

University of Colorado at Boulder
Department of Economics

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Economics 8686: Graduate Labor 2, Fall 2020
Syllabus and Schedule
Office Hours: T/Th 11:30-12:15, 2:00-2:45
<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 virtually over Zoom (link available on Canvas), each T/Th (8/25-12/3) from 12:30 PM – 1:45 PM, with the exception of Thanksgiving (11/26).

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 previous or concurrent 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%	12/12, 7 PM
First Midterm	20%	10/15 during class (tentative date)
Second Midterm	20%	Tuesday 11/24 (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 D2L, 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.

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. 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. 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 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.

This paper will serve as our final exam and will be due at the end of our normally scheduled final exam period: December 12, 7 PM.

The Midterm will cover the material on labor demand theory, immigration and migration, and the minimum wage. It is tentatively scheduled for October 15 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 11/24 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. In general, I plan to have a flexible policy related to late work for a class meeting during a global pandemic.

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. I recognize that you are adjusting to taking (and teaching!) courses online and that things other than your coursework may have become higher priorities than usual. At times during the semester, you may need to attend to your own health care or care for loved ones. I also recognize that you may have imperfect internet access or that you may be in a different time zone. 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 and their noises during your presentations or even just when you want to ask a question during class. I also have two elementary-school-aged children who will be remote learning this semester, and my spouse and I both work full-time. While I will do my best to keep up normal response times to e-mail and to make myself available outside of regularly scheduled office hours and class meetings, I hope that you will extend some grace and patience to me this semester as well.

Tentative Schedule

Topic	Tentative Dates
Introduction, Immigration Background	8/25, 8/27
Case Study: Mariel Boatlift	9/1, 9/3
Theory of Labor Demand	9/8, 9/10
Immigration and Migration	
Labor Demand Application: Immigration and Native Wages	9/15, 9/17, 9/22
Individual Migration Decision – Roy Model and Applications	9/24, 9/29
The Minimum Wage	
Models of the Minimum Wage	10/1
Empirical Analysis of the Minimum Wage	10/6, 10/8, 10/13
MIDTERM EXAM	10/15
Discrimination and Race/Gender Wage Gaps	
Models of Wage Discrimination	10/20, 10/22
Empirical Topics in Discrimination	10/27, 10/29, 11/3, 11/5, 11/10
Human Capital Investment	
Basic Models	11/12
Market Imperfections	11/17
Behavioral considerations	11/19
Thanksgiving – NO CLASS	11/26
Class choice – see description	12/1, 12/3
“Kill a Paper” due	Saturday, 12/12 7:00 PM

Other University Policies:

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 policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Requirements for COVID-19

As a matter of public health and safety due to the pandemic, all members of the CU Boulder community and all visitors to campus must follow university, department and building requirements, and public health orders in place to reduce the risk of spreading infectious disease. Required safety measures at CU Boulder relevant to the classroom setting include:

- maintain 6-foot distancing when possible,
- wear a face covering in public indoor spaces and outdoors while on campus consistent with state and county health orders,
- clean local work area,
- practice hand hygiene,
- follow public health orders, and
- if sick and you live off campus, do not come onto campus (unless instructed by a CU Healthcare professional), or if you live on-campus, please alert [CU Boulder Medical Services](#).

Students who fail to adhere to these 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 policies on [COVID-19 Health and Safety](#) and [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#). If you require accommodation because a disability prevents you from fulfilling these safety measures, please see the “Accommodation for Disabilities” statement on this syllabus.

Before returning to campus, all students must complete the [COVID-19 Student Health and Expectations Course](#). Before coming on to campus each day, all students are required to complete a [Daily Health Form](#). Students who have tested positive for COVID-19, have symptoms of COVID-19, or have had close contact with someone who has tested positive for or had symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home and complete the [Health Questionnaire and Illness Reporting Form](#) remotely. In this class, if you are sick or quarantined, let me know whether you will be able to continue to participate. If you are unable to participate in the class for a substantial period of time, I will meet with you to discuss alternatives.

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. In the absence of such updates, the student's legal name appears on 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 policy may include: 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 the Honor Code (honor@colorado.edu); 303-492-5550). Students found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](#).

Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner violence (dating or domestic violence), stalking, or protected-class discrimination or harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or cureport@colorado.edu. Information about the OIEC, university policies, [anonymous reporting](#), and the campus resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#). Please know that faculty and instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, dating and domestic violence, stalking, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

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, 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.