

Fall 2009

Instructor: Linda Wong

Binghamton University, Department of Economics  
ECON 433 Labor Economics  
Syllabus  
(8/23/2009)

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Office Hours: T, Th: 1:45-2:45 p.m.

TA and office hour: TBA

**Course Description** This course provides an economic analysis of the labor market. I will demonstrate how to apply and extend basic economic theory to study firms' and workers' behavior. The course will cover topics including unemployment, labor force participation, labor demand, labor supply, human capital, worker mobility, job training, wage inequality, discrimination, and policy issues applicable to the above topics.

**Course Materials** The reading for this course is from the text Modern Labor Economics: Theory and Public Policy, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, by Ehrenberg R. and R. Smith. (available at the University bookstore). You may also use the 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> editions (cost a LOT less), but mindful that all chapters and discussions that I shall refer to in this syllabus and in class are based on the 9<sup>th</sup> edition. The text book is available for the class through library reserve for a two-hour check-out time.

At least one-third of the class will focus on applications from empirical and theoretical papers from leading journal articles that I present in class. These papers are mostly (not all) quite recent and so will not appear in textbooks. You will need to attend class to master these materials. If you were planning to take another class that meets at the same time as this class, I strongly discourage it. Students who have tried this in the past have fared poorly and received little sympathy.

*Getting Help Outside of Class*

If you have questions on the class material or problem sets, there are four ways to get help:

1. Use the 'Blackboard'. I will have posted messages and documents there, e.g. answers from the class, exam solutions, reading assignments, etc. "Blackboard" will serve as a communication tool for questions needed to be addressed and for timely announcements.
2. Drop in during TA's office hours.
3. Drop in during my office hours.
4. Ask your question in or after class.

You should bear in mind that last minute questions or accommodations may not always be met in practice. So, plan ahead.

**Course Requirements and Grading** You are required to check 'Blackboard' regularly (once a week at least). You are required to apply calculus and intermediate microeconomic theory in this course.

There will be three exams. Two will be given during class hours and will be 80 minutes long. The third exam will be given during the final period and will be two hours long.

Each of the first two exams will only focus on the new material since the last exam, although of course you will need to understand the older material to apply the new material. The final exam will focus on all materials in the course. The exams will be based on the textbook, the assigned readings, and classroom discussion.

If you miss an exam, I will offer a written makeup or an oral exam. Students typically find oral exams painful. But, I will not write a new exam for only one or two students – so, an oral exam is reasonably likely.

If you are caught cheating during an exam, you will receive a zero on that exam. All other available penalties within the University will be pursued to the fullest extent.

Your aptitude in this course will be evaluated by (1) three examinations (dates to be announced) respectively weighs 25, 25, 30 percent of your course grade, and (2) homework assignments, which weighs 20 percent of your course grade. No changes will be amended. No unsolicited materials will be accepted towards your final grade.

Approximate grading: A range=90% and above, B range=80-90%, C range=60-79%. The class is not graded on a curve per se. It's possible for everyone to do well, and I'd be happy to have a reason to assign straight A's. I do not like to assign grades below C-, so I will ask you to drop the class if I see that you are in danger of getting a D or F. Of course, I can't help you if your performance plummets after the class drop date.

Final grades can only be checked via the university system. No grade will be given through the telephone, mail, electronic mail, or in person.

*Class participation (up to 5% extra credit):* You are not required to participate in class. But if you participate, I will notice and you will receive extra credit. This credit is applied after grades are assigned at the end of the final exam period. This credit can (and occasionally does) make the difference between a B/B+ and A-, or between a C/C+ and a B-. Participation does not mean you always have your hand up and always get the right answer. It means that you engage and contribute, actively and constructively participate in class.

*Questions Regarding Grading:*

Questions on grading should go first to your TA. Questions on homework or exam grades must be received by the TA no later than one week after the homework or exam has been handed back. After one week, no appeals will be considered.

To have the grading re-considered take the following steps:

1. Take the material to your TA along with a note describing specifically what you believe the problem to be. (Make a copy of your note and the problem set/exam for your own safekeeping.) Leave the material with your TA along with your email address.

2. After the TA has contacted you by email, come to his/her office to discuss the question.

This procedure is designed to help to ensure fair grading by providing us with an opportunity to think about your questions carefully before responding.

**Readings** Students should expect to devote a great deal of study outside of class meetings to master the course materials. Each student is expected to read all assigned reading materials. Better comprehension will often require multiple readings. I will keep students posted as to where they should be in the readings but it is also the responsibility of the students to keep abreast of the flow of topics and perhaps read ahead.

### **ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT POLICY REGARDING MAKE-UP FINAL EXAMS**

**ALL** make-up final exams in Economics will be given **Friday, December 18 from 8:00 to 10:00 AM**. All officially scheduled final exams are linked from the [BU Brain](#) – check **NOW** for conflicts. If a conflict exists you may request a make-up exam from the instructor of **ANY** of the conflicting courses. If you choose to request a make-up exam for an economics course, a sign-up list to request the make-up exam will be available in class after the add/drop deadline – ask the instructor. Students **MUST** make their request for a make-up exam in economics **NO LATER THAN FRIDAY, October 9**.

It is **the student's responsibility** to learn from the instructor if the request has been approved. Only students who are approved may take a make-up final exam. Students who have not requested a make-up exam in an economics course by **October 9** will be required to resolve conflicting exams with the instructor in one of their other courses.

Make-up exams are approved **ONLY** for the following conditions:

- Conflicts with the **OFFICIAL** final exam schedule (e.g. exams at the same time or more than two exams within 24 hours).
- **DOCUMENTED** personal illness or family emergency.