
University of Alberta – Department of Economics – Winter 2025
ECON 531 – Labour Economics I – Marchand

COURSE OUTLINE

Website

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

<u>Class Hours</u>	<u>Instructor</u>	<u>Office Hours</u>
Monday and Wednesday Tory 1-083: 11:00 – 12:20 pm	Joseph Marchand jmarchan@ualberta.ca	Monday and Wednesday Tory 7-29: 12:30 – 2:00 pm

Description

Labour Economics I (ECON 531) at the University of Alberta serves as masters-level graduate exposure to the market for labour, in order to establish a comprehensive understanding of the field. This course will explore several topics of labour economics, specifically through the lens of local labour markets from a North American perspective and with an analytical link to the evaluation techniques of an event or a policy change.

This course is restricted to graduate students only, at both the MA and PhD level. Students enrolled in this course should have a strong interest in labour economics and in the production of research. A beneficial background for this course would include exposure to an undergraduate course in labour economics, the writing of previous research papers, and some form of training in a statistical software package (i.e. Stata).

Resources

There is one suggested 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.

There is also one suggested supplemental book: *Mostly Harmless Econometrics: An Empiricist's Companion* (2009), written by Joshua Angrist and Jorn-Steffen Pischke under Princeton University Press. (<https://www.mostlyharmlesseconometrics.com/>) A paperback version is available online (~\$50-70 CAD) or also in Kindle form (~\$50 CAD). A free access online version is also available through the University of Alberta Library.

Research papers will also serve as important material for the course, in the form of published articles and working papers. A reading list will be compiled in some form throughout the semester, providing the full citations of the papers covered in some depth.

Evaluation

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

Participation (in class)	20%	(attendance counts but participation worth more)
Research Production	20%	(occasional tasks to prepare research ingredients)
Exam #1 (Book C1-5)	30%	(Wednesday, February 12 th , 11:00 am, 80 minutes)
Final Research Products	30%	(Mon, Apr 14 th , 1:00 pm, 120 min; then papers due)

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 ~ 3.4 out of 4.0 ($\sim A-/B+$).

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.

Graduates are also encouraged to attend department seminars, which are typically at 3:30 to 5:00 pm on Fridays, and any other opportunities to experience economic research.

Exam

All students must complete a mid-term exam. A previous mid-term exam will be provided, with no answers. The mid-term exam will cover the first five chapters of the textbook. Although other textbook chapters will also be covered and you are expected to know the material, our final exam period will be used for final research presentations.

Products

Presentations are your opportunity to defend your research to your peers and instructor. This is a chance to walk us through your reasoning and explain how all of your materials come together to answer your research question. This talk should emulate a department seminar, with questions. Its evaluation will be based on your preparedness and potential.

Your papers should begin by emulating the short form of an economics working paper, such as those from NBER or our own Department of Economics Working Paper Series. Thus, they should have a typical cover page with title, author name, institution, date, abstract, JEL codes, keywords, and an author footnote with your contact information. The body of the paper should have an introduction, background, data and methods, evidence, conclusion, references, and figures (which may also contain maps) and tables. The paper form of your research will obviously progress from longer to a shorter paper, but the final form of research you hand in should be as close to perfection as possible. The only way to get there is by writing, and rewriting, and rewriting, all semester long.

Presentations and papers will be evaluated through the following research ingredients:

- 1) A clear statement of your research question.
- 2) An explanation of its importance (use numbers).
- 3) A description of the market and/or policy you examine.
- 4) Your synthesis of the relevant literature with references.
- 5) Potential data sources that you can and do use.
- 6) A theoretical explanation of the main relationships.
- 7) Your identifying variation and empirical strategy.
- 8) The visualization of your evidence (figures and tables).
- 9) Your original contribution to the economics literature.

Your software skills should go through rapid improvement as your research progresses. Such software would include paper preparation (LaTeX, LyX, Overleaf, or equivalent), presentation preparation (Beamer, Zoom, or equivalent), and statistical (Stata, R, etc.). However, some students may also find it useful to learn mapping software (ArcView). Grammarly software is also available to help clean up your papers and presentations.

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.)

Schedule

January	6 th	Mon	(1)	Overview of the Course
	8 th	Wed	(2)	Introduction to Labour Economics (C1+)
	13 th	Mon	(3)	Introduction to Labour Economics (C1+)
	15 th	Wed	(4)	Introduction to Labour Economics (C1+)
	20 th	Mon	(5)	Labour Markets (C2+)
	22 nd	Wed	(6)	Labour Markets (C2+)
	27 th	Mon	(7)	Labour Markets (C2+) / Labour Supply (C3+)
	29 th	Wed	(8)	Labour Supply (C3+)
February	3 rd	Mon	(9)	Labour Supply (C3+) / Labour Demand (C4+)
	5 th	Wed	(10)	Labour Demand (C4+)
	10 th	Mon	(11)	Job Attributes (C5+)
	12 th	Wed	(ME)	Mid-Term Exam (C1-5) (@ 11:00 am; 80 min; T 1-083)
	17 th	Mon	*	No Class (Statutory Holiday)
	19 th	Wed	*	No Class (Reading Week)
	24 th	Mon	(12)	
	26 th	Wed	(13)	
March	3 rd	Mon	(14)	
	5 th	Wed	(15)	
	10 th	Mon	(16)	
	12 th	Wed	(17)	
	17 th	Mon	(18)	
	19 th	Wed	(19)	
	24 th	Mon	(20)	
	26 th	Wed	(21)	
	31 st	Mon	(22)	
April	2 nd	Wed	(23)	
	7 th	Mon	(24)	
	9 th	Wed	(25)	
	14 th	Mon	(FP)	Final Presentations (@ 1:00 pm; 120 min.; exam room)
	(?)	(?)	(FP)	Final Papers Due (?)