

ECONS 323

Labor Economics

Course Details

Instructor: Mengshan Zhao

Email: mengshan.zhao@wsu.edu

Zoom Office Hours: by appointment

Textbook: Labor Economics by George Borjas, 8th edition, 2020.

IMPORTANT: Visit the course "[More Information](#)" page to review details about textbooks, course materials, media and any fees associated with this course.

Course Overview

This course is designed to introduce key concepts in labor economics to both economics majors and non-majors. You do not need to be an economics major to succeed in this course, but you will need to use mathematical and analytical reasoning to solve problems. The greatest predictor of success in this course is a student's willingness to work hard inside and outside of class to master the materials, and actively participate in class and discussions.

My overall goal is to prepare you for future employment in economics or a related field by honing skills that matter to employers: how to solve a mathematical model, how to analyze graphs and use graphical analysis as a complement to mathematics, and how to form and articulate logical arguments that are based on mathematical reasoning.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

1. Students will learn how to derive a labor demand curve from a firm's profit maximization problem and a labor supply curve from an individual's utility maximization (labor/leisure tradeoff) problem.
2. Students will be able to evaluate how government interventions, technological and other price changes, and product market fluctuations affect equilibrium wages, employment levels, and other important labor market outcomes (e.g. capital/labor ratios or non-wage benefits).
3. Students will be able to state the conditions under which government interventions in labor markets may enhance social welfare.

4. Students will understand a basic quasi-experimental design for empirically evaluating a prediction of labor economic theory (e.g. the effect of a change in the minimum wage on employment).
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Course Work

Problem Sets

There are three problem sets throughout the semester that will help you practice the concepts learned and develop your analytical capability to solve different problems in labor economics. They will be posted via the "Problem Sets" tab on Canvas by Friday, 4pm of the scheduled week of assignment. Please refer to the course schedule for the posting and due dates. **Each problem set contributes 10 percent to your course grade. Altogether, problem sets account for 30 percent of your course grade. No late submissions are allowed without prior approval, and no problem set scores will be dropped.**

Smartbook Exercises

Each week, there will be a SmartBook® exercise administered through McGraw-Hill Connect to test your understanding of the ideas, theories, concepts, and examples covered in that week. There are altogether 14 exercises, that are due at 11:59PM, Pacific Time, on Sunday, unless otherwise specified. **2 lowest scores** from the exercises will be automatically dropped. **Altogether, SmartBook® exercises account for 15 percent of your course grade. No late submissions are accepted without prior approval.** *Please note that for any quiz or exercise on SmartBook®, the deadline is the time you need to submit the assignment, not the time you begin working on it. For example, if you start your assignment on 11:58PM, you have (less than) 1 minute to work on the quiz.*

The instructor recognizes that occasionally situations arise beyond students' control, so that students are allowed to request **an extension for a maximum of two problem sets** for at most one week's time, which are separately counted and can be of the same or different chapters. *This design is to protect you from extenuating circumstances that get in the way of completing the assignments on-time, rather than an excuse to procrastinate.* To request an extension, **e-mail the instructor at least 24 hours in advance of the deadline.** Any request made within 24 hours, or after the deadline, will not be granted. The instructor reserves the right not to grant an extension.

Discussions

There will be two discussions on topics relevant to current issues in labor economics. **Each discussion contributes 5 percent to your course grade. Altogether, discussions account for 10 percent of your course grade, and no discussion scores will**

be dropped. Discussion posts must be completed on time according to the schedule (no extensions). Posting after the deadlines will not be graded.

If you have any medical/family emergencies, court appearances, military service obligations, or other extenuating circumstances that prevent you from participating in the discussions and/or responses on time, please **e-mail the instructor as soon as possible with scanned/electronic copies of the relevant documentations.** The instructor will make a decision and inform the student of the decision within one week's time. The instructor reserves the right not to grant an extension or make alternative arrangements if the student fails to make the request in a timely fashion (such as weeks after the discussion/responses due is considered unacceptable) or provide documentary proof (such as the doctor's note, police report, court summons, advance notice of military service, etc.).

Exams

There are two non-cumulative examinations that are administered on Canvas. Exam availability, materials covered, and due dates are posted in the Course Schedule. Each exam is open book and open notes. However, **you should complete the exam on your own without help from others.** If you have any question, please contact me.

Each exam contributes 20 percent to your course grade. Altogether, exams account for 40 percent of your course grade. No exam scores will be dropped, and no early/make-up exams will be offered.

Discussion Session and Office Hours

Students can post their course chapter related question on discussion board via the "Ask the Instructor" thread. Students are also highly encouraged to respond to other participants question in this platform. Overall, participation accounts for 5 percent of your course grade. You can make an appointment with me for extra consultation sessions (please e-mail me at least 24 hours in advance and include the question at hand). Please note that this will be subject to my availability.

If the instructor is unavailable at the captioned time period, an announcement will be made as soon as possible regarding make-up discussion.

Extra Credits

Extra credit assignments may be offered at the discretion of the instructor.

Grading

As an indication of the student's progress to date, students should be able to calculate their grades using the following table by adding up the scores they have received in each category weighted by the percentages below. You can check the score of each assignment at "My Grades" in the map menu on the left, and calculate the current grade yourself instead of asking the instructor from time to time. Note that mid-semester

grades are advisory and do not appear on the student's permanent record, the WSU transcript.

Your course average will be calculated using the following weights:

Assignment Breakdown	
Assignment	Percent of Overall Grade
Problem Sets	30%
SmartBook® Exercises	15%
Discussions (5% each)	10%
Exams (20% each)	40%
Participation	5%
Total	100%

After calculating your course average, letter grades for the course are then assigned according the following schedule:

Grading Schema			
Grade	Percent	Grade	Percent
A	94.0 - 100	C	74.0 - 76.9
A-	90.0 - 93.9	C-	70.0 - 73.9
B+	87.0 - 89.9	D+	67.0 - 69.9
B	84.0 - 86.9	D	64.0 - 66.9
B-	80.0 - 83.9	D-	60.0 - 63.9
C+	77.0 - 79.9	F	< 60.0

Note: You have to attain the lower bound of the grade range in order to obtain that grade. For example, if your course average is 79.999, you will get a C+, and only when you attain 80.000 will you get a B-.

Instructor Interaction

The instructor will be available for Questions & Answers via the Discussion Board. To access the Discussion Board, if you haven't done so already, expand the content folder in the map menu on the left by clicking the plus sign (+), and then select Discussion Board.

For matters that cannot be addressed via the Discussion Board, students should contact the instructor via e-mail. Make sure to specify the course prefix, number & section: **ECONS 323 Global Campus** in the Subject window of your e-mail. End your e-mail with your full name & student ID number. My email is **mengshan.zhao@wsu.edu**.

The instructor will be in the course space daily throughout the semester and answer e-mail in a timely fashion (no longer than two business days after reading a post or receiving an e-mail, and possibly faster). If there are any exceptions or periods during which the instructor must be away for more than 48 hours, the instructor will make an announcement.

Academic Integrity Instructor Statement

The emergence of generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT , Claude or Co-pilot) has sparked interest among many students in our discipline. The use of these tools for brainstorming ideas, exploring possible responses to questions or problems, and creative engagement with the materials may be useful for you as you craft responses to class assignments. While there is no substitute for working directly with your instructor, the potential for generative AI tools to provide automatic feedback, assistive technology and language assistance is clearly developing.

1) **All submitted work must be your own.** AI should assist in refining your ideas, not generating complete assignments.

2) Clearly indicate any AI tools used and describe their specific contributions to your work.

Failure to appropriately attribute AI assistance or submitting AI-generated content as your own may be considered a violation of the academic integrity policy. Ensure transparency in your use of AI tools. Please feel free to reach out to me well in advance of the due date of assignments for which you may be using generative AI tools and I will be happy to discuss what is acceptable.

Incomplete Grade Policy (Academic Rule 90h)

Incompletes are granted only with permission of the instructor and are subject to the following guidelines:

1. Students must request an incomplete in writing or by e-mail from the instructor before the end of the semester.
2. The request must be signed and dated by the student (or identified by student's e-mail address) and must explain the reasons behind the request for the incomplete.
3. In order to be considered for an incomplete, there are two main conditions:
 1. A student must complete a minimum of 75 percent of the assigned course work.
 2. A student must have a mathematical possibility of scoring a 60 percent or above for the entire course.
4. If extraordinary circumstances (e.g., family emergency, serious illness) are involved and are documented to the instructor's satisfaction, the professor/instructor retains the discretion to grant an incomplete even if the minimum conditions outlined in item 3 above are not met.

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If an incomplete is granted, the standard WSU policy applies (i.e., ALL work must be completed within one full year from the end of the enrollment semester at issue, unless a shorter time is specified by the instructor. Otherwise, an automatic grade of "F," or failing, will be entered on the student's transcript).

Credit Hour Equivalent

Academic credit is a measure of the total minimum time commitment required of a typical student in a specific course. For the WSU semester system, one semester credit is assigned for a minimum of 45 hours of student effort. See Academic regulation 27.

For a 15-week course, students should expect to spend a minimum of 9 hours per week for each online 3-credit course engaged in activities including, but not limited to: reading, listening to/viewing media, completing assignments and reviewing instructor feedback, contributing to discussions, conducting research, studying for and completing assessments, etc.

For a 7-week course, students should expect to spend a minimum of 19 hours per week for each online 3-credit course engaged in the activities as listed above.

For Graduate Students

The Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities describes procedures for channeling graduate student complaints, grievances, and concerns to faculty, staff and administrators for appropriate action. In conjunction with this document, graduate students must adhere to the Graduate School's Policies and Procedures. While these rights and responsibilities outline the complaint process, students are encouraged to use the Graduate School Deans for guidance and advice on conflicts that may arise at any point during their course of study at the University.

Academic Integrity

You are responsible for reading WSU's [Academic Integrity PolicyLinks to an external site.](#), which is based on [Washington State lawLinks to an external site.](#). If you cheat in your work in this class you will:

- Incur a penalty up to and including failing the assignment, exam, quiz, course requirement, or the course itself.
- Be reported to the [Center for Community StandardsLinks to an external site.](#).
- Have the right to appeal my decision.
- Not be able to drop the course or withdraw from the course until the **appeals** process is finished.

If you have any questions about what you can and cannot do in this course, ask me.

If you want to ask for a change in my decision about academic integrity, use [the formLinks to an external site.](#) at the [Center for Community StandardsLinks to an external site.](#) website. You must submit this request within 21 calendar days of the decision.

Copyright

Any course-related materials, presentations, lectures, etc. are the instructor's intellectual property and may be protected by copyright. The use of University electronic resources for commercial purposes, including advertising to other students to buy notes, is a violation of WSU's computer abuses and theft policy (WAC 504-26-218). Selling class notes through commercial note taking services without written advance permission from the faculty, could be viewed as be as copyright infringement and/or academic integrity violation, WAC 504-26-010 (3)(a,b,c,i).

Academic Regulations

Students enrolled in online courses are subject to the same University academic regulations as on-campus students. For the most accurate and up to date information go to [Academic RegulationsLinks to an external site.](#)

Online Collaboration

The essence of education is exposure to diverse viewpoints. You will engage with people with vastly different opinions and backgrounds. You are encouraged to disagree with the substance of others' ideas and opinions but do so with an active sense of respect for one another, and without losing focus on the topic at hand. Personal attacks, inflammatory statements, flaming, trolling, and disruption of the discussion do not have a place in academic discourse. Postings must comply with University policy on use of computing resources, including those regarding harassment and discrimination, as well as conform to the [WSU Community StandardsLinks to an external site.](#)

Your instructors will promote high-quality academic discussions by removing any posts they view as disruptive of the educational process and alerting students whose posts have been removed that they have violated course expectations. Students who continue to misuse the discussion boards after a warning may be subject to removal of access rights, course failure, and referral to the Office of Community Standards.

[Review the netiquette guidelines.Links to an external site.](#)

Cougar Community and Reimbursement Options

[Student InvolvementLinks to an external site.](#): Explore all the ways to become involved at WSU Global Campus and get connected with the Cougar community.

[ReimbursementsLinks to an external site.](#): ASWSU Global offers a variety of reimbursements to current S&A fee paying Global Campus students, including internet, childcare, mental health and wellness, a grocery voucher program and more.

Mental Health Resources and Support

[Mental HealthLinks to an external site.](#): Life as a student can be stressful. WSU Global Campus has mental health resources that may help.

[988 Suicide & Crisis HotlineLinks to an external site.](#): 24/7 call for yourself or if you are concerned about a friend, acquaintance, or family member.

Technical Support

The [WSU Global Campus Current StudentLinks to an external site.](#) site has all the non-content and administrative and contact related information you need to be a successful online learner as well as [study tips and skills for successLinks to an external site.](#).

Before contacting Technical Support please visit our [Equipment Requirements web pageLinks to an external site.](#) to ensure your system meets our computer requirements and test your connection.

Technical support is available 24/7

A member of our technical support team will assist you or direct your request to the appropriate group. The technical support team is NOT able to answer questions about course content or procedures (e.g., assignments, grades).

Please visit our [Tech Support web pageLinks to an external site.](#) for up to date hours and contact information.

Library Support

All students enrolled in Washington State University online courses can use the WSU Libraries online databases and receive reference and research assistance from their home campus. Students can also borrow books and other circulating material as well as access full-text journal articles.

General Library Links by Campus

- [Pullman Library SupportLinks to an external site.](#)
 - [Global Campus Library SupportLinks to an external site.](#)
 - [Vancouver Library SupportLinks to an external site.](#)
 - [Tri-Cities Library SupportLinks to an external site.](#)
 - [Library Support at Spokane – Riverpoint and Nursing at YakimaLinks to an external site.](#)
 - [College of Nursing Library SupportLinks to an external site.](#)
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Online Tutoring

As a WSU student enrolled in an undergraduate course, you have FREE unlimited access to Online Tutoring. This is not a course requirement, but a resource for you to utilize as needed.

With three ways to access a tutor you can choose the one that best fits your needs:

- **Submit a paper:** Writing Lab tutors will respond to papers in ANY academic subject. Just submit your paper, ask specific questions on the submission form, and a tutor will respond within 24-48 hours.
- **Live tutoring:** eChat rooms allow students to meet with tutors in one-on-one tutoring sessions via a fully interactive, virtual online environment.
- **Leave a question:** Students can leave specific questions for a tutor in any of our subjects by taking advantage of our eQuestions option. Our tutors will respond to your question within 24-48 hours.

More details and the list of available tutoring subjects can be found at [www.eTutoringOnline.orgLinks to an external site.](#)

As a WSU student enrolled in a graduate level course, you have FREE unlimited access to writing support through eTutoringOnline. This is not a course requirement, but a resource you may utilize as needed.

Writing Lab tutors will respond to papers in ANY academic subject. If you're working on a paper for ANY of your courses our tutors can help you. Just submit your paper, ask specific questions on the submission form, and a tutor will respond within 24-48 hours. For more information visit [www.eTutoringOnline.orgLinks to an external site.](#)

Important Dates and Deadlines

Students are encouraged to refer to the [academic calendarLinks to an external site.](#) often to be aware of critical deadlines throughout the semester.

University Syllabus

Students are responsible for reading and understanding all university-wide policies and resources pertaining to all courses (for instance: accommodations, crisis resources, policies on discrimination or harassment), which can be found in the university syllabus:

<https://syllabus.wsu.edu/university-syllabus>Links to an external site.