
University of Alberta – Department of Economics – Winter 2025
ECON 431 – Labor Economics – Marchand

COURSE OUTLINE

Website

<https://sites.ualberta.ca/~jmarchan/teaching.htm>

Class Hours

Monday, Wednesday, Friday
Tory **T B 65**: 10:00 – 10:50 am

Instructor

Joseph Marchand
jmarchan@ualberta.ca

Office Hours

Monday and Wednesday
Tory 7-29: 12:30 – 2:00 pm

Description

Labor Economics (ECON 431) is a course serving as senior-level undergraduate exposure to the market for labour, in order to establish a comprehensive understanding of the field.

This course will explore the fundamental topics of the field, including: an introduction to labour economics; labour markets; labour supply; labour demand; job attributes; schooling; training, turnover, and migration; discrimination; unions; wage inequality; compensation strategies; and unemployment; all through a North American perspective.

Undergraduate prerequisites are ECON 109, ECON 281, and **ECON 399** (or equivalent).

Resources

There is one required textbook for this course: *Labor Economics, Principles in Practice, Second Edition* (2019), written by Kenneth McLaughlin under Oxford University Press. (<https://global.oup.com/ushe/product/labor-economics-9780190856991?cc=ca&lang=en>) A hard copy version is available through the UofA bookstore or online (~\$140-190 CAD). A digital rental is available through VitalSource (~\$80 CAD) for 180 days (or 6 months).

The first Canadian edition of this textbook was under contract to be produced (by me), but Oxford University Press has since backed out. So, the second US edition will provide US examples and the concepts, and I will provide the Canadian examples and updates. These will come in lecture form, which will be made available as slides after each class.

Evaluation

Your numerical grade for the course will be calculated using the following weights:

Participation (in class)	20%	(attendance counts but participation worth more)
Packback (10 questions)	20%	(one due weekly by Sunday night before midnight)
Exam #1 (Book C1-4)	20%	(on Friday , February 14 th , 10:00 am, 50 minutes)
Exam #2 (Book C5-12)	40%	(on Monday, April 14 th , 8:30 am, 120 minutes)

Your letter grade is then determined based on your absolute and relative performance to the rest of the class, with a historical grade point average of ~ 3.15 out of 4.0 (~ B+/B).

My approach to grading is to read all given answers to a question, and then rank them, with the best answer typically receiving full marks and a sliding scale then being used.

An A minus in any of my courses is the bare minimum requirement for a recommendation letter from me, but it does not guarantee it. I will no longer make exceptions to this rule.

Participation

Participation during class hours is encouraged. Grading will be based on the attendance of the lectures in person, and then on the contributions made during those lectures, through spoken comments. Please treat our time together like a language course: we will focus our discussions only on labour economics and labour markets, including your own.

Packback

Packback is a software that allows the posting of questions by me and answers by you. Please sign up soon (~\$40 CAD). There will be ten questions, with one roughly each week, with questions usually posted late on Wednesday and answered by midnight on Sunday. The questions will mostly relate to identifying Canadian and updated content to replace the US examples from the textbook. Grading will be based on the completeness of the answer (based on **Packback's score**) and its originality (as determined by myself and a teaching assistant). A late penalty of 10 percent per day will be added when applicable.

Exams

All students must complete a mid-term exam and a final exam. A previous **mid-term** exam will be provided, with no answers, but a final exam has never circulated. The mid-term exam will cover the first four chapters of the textbook, and the final exam will cover the final eight chapters. The final exam may be deferred through your faculty, but approval requires that at least half of your assigned work had already been completed.

Schedule

January	6 th	Mon	(1)	C0 – Overview of the Course
	8 th	Wed	(2)	C1 – Introduction to Labour Economics (PB #1 due 1/12)
	10 th	Fri	(3)	C1 – Introduction to Labour Economics
	13 th	Mon	(4)	C1 – Introduction to Labour Economics
	15 th	Wed	(5)	C1 – Introduction to Labour Economics (PB #2 due 1/19)
	17 th	Fri	(6)	C2 – Labour Markets
	20 th	Mon	(7)	C2 – Labour Markets
	22 nd	Wed	(8)	C2 – Labour Markets (PB #3 due 1/26)
	24 th	Fri	(9)	C2 – Labour Markets
	27 th	Mon	(10)	C3 – Labour Supply
	29 th	Wed	(11)	C3 – Labour Supply (PB #4 due 2/2)
	31 st	Fri	(12)	C3 – Labour Supply
February	3 rd	Mon	(13)	C4 – Labour Demand
	5 th	Wed	(14)	C4 – Labour Demand (no PB; practice E1)
	7 th	Fri	(15)	C5 – Job Attributes
	10 th	Mon	(16)	C5 – Job Attributes
	12 th	Wed	(17)	C5 – Job Attributes (no PB; study for exam)
	14 th	Fri	(E1)	C1-4 – Mid-Term Exam (@ 10:00 am; 50 min; T B 65)
	17 th	Mon	*	No Class (Statutory Holiday)
	19 th	Wed	*	No Class (Reading Week)
	21 st	Fri	*	No Class (Reading Week)
	24 th	Mon	(ER)	C1-4 – Mid-Term Exam Review
	26 th	Wed	(18)	C6 – Education (PB #5 due 3/2)
	28 th	Fri	(19)	C6 – Education
March	3 rd	Mon	(20)	C6 – Education
	5 th	Wed	(21)	C7 – Training, Turnover, and Migration (PB #6 due 3/9)
	7 th	Fri	(22)	C7 – Training, Turnover, and Migration
	10 th	Mon	(23)	C7 – Training, Turnover, and Migration
	12 th	Wed	(24)	C8 – Discrimination (PB #7 due 3/16)
	14 th	Fri	(25)	C8 – Discrimination
	17 th	Mon	(26)	C8 – Discrimination
	19 th	Wed	(27)	C9 – Unions (PB #8 due 3/23)
	21 st	Fri	(28)	C9 – Unions
	24 th	Mon	(29)	C10 – Wage Inequality
	26 th	Wed	(30)	C10 – Wage Inequality (PB #9 due 4/1)
	28 th	Fri	(31)	C10 – Wage Inequality
31 st	Mon	(32)	C11 – Compensation Strategies	
April	2 nd	Wed	(33)	C12 – Unemployment (PB #10 due 4/6)
	4 th	Fri	(34)	C12 – Unemployment
	7 th	Mon	(35)	OPEN – Extra / Make Up Lecture
	9 th	Wed	(ER)	C5-12 – Final Exam Review (no PB; study for exam)
	14 th	Mon	(E2)	C5-12 – Final Exam (@ 8:30 am; 120 min; exam room)

Policy

“Policy about course outlines can be found in the Evaluation Procedures and Grading System section of the University Calendar.” (If there is a problem, let me know ASAP.)

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Student Academic Integrity Policy and the Student Conduct Policy (on the University of Alberta Policies and Procedures Online (UAPPOL) website) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University. (Faculty Dean’s office makes decisions.)

“Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as part of an approved accommodation plan. Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).” (Includes picture taking too.)