

Sacramento State University
Department of Economics
Fall 2009

ECON 150: LABOR ECONOMICS

Professor: Jessica Howell
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Class Meetings: Tues/Thurs 3:00 – 4:15
Amador 217
Office Hours: W, R, F 9:30 – 10:30 am
Website: www.csus.edu/indiv/h/howellj

Catalog Description This course applies microeconomic theory to the market for labor. The course covers the economic analysis of employment and wage determination (supply and demand), including human capital, unemployment, discrimination, income inequality, and unions.

Prerequisites Successful completion of ECON 1A & ECON 1B;
ECON 100B recommended but not required.

Course Textbook *Labor Economics* by George Borjas, 5th edition (ISBN: 9780073511368)

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| Grading Policy | Homework | 25% | |
| | Midterm Exam | 25% | Thursday Oct. 15th |
| | Project | 20% | due Thursday Dec. 3rd |
| | Class Participation | 5% | |
| | Final Exam | 25% | Tuesday December 15th |

The actual letter grade you earn in this course will be based on a grading scale to be determined *after* the final exam. This scale may or may not resemble a 10-point scale (*e.g.*, 90-100% is some sort of A, 80-90% is some sort of B, etc...) because I reserve the right to curve. I will provide feedback over the semester on how to interpret your homework and exam scores so that you know how you are progressing in the course.

NOTE ON THE CONTENT OF THIS COURSE SYLLABUS

I view the information on this syllabus as a contract with my students. I try to be very clear about my expectations and policies so that everyone knows the basic rules and we all go home happy after each class and, ultimately, at the end of the semester. Please read the following information carefully.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance at lecture is left up to your discretion, although I obviously believe that spending 2½ hours with me each week will have a positive effect on how much you learn and your final grade. I will not take roll, but that does not mean that I am without eyes and the ability to observe who is there on a regular basis and who is not. Your class participation grade will obviously be a function of how frequently you attend and the quality of your participation.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

The homework assignments are designed to develop a variety of skills and cater to a variety of learning styles. Some questions will focus on graphical and mathematical skills needed to work with models of the labor market. Other questions will develop your ability to analyze (through writing) labor market issues that appear in the news media and economics journals. I have tentatively scheduled five equally-weighted assignments, which will be posted on the course web page at www.csus.edu/indiv/h/howellj (click on *Econ 150* in the *Teaching* section). The due dates for these assignments will be determined by the rate at which we are able to move through the course material. I will maintain and update a course schedule with relevant due date information on the course web page listed above. Late assignments are not accepted, in-class assignments cannot be made up, and no assignments are dropped.

EXAMS

There are two exams in this class; a midterm on **THURSDAY OCTOBER 15th** and a final on **TUESDAY DECEMBER 15th**. These dates are carved in stone, so please put them in your calendar immediately. There are no makeup exams and very few acceptable excuses for missing one. Acceptable excuses include a death in the family, a University-sponsored event, or a serious illness documented by a doctor. Exams are all closed-book, closed-note, and closed-friend/neighbor. The format of the exams will be discussed in the class meeting prior to the exam. Exam questions will reflect material covered in class, homework and reading assignments, and the textbook.

PROJECT

Because Labor Economists tackle a variety of very timely policy-relevant topics (e.g. unemployment, immigration, education, minimum wages), this project will introduce you to some simple tools of economic analysis: finding data, working with data, presenting data and empirical findings in a clear and concise manner, and economic writing. These skills will be useful in other Econ courses (140, 141, 145), but you will also find them exceptionally helpful when you are trying to find (and keep!) a job. Following the midterm exam, I will distribute detailed information regarding this project.

ADDITIONAL REQUESTS

- If you choose to attend, I do request that you **be on time**. If you arrive late, please come in quietly, settle quickly, and at least muster an apologetic expression for me. It is your responsibility to get any material that you miss. I will not provide lecture notes under any circumstances.
- Please make sure that all cell phones and pagers are shut off during lecture. At a minimum, put these devices in silent mode and refrain from answering calls/pages/text messages during class.
- If you have a physical or learning disability that requires accommodation, please let me know as soon as possible and contact Services to Students with Disabilities at (916) 278-6955 to get the proper documentation well in advance of the first exam.
- Academic honesty is expected. All students are expected to adhere to the University Student Code of Conduct outlined in the *CSUS University Policy Manual*. Please read the policy manual carefully at www.csus.edu/admbus/umanual/UMAN00150.htm. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism and/or the appropriate way to credit sources, review the university's guidelines on plagiarism at www.library.csus.edu/content2.asp?pageID=353 or ask me. Neither of us really wants to have to deal with cheating and/or plagiarism, but my job is to teach you economics and then give you a grade that reflects your knowledge of the subject. If you cheat, you force me to assume that you know zero, and that is precisely the grade you will get. Additionally, all instances of cheating and/or plagiarism will be reported to Judicial Affairs.
- Faculty are required to take nine furlough days during the fall 2009 semester. One is campus-wide and designated by the President (October 19, 2009); the other eight will vary by individual faculty member. Furlough days will result in approximately three of our class meetings being canceled, but I am also not permitted to hold office hours, return emails, or do any grading on furlough days, so you may be affected even on some non-instructional days. The University has recommended that faculty make up for missed class meetings through additional assignments, which I will make available on the course website. I will also update the online class schedule with furlough-related class cancellation information once my furlough plan is finalized by the dean.