

# LABOR ECONOMICS

University of New Mexico  
Economics 427/520 - Fall 2002  
SSCI 1008, Tuesdays 7-9:30 PM

Prof. Melissa Binder: Office hours Thurs. 2:00-4:00 PM and by appointment  
1006-D Econ, 277-3548, mbinder@unm.edu

## Course Description

This course is the gateway to the field of labor economics and will familiarize students with theories of labor supply decisions, wage determination, human capital, unemployment, gender and race discrimination, work incentives and unionization. From this rigorous theoretical foundation, students will explore key developments in the United States labor market over the past few decades regarding inequality, immigration, globalization, de-industrialization, unionization, the computer revolution, women's labor force participation and welfare reform.

## Course Requirements

- 1. E-mail account.** Students providing their e-mail addresses will be added to the list ECON520-L. Course announcements and reminders will be posted as needed. Please note that anything you send to the list will be forwarded to all of your classmates. If you want to send a message to the instructor, use my personal e-mail address (see above).
- 2. Class preparation.** Each class will cover one chapter from the text and at least one journal article or professional report. Students are expected to read this material prior to class.
- 3. Article summaries.** These are due at the beginning of each class and should indicate the a) research question, b) theoretical framework, c) empirical approach (data used, models estimated), d) results and e) questions raised (for example, were a, b and c reasonable and did author interpret the results in a correct and meaningful way). [Undergraduates: 30% of grade, Graduate students: 10% of grade]
- 4. Quizzes.** The first 10 minutes of each class will consist of a one-question quiz on the material covered in the previous class. [ Undergraduates: 40% of grade; Graduate students: 30% of grade]
- 5. Graduate Student Presentations.** Graduate students will prepare a 50-minute presentation on the assigned chapter, and provide students with at least 5 study questions or problems to help them prepare for the quiz. [Graduate students: 30% of grade]
- 6. Term paper.** Students will write a 5 page paper (8-10 pages for graduate students) critiquing a viewpoint expressed in the mainstream press that concerns labor economics by reviewing evidence provided in academic journals. The idea is that many observers and policy-makers make judgments on policies and issues that have economic implications without bothering about the facts. I want you to determine what we really, scientifically, know and don't know about the policy or issue at hand. You may choose a topic from the syllabus (for example, how does globalization affect U.S. workers?) or any labor topic (including related subfields such as education, health, family economics, among others). Undergraduates should review 3-5 academic articles or working papers; graduate students should review at least 8. The mainstream claim (and its source) and full citations for the academic articles and papers are due in class on Oct. 29. The paper is due in class on Dec. 3. [Undergraduates and Graduate students: 30% of grade]

## Required reading

Ehrenberg, Ronald and Robert Smith. *Modern Labor Economics: Theory and Public Policy* (New York: Addison-Wesley).

*Readings for Econ 427/520*, on reserve at Parish Library. Asterisked readings are required for Graduate Students only (see course schedule below).

## Recommended:

Borjas, George. *Labor Economics* (New York: Irwin McGraw-Hill).