

ECONOMICS OF HUMAN RESOURCES
ECON 430 (001)
(Oral Communication)

Semester: Fall 2004
Lecture: MW 12:00-1:15 pm
Location: GRG 214

Instructor: Comfort M. Sumida
Office Hours: MW 10:30-11:45 am or by appt.
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Course Description

Does college education truly increase a worker's productivity and earnings? Should the government increase the minimum wage? Are the salaries of top executives too high? How does a business decide on how many people to employ? What determines who chooses to work and who does not? What characteristics make it more or less likely that workers will change locations or jobs? How do the nature of technology and tastes of workers interact to generate wage differentials? How do earnings differ among families and individuals?

Economics of Human Resources tries to answer these questions. This course aims to present an analysis of the main topics in human resources and labor economics. In particular, the course studies the most recent debates on U.S. labor policy, trends in employment and unemployment, wages and income distribution, and labor market outcomes. In addition, this course fulfills the Oral Communication requirement.

Textbook: * *Modern Labor Economics* by Ehrenberg, R.G. and Robert S. Smith (2002, 8th ed. Addison Wesley Longman)

* Required and available at the bookstore for purchase

Assignments

Assignments will include: i) four debate sessions requiring one-page summaries of debate issues and positions, ii) three discussions of assigned readings (requiring discussion questions turned in before class), and iii) quizzes and a final exam.

Debate and presentational speaking: Each student will choose two topics from a list of assigned topics. Exploiting the assigned topic, each student will have 5-7 minutes of presentation. Debate topics will be given in class.

Discussions of assigned readings: Each assigned reading and case study has a corresponding discussion day, during which students discuss issues relevant to the textbook and course during class. Before the discussion each student should turn in at least two discussion questions, which will be distributed in class for the purpose of stimulating discussion.

Feedback

Feedback from peers: In the class session following each debate, students will respond to the various arguments and evidence presented during the debate. They will also discuss their problems and successes in presenting the debate position, in preparing arguments and evidence, in making eye contact, in handling notes, etc.

Self-evaluation: The course will use a brief self-evaluation form for each student. Students are expected to provide thoughtful, honest self-evaluations, as well as brief comments on the best of their classmates.

Instructor feedback: “Self-evaluation” and “feedback from peers” will be utilized in instructor feedback to students (possibly midterm and the end of semester), allowing the instructor to play off of students’ own analyses in providing out-of-class written and oral feedback (arguments, handling notes, eye-contact, etc).

Grading

Debate, discussion, class participation	40%
Quizzes	20%
Final exam	40%

Oral communication performance will count for 40% of the final grade, and requires regular class attendance. Several quizzes and a final exam will count for 60% of the final grade. This assures that students will be able to maintain a good grade even if speaking is not one of his or her strengths. Furthermore, because each student’s learning progress will be considered, initial weaknesses in speaking will not ruin a student’s course grade.

Important Dates	August 23 (M)	First day of Instruction
	December 9 (W)	Last day of Instruction
	December 13 (M)	Final Exam (12:00 – 2:00 pm)

Please check your travel and work arrangements to make sure you are able to take the final exam on the scheduled date and time. No early/late final exams will be given.

Scheduled Topics

1. Overview of the Labor Market (Ch. 2)
 - Demand for labor and supply of labor
 - Determination of wage
2. Demand for Labor (Ch. 3, 4, 5)
 - Short-run vs. Long-run
 - Payroll tax and other policy applications
 - Wage elasticity
 - Minimum wage laws
3. Supply of Labor (Ch. 6, 7)
 - Decision to work
 - Income and substitution effects
 - Household production
 - Effect of child care
 - Labor force participation patterns by age and sex
4. Investment in Human Capital (Ch. 9, 5)
 - Schooling investment model
 - Measuring returns to schooling
 - Difficulties (signaling, quality, etc.)
 - General vs. specific training
5. Worker Mobility, Unemployment, and Migration (Ch. 10, 15)
 - Migration decision (individual and family)
 - Turnover
 - Job search
 - Vacancies and unemployment
6. Wage Structure (Ch. 8, 11)
 - Compensating wage differentials
 - Employee benefits
 - Effort, productivity, and pay
 - Efficiency wages
7. Gender and Race in Pay (Ch. 12)
 - Theories of discrimination
 - Measuring discrimination
8. Unions (Ch. 13)
 - Union structure
 - Theory of collective bargaining
 - Effects of unions