



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MEMPHIS[®]
Fogelman College
of Business & Economics

Course Syllabus
ECON 3210 – Labor Economics
Fall Semester, 2015
3.0 Credit Hours

Instructor: Dr. Jamin D. Speer

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Class meeting times: Tuesday/Thursday, 11:20-12:45, FCB 370
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:15-4:00 pm, or by appointment

Course Overview:

The primary goal of this course is to analyze how labor markets function. The course will familiarize students with economic theories of labor supply and demand decisions, wage determination, human capital, unemployment, gender and race discrimination, work incentives, unionization, and the evaluation of social programs. More broadly, the course should further the student's ability to think about real world issues from the mindset of a microeconomist. After completing this course, students should be able to more carefully think through the effects of policies on the decisions and outcomes of firms and workers.

Pre-Requisites/Co-Requisites:

This course is intended for advanced undergraduates. You must have taken Econ 2020 (Principles of microeconomics). Econ 3310 (Microeconomic theory) would also be helpful.

Required Texts (and Related Materials):

Labor Economics by George J. Borjas (5th, 6th, or 7th edition)

Location of Course Materials:

I will regularly post class materials (homework assignments, announcements, exam solutions, etc.) on the [eCourseware website](#). Please check it regularly.

Course Objectives:

By successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Analyze a worker's labor supply decision.

2. Analyze a firm's labor demand decision.
3. Understand labor market equilibrium and how a change in supply or demand for labor alters the wage and the quantity of labor.
4. Connect theory to important policy issues like immigration and the minimum wage.
5. Analyze the wage dynamics of jobs with desirable or undesirable characteristics.
6. Know the evidence and theory of labor market discrimination.
7. Give a presentation on a relevant policy topic.

Fogelman College: Learning Outcomes for Your Degree

This course is designed to help you to meet the overall learning objectives for the BBA degree offered by the Fogelman College. You should take the time to become familiar with the overall learning objectives as a student in the [BBA program](#):

- <http://www.fcbeassessment.net/LearningOutcomes/BBADegreeLearningOutcomes.pdf>

Grading and Evaluation Criteria

Your grade will be based on a mixture of assignments, exams, and attendance, as described below.

Final Course Grades

Final course grades are earned according to the following table:

Point Range	Assigned Grade
90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-70	D
Under 60	F

I reserve the right to give “pluses” and “minuses” in accordance with this grading scheme, at my own discretion. For example, a grade of 91 might merit a grade of A-minus.

There may be a curve applied; if so, it will be applied at the end to your final grade, not to each individual assignment.

Summary of Graded Activities

Points earned on the assessed activities will be distributed as follows:

Item	% of Grade
Problem Sets and Quizzes	30
Midterm Exams (2 exams)	35
Policy brief	15
Presentation	15
Attendance and Participation	5

You are expected to **attend and participate** in class. This essentially means: 1) show up to class regularly (an absence here and there is okay, but you should not make it a habit), 2) pay attention (no texting, facebook, etc.) and 3) be willing to answer questions or work on the board when asked. If you need to miss more than a couple of classes for some reason, please talk to me.

There will be approximately 6 **problem sets and quizzes** based on lecture material and the textbook. You may work together, but all students are required to turn in their own work. If this requirement is not followed, credit will not be given.

One of these problem sets is a **research summary**, in which you will be asked to read an academic article or two (provided by the professor) and write a short summary of that article. Details will be given later in the course.

There will be two **midterm exams** held in class. All material covered in the book, lectures, and problem sets will be fair game.

Instead of a final exam, you will be required to write a **policy brief** and give a **presentation** on a relevant policy topic in labor economics. A policy brief is a 2-page (single-spaced) paper that describes and analyzes a policy issue in detail, written as if the student is writing to a politician or other policy maker. The policy brief should briefly summarize various perspectives or sides of the issue, and then make a stand on the issue, in part by discussing some of the empirical evidence provided by the economics literature. Grading will emphasize concisely communicating your thoughts.

The presentation will be a short talk about a relevant policy topic (it may be the same issue as the policy brief if you like). In the presentation, the student should briefly summarize the arguments on both sides of the debate and then take a stance. Presentations will be *exactly* 5 minutes long; you will be stopped after 5 minutes, whether you have finished or not. The purpose of the presentation is to engage and motivate your audience while getting your point across concisely. More details on the presentation and policy brief will be given later.

Important Dates

(Dates are subject to change, through class announcements)

September 17: Problem set 1 due

October 1: Midterm review quiz due (online)

October 1: Midterm 1

October 22: Problem set 3 due

November 5: Problem set 4 due

November 17: Midterm review quiz due (online)

November 17: Midterm 2

November 27: Research assignment due via email (counts as a problem set)

December 1: Presentations day 1 (Policy briefs due for students not presenting)

December 10: Presentations day 2 during scheduled final exam time (Policy briefs due for students not presenting)

Course Topics:

Labor supply (~2 weeks)

Labor demand (~2 weeks)

Labor market equilibrium and applications (~3 weeks)

Compensating differentials (~1 week)

Human capital and education (~2 weeks)

Wage structure and inequality (~1 week)

Labor market discrimination (~1 week)

Labor mobility (~1 week)

Other topics as time permits

Course Policies

E-MAIL:

All students are required to maintain and access their University of Memphis (@memphis.edu) email account. You will receive all official course correspondence at this email account. Any inability to receive incoming mail in a timely fashion (e.g., not regularly checking your email, having a “full mailbox” condition, etc.) is the student’s responsibility.

Computers:

You are encouraged **not** use a laptop during class. This is for several reasons. First, the material will be hand-written on the board, and you will likely want to take notes by hand. Second, studies show that students who take notes by hand do significantly better in class than those who use laptops. Third, computers are distracting to students around you.

If you choose to use a laptop, I ask you to sit in the back 2 rows of the class so that those who wish to not be distracted can sit in front of the computer screens.

Attendance:

Although I will not take formal attendance, I expect you to be in class every time we meet. Based on my teaching experience, I can tell you that students who miss class perform significantly worse than students who attend regularly. Your general attendance and participation in class will factor into your grade (see grading section of this syllabus).

Adding / Dropping:

If you have questions about adding or dropping classes, please refer to this page on the [Registrar's website](#).

Academic Integrity:

The University of Memphis has clear codes regarding cheating and classroom misconduct. If interested, you may refer to the Student Handbook section on academic misconduct for a discussion of these codes. Note that using a "Solutions Manual" is considered cheating. Should your professor have evidence that using a "Solutions Manual" has occurred, he/she may take steps as described on the campus' [Office of Student Conduct website](#). If you have any questions about academic integrity or plagiarism, you are strongly encouraged to review the [Fogelman College's Website on Academic Integrity](#).

Participation:

To be successful in this course as a student, you must stay active and involved throughout the entire semester. This involves showing up to class, asking questions when needed, and answering questions when called upon.

Classroom Behavior:

All participants in the course should be considerate of the other course participants and treat them with respect. This involves, among other things, not talking while instruction is taking place. If you disrupt class, I will ask you to leave.

Late Assignments:

Assignments will only receive full credit if turned in by the due date specified by the professor. The only exception to this policy will be for official school-approved absences (school athletics, etc.) or in other *extreme* cases. The definition of "extreme" is at the discretion of the professor. If you feel that you have a reason to turn in late work that should qualify, please come talk to me. Problem sets turned in within a week of the due date will receive half credit at most.

Extra Credit:

I do not plan to offer extra credit in this course. Your final grade will be computed based on your work on the formal/assessed activities previously described in this syllabus. However, individual assignments and exams may offer extra credit in the form of bonus questions or more than 100 points being possible.

Inclement Weather:

In the event that inclement weather requires the cancellation of classes at The University of Memphis, local radio and television media will be immediately notified. Additionally, The University of Memphis has established an Inclement Weather Hotline at 678-0888 as well as [TigerText](#), an emergency alert text messaging service to students, faculty and staff. This optional service is used in the event of an on-campus emergency, an unscheduled university closing, or a delay or cancellation of classes due to, for instance, inclement weather. Click [Here](#) for information on TigerText.

Syllabus Changes:

The instructor reserves the right to make changes as necessary to this syllabus. If changes are necessitated during the term of the course, the instructor will immediately notify students of such changes both in class and by posting on ECourseware.

Student Services

Please access the [FCBE Student Services](#) page for information about:

- Students with Disabilities
- Tutoring and other Academic Assistance
- Advising Services for Fogelman Students
- Technical Assistance