

ECON 430: Economics of Human Resources

Summer 2014, Session I

Instructor: Wayne Liou
Classroom: Kuykendall 306
Times: M-F, 10:30-11:45 AM

Office: Saunders 522
Office hours: By appointment
E-mail: wliou@hawaii.edu

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes:

Labor markets and the economics of human resources, probably more so than other economic fields, is very different from the perfectly competitive ideal which economists typically analyze. These imperfections to the labor market lend to interesting policy discussions which are not so straightforward. This class focuses on the intricacies of these imperfections. After this course, students should be able to adequately argue either side of a labor market/human resource policy debate with both theoretical and empirical arguments.

Textbook:

“Required”:

Tito Boeri and Jan van Ours, *The Economics of Imperfect Labor Markets, 2ed*

The Boeri/van Ours book is available electronically on MyiLibrary, via UHM’s library, and is required in the sense that you need the book to do homework problems (and reading, should you be the studious type), but you don’t need to purchase it from the bookstore, Amazon, etc. I highly recommend actually purchasing the book, however, as sifting through pages is much easier with a physical copy. Plus, I searched long and hard for a cheaper textbook.

Strongly Recommended:

George Borjas, *Labor Economics*

or

RG Ehrenberg and Robert S. Smith, *Modern Labor Economics: Theory and Public Policy*

The Borjas book and the Ehrenberg/Smith book are highly recommended for the first few topics, at the very least. The Boeri/van Ours book isn’t quite as good at introducing these concepts. The Borjas and the Ehrenberg/Smith book are rather costly, but more complete than the Boeri/van Ours book; if you trust my lecturing and your ability to digest the Boeri/van Ours book, don’t worry about getting either the Borjas or the Ehrenberg/Smith book. If you’d like something that will likely be more reliable than my lectures and the Boeri/van Ours book, I’d look into the Borjas or the Ehrenberg/Smith book. The Ehrenberg/Smith book is available at Hamilton Library; last I checked, three older editions are available, and these older editions are probably suitable for the purposes of this course. Neither the Borjas nor the Ehrenberg/Smith book will be available at the bookstore.

Topics Covered:

1. Labor supply & demand
2. Wage structure - executive pay, minimum wage, unions
3. Discrimination, immigration
4. Family policies, education
5. Retirement, unemployment, active employment

Grading:

Homework (5)	x 4% each	= 20%
Debates/discussions (# depends on class size)		= 40%
Exams (4)	x 10% each	= 40%

I do use a +/- grading system.

Homework, as previously mentioned, will be questions from the Boeri/van Ours book. Will include some short answer stuff that you could probably copy from the chapter, and some mathematical work.

Debate/discussions will cover the last 4 topic “groups” mentioned in the “Topics covered” section. One specific topic (ex, immigration from “3. discrimination, immigration”) will be chosen, a more guiding policy-related question will be asked, and two sides will fight to the death. Each student will probably do two-ish debates.

Exams will cover the last 4 topic “groups” mentioned in the “Topics covered” section. There might be a little math, but the exams will focus more heavily on policy analysis.

Late/Missing Assignments

Don't turn in homework late. Don't miss debates/discussions or exams.

Academic Integrity

Don't cheat.

Students with Disabilities

If you feel you need reasonable accommodations because of the impact of a disability please (1) contact the KOKUA Program at 956-7511, in room 013 of the QLCSS, and (2) speak with me privately to discuss your specific needs. I will be happy to work with you and the KOKUA Program to meet your access needs related to your documented disability.