Policy:

The Referee Report and the Research Proposal will be due by 5:00 PM on their due dates. Following a 5-minute grace period, I will deduct 25 percent from each assignment for each day it is late. Paper summaries turned in after the class period in which the paper is discussed will receive no credit. Other assignments submitted more than 2 days after the due date will receive no credit.

If you miss the midterm or the final exam you will receive no credit unless you provide documentation of a medical or family emergency. In the case of a legitimate emergency, the missed exam will be given no weight in the calculation of the final grade and other assignments will be reweighted accordingly. *There will be no make-up exams.* If you foresee any conflict that will prevent you from taking an exam, please let me know as soon as possible and at least two weeks beforehand.

¹ http://www.colorado.edu/policies/final_exam.html

Tentative Schedule

Topic	Tentative Dates
Introduction, Immigration Background	8/28, 8/30
Theory of Labor Demand	9/6, 9/11
Immigration and Migration	
Labor Demand Application: Immigration and Native Wages – Competing Estimates	9/13, 9/18, 9/20, 9/25
Individual Migration Decision – Roy Model and Applications	9/27, 10/2
The Minimum Wage	
Models of the Minimum Wage	10/4
Empirical Analysis of the Minimum Wage	10/9, 10/11, 10/16
MIDTERM EXAM	10/18
Discrimination and Race/Gender Wage Gaps	
Models of Wage Discrimination; theoretical treatment of affirmative action	10/23, 10/25, 10/30
Empirical Estimates of Discrimination	11/1, 11/6, 11/8
Human Capital Investment	
Basic Models	11/13
Market Imperfections	11/15
Fall Break – NO CLASS	11/20, 11/22
Behavioral considerations	11/27
Class choice – see description	11/29, 12/4, 12/6
Wrap-Up	12/11
FINAL EXAM	Sunday, 12/17 1:30-4:00 PM

UPDATE THIS FOR 2017 Other University Policies:

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. *In this class, please inform me no later than two weeks prior to any conflict you foresee, sooner if possible, so that we can find an alternative arrangement for you to complete the requirements of the course.* See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

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](http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/students) (www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/students). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) under the Students tab on the Disability Services website and discuss your needs with your professor.

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail 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, political affiliation or political philosophy. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. CU's Sexual Misconduct Policy prohibits sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, intimate partner abuse (dating or domestic violence), stalking or related retaliation. CU Boulder's Discrimination and Harassment Policy prohibits discrimination, harassment or related retaliation based on race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct under either policy should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127. Information about the OIEC, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation can be found at the [OIEC website](#).

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to [the academic integrity policy](#). Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism,

cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, resubmission, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code Council as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](#).