
University of Alberta – Department of Economics – Winter 2024
ECON 431-531 – Labor Economics / Labour Economics I – Marchand

COURSE OUTLINE

Website

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

Class Hours

Monday and Wednesday
Tory B-109: 12:00 – 1:20 pm

Instructor

Joseph Marchand
jmarchan@ualberta.ca

Office Hours

Monday and Wednesday
Tory 7-29: 1:20 – 2:00 pm

Description

Labor Economics / Labour Economics I (ECON 431-531) at the University of Alberta is a blended course serving as senior-level undergraduate and graduate-level 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 MATH 154 (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 (~\$80-240 CAD). A digital rental is available through VitalSource (~\$80 CAD) for 180 days (or 6 months).

The first Canadian edition of this textbook is currently being written, by your professor, hopefully due out sometime next year. Therefore, the second US edition will provide US examples and the concepts, and the lectures will give Canadian examples and updates.

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 PB Q&A)	20%	(one due weekly by Sunday night before midnight)
Exam #1 (Book C1-5)	25%	(on Monday, February 26 th , 12:00 pm, 80 minutes)
Exam #2 (Book C6-12)	35%	(on Wednesday, April 24 th , 9:00 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.

Due to the blended nature of the course, graduate status will also be taken into account. Graduate students will do both exams, plus an application, with these worth 20% each.

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 in class is encouraged. Grading will be based on the attendance of the lectures in person (or online), and then on the contributions made during those lectures, through spoken (or written) comments. Please treat our time together like a language course, as we will focus our discussions only on labour economics and the teaching of it.

Packback

Packback is a software that allows the posting of questions by me and answers by you, all of which we are typically able to see. Please sign up soon (~40 CAD). There will be ten questions, with around one question each week throughout the semester, and questions typically posted on Wednesday and answered by Sunday. The 431 and 531 sections have separate communities, as the expectations differ between the two sets of students, as will the questions, mostly. The 431 questions will mostly relate to identifying Canadian content to replace the US examples from the textbook, whereas the 531 questions will be more Canadian data driven. Grading will be based evenly on the order of answers received (from first to last answered and edited), the completeness of the answer (based on the Curiosity Score), and its originality (as determined by myself and maybe also a TA). A late penalty of 10 percent per day will be added when applicable.

Application

The applications that the graduate students will do help expand on topics that we cover with the textbook chapters. Each student will choose from one of the final eight chapters and will work together with the instructor to identify the best application to produce. The typical application will involve finding academic journal articles that are recent (ideally forthcoming), high quality (see Labour Journals list), and Canadian (or U.S.) in content, and synthesizing them to better explain one of the concepts in their chapter. However, another application may be to find newer or better data sources to carry out a fresher analysis, in order to better explain the concept, in the form of figures or tables.

Exams

All students must complete a mid-term exam and a final exam, but graduate students must also complete an application. A previous mid-term exam will be provided. The mid-term exam will cover the first five chapters of the textbook, and the final exam will cover the final seven 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	8 th	Mon	*	No Class (ASSA Conference)
	10 th	Wed	(1)	C0 – Overview of Course Outline (sign up to PB)
	15 th	Mon	(2)	C1 – Introduction to Labour Economics
	17 th	Wed	(3)	C1 – Introduction to Labour Economics (PB #1 due 1/21)
	22 nd	Mon	(4)	C1 – Introduction to Labour Economics
	24 th	Wed	(5)	C2 – Labour Markets (PB #2 due 1/28)
	29 th	Mon	(6)	C2 – Labour Markets
	31 st	Wed	(7)	C2 – Labour Markets (PB #3 due 2/4)
February	5 th	Mon	(8)	C3 – Labour Supply
	7 th	Wed	(9)	C3 – Labour Supply (PB #4 due 2/11)
	12 th	Mon	(10)	C4 – Labour Demand
	14 th	Wed	(11)	C5 – Job Attributes (do practice E1)
	19 th	Mon	*	No Class (Statutory Holiday)
	21 st	Wed	*	No Class (Reading Week)
	26 th	Mon	(E1)	C1-5 – Mid-Term Exam (@ 12:00 pm in class room)
	28 th	Wed	(ER)	C1-5 – Mid-Term Exam Review (PB #5 due 3/3)
March	4 th	Mon	*	No Class (Students' Union Election Forum)
	6 th	Wed	(12)	C6 – Education (PB #6 due 3/10)
	11 th	Mon	(13)	C6 – Education
	13 th	Wed	(14)	C7 – Training, Turnover, and Migration (PB #7 due 3/17)
	18 th	Mon	(15)	C7 – Training, Turnover, and Migration
	20 th	Wed	(16)	C8 – Discrimination (PB #8 due 3/24)
	25 th	Mon	(17)	C8 – Discrimination
	27 th	Wed	(18)	C9 – Unions (PB #9 due 3/31)
April	1 st	Mon	*	No Class (Easter Monday)
	3 rd	Wed	(19)	C10 – Wage Inequality (PB #10 due 4/7)
	8 th	Mon	(20)	C12 – Unemployment
	10 th	Wed	(ER)	C6-12 – Final Exam Review (graduate applications due)
	24 th	Wed	(E2)	C6-12 – Final Exam (@ 9:00 am in exam room)

Policies

“Please note that class times for this course will be recorded. Recordings of this course will be used to allow students enrolled in the course to review the material and will be disclosed to other students enrolled in this section of the class. Students have the right to not participate in the recording and are advised to turn off their cameras and audio prior to recording; they can still participate through text-based chat. It is recommended that students remove all identifiable and personal belongings from the space in which they will be participating. Recordings will be made available until the end of term and accessible on [eClass]. Please direct any questions about this collection to the professor of this course.” (If you feel that a lecture should not be posted, then please let me know.)

“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 Code of Student Behavior (online at www.governance.ualberta.ca) and avoid any behavior 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.” (Dean’s office makes decisions.) (<http://www.ualberta.ca/current-students/academic-resources/academic-integrity>)