

University of Colorado at Boulder
Department of Economics

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Economics 8686: Graduate Labor 2, Spring 2023
Syllabus and Schedule
Office Hours: M/W 10:45-11:45
Economics 208D or
<https://cuboulder.zoom.us/my/briancadena>
Please use this link to schedule a specific time:
<https://calendly.com/brian-cadena/econ-8686-office-hours>

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 M/W (1/18-5/3) from 9:30 AM – 10:45 AM, with the exception of Spring Break (3/27-3/31).

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 required, I strongly recommend exposure to such methods through Econ 8848. I will make the Econ 8848 coursepack available as a reference for students who want it.

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 Canvas 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%	5/9, 4 PM (Final Exam Slot)
First Midterm	20%	3/13 during class (tentative date)
Second Midterm	20%	Wednesday 4/26 (date fixed)

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 Canvas, and it will include links to the papers, which can be accessed from any computer on the University's network. Have a copy (either paper or electronic) of the papers we are discussing available during class. In addition, please prepare a ½ page summary of each paper and upload it to Canvas prior to the class meeting when 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. These summaries should be your own summaries of the papers, and you should avoid copying and pasting text from the original paper. If you copy/paste from the original paper, I will consider the assignment as if you turned in nothing.

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 papers that are 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. Areas that we could choose include labor market adjustments to trade shocks, environmental effects on the labor market, newer work on tasks/automation, active labor market policies, tax effects on labor supply, 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, and the number of presentations required will depend on the total enrollment in the course. 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 extended 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 an area 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.

This paper will serve as our final exam and will be due at the end of our normally scheduled final exam period: May 9, 2023 at 4 PM.

The Midterm will cover the material on labor demand theory, immigration and migration, and the minimum wage. It is tentatively scheduled for March 13 during the regular class meeting time, although we may move the exam depending on how quickly we progress through the material.

The Second Midterm will cover all of the material after the first midterm. It will occur on 4/26 during the regular class meeting. This date is fixed, as it is the final available date for a midterm this semester.

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 will be due by 5:00 PM on its due date. Paper summaries will be due prior to the class when we discuss them.

If you miss either midterm exam, 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.

Learning During a Global Pandemic:

The pandemic has affected and will continue to affect all of us in profound and unpredictable ways. This semester, I commit to offering empathy and flexibility to students enrolled in the class, and I ask that you offer me the same. At times during the semester, you may need to attend to your own health care or care for loved ones. I also recognize that things other than your coursework may have become higher priorities than usual. I am more than willing to be flexible

and to find ways to support you. Please be in touch with me if you are struggling and let me know how I can help.

Some of you may have children at home without consistent childcare; know that I will welcome them in class, regardless of the mode of instruction we are currently operating in. I also have two young children, and my spouse and I both work full-time. Although I am hopeful that the days of broad school closures are behind us, there is always a chance that I may need to cancel class or office hours at the last moment due to a lack of childcare.

Tentative Schedule

Topic	Tentative Dates
Introduction, Immigration Background	1/18, 1/23
Case Study: Mariel Boatlift	1/25, 1/30
Theory of Labor Demand	2/1, 2/6
Immigration and Migration	
Labor Demand Application: Immigration and Native Wages	2/8, 2/13, 2/15
Individual Migration Decision – Roy Model and Applications	2/20, 2/22
The Minimum Wage	
Models of the Minimum Wage	2/27, 3/1
Empirical Analysis of the Minimum Wage	3/6, 3/8
MIDTERM EXAM	3/13
Discrimination and Race/Gender Wage Gaps	
Models of Wage Discrimination	3/15
Empirical Topics in Discrimination	3/20, 3/22, 4/3, 4/5, 4/10
Human Capital Investment	
Basic Models	4/12
Market Imperfections	4/17
Behavioral considerations	4/19, 4/24
Midterm 2	4/26
Class choice – see description	12/1, 12/3
“Kill a Paper” due	Tuesday, 5/9 4:00 PM

Additional Policies: This course is governed by additional policies covering all courses at CU Boulder. They are listed below for your reference.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

Both students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment in all instructional settings, whether in person, remote or online. 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. For more information, see the [classroom behavior](#) policy, the [Student Code of Conduct](#), and the [Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance](#).

REQUIREMENTS FOR COVID-19

As a matter of public health and safety, all members of the CU Boulder community and all visitors to campus must follow university, department and building requirements and all public health orders in place to reduce the risk of spreading infectious disease. CU Boulder currently requires COVID-19 vaccination and boosters for all faculty, staff and students. Students, faculty and staff must upload proof of vaccination and boosters or file for an exemption based on medical, ethical or moral grounds through the MyCUHealth portal.

The CU Boulder campus is currently mask-optional. However, if public health conditions change and masks are again required in classrooms, students who fail to adhere to masking requirements will be asked to leave class, and students who do not leave class when asked or who refuse to comply with these requirements will be referred to Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. For more information, see the policy on classroom behavior and the Student Code of Conduct. If you require accommodation because a disability prevents you from fulfilling these safety measures, please follow the steps in the “Accommodation for Disabilities” statement on this syllabus.

If you feel ill and think you might have COVID-19, if you have tested positive for COVID-19, or if you are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated and have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, you should stay home and follow the further guidance of the Public Health Office (contacttracing@colorado.edu). If you are fully vaccinated and have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, you do not need to stay home; rather, you should self-monitor for symptoms and follow the further guidance of the Public Health Office (contacttracing@colorado.edu). {Faculty: insert your procedure here for students to alert you about absence due to illness or quarantine. Because of FERPA student privacy laws, do not require students to state the nature of their illness when alerting you. Do not require "doctor's notes" for classes missed due to illness; campus health services no longer provide "doctor's notes" or appointment verifications.}

ACCOMMODATION FOR DISABILITIES

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.

PREFERRED STUDENT NAMES AND PRONOUNS

CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information doesn't always align with how they identify. Students may update their preferred names and pronouns via the student portal; those preferred names and pronouns are listed on instructors' class rosters. I will gladly honor your request to use your preferred name/pronouns, regardless of what appears in the class roster.

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, 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. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution (honor@colorado.edu); 303-492-5550). Students found responsible for violating the [Honor Code](#) will be assigned resolution outcomes from the Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution as well as be subject to academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found on the [Honor Code website](#).

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND/OR RELATED RETALIATION

CU Boulder is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. University policy prohibits sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner violence (dating or domestic violence), stalking, protected-class discrimination and harassment, and related retaliation by or against members of our community on- and off-campus. These behaviors harm individuals and our community. The Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) addresses these concerns, and individuals who believe they have been subjected to misconduct can contact OIEC at 303-492-2127 or email cureport@colorado.edu. Information about university policies, [reporting options](#), and support resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

Please know that faculty and graduate instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when they are made aware of any issues related to these policies regardless of when or where they occurred to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about their rights, support resources, and resolution options. To learn more about reporting and support options for a variety of concerns, visit [Don't Ignore It](#).

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

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, let me know as soon as possible if you foresee a conflict, and I will accommodate your absence to the best of my ability. I will gladly provide an extended deadline for any assignment due on a date when you are observing a religious holiday.

See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.