

PPHA 44302 Labor Markets: A Global Perspective

Winter 2026

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Office hour: Monday 1-2pm in Keller 2085, after lectures and by appointment.

Lecture: Monday and Wednesday, 3:00-4:20pm in Keller 1022

TA: TBA

TA session: Friday, 1:30-2:50pm in Keller 0021 (see schedule)

TA office hour Posted on Canvas

Course Description

In this course we will explore standard models that form the core of labor economics including labor supply, labor demand, job search models, wage setting, education and migration. For each topic we will then examine empirical applications of these models with a focus on middle and low-income countries. We will discuss how these traditional models are useful, or not, in understanding labor market outcomes in these settings and how they can be expanded to better capture relevant features of labor markets outside high-income countries.

You will learn:

- How to apply the tools of economic analysis to understand how labor markets function in different settings.
- Develop a critical approach to evaluating economic models and understanding when they may or may not be useful.
- Gain a working understanding how labor market institutions and policies affect labor markets, particularly in middle and low-income countries.

The course is issue and problem-solving oriented, making rigorous use of the tools and techniques of applied economics.

Practical Information:

- This course is cross-listed as ECON 14020 and PBPL 25640. ECON 14000 is an exclusion.
- This course is complementary to PPHA 46610 “Workplace and Family Policy”. There is some overlap in the discussion of labor supply and theories of discrimination.

We will meet twice a week for 80-minute lectures on Monday and Wednesday (with the exception of January 19, Dr Martin Luther King day, “MLK”, see schedule). I will post slides and readings before class on Canvas. Attendance is required for lectures, and you may miss one of the classes after week 2 without consequences.

The TA sessions will be used for problem sets (optional), one midterm (not optional, obviously) and student presentations (you have to attend the whole session in which you present). Classes will not be recorded, except for the make-up class for MLK day.

I love to meet you and hear from you – about your personal experience, examples from your home country, your career plans and any feedback you may have about the class. My office hours are open-door, walk-in – and I can close the door upon request. I am available right before and after lecture time, and you can always send me an email to schedule a meeting, in person on Mondays and Wednesdays, or online on other days. Please reserve email for making appointments, and include “PPHA 44320” in the subject line for a quick response.

Teaching Assistants

TBA

Suggested Textbook

Ronald G. Ehrenberg, Robert S. Smith and, Kevin F. Hallock: *Modern Labor Economics: Theory and Policy* (ESH). The 15th edition is quite expensive, earlier versions from say the 11th version will do as well. Note that earlier versions have Ehrenberg and Smith as authors. We will discuss most of the book.

While this text may prove useful for students, everything you need to know will be covered in lectures and I will often cover topics not highlighted as strongly in the text. I will also assign you required readings which will be posted on Canvas consisting of academic papers or news articles on specific topics.

Grading Criteria

15% **In Lecture Mini-Surveys and Participation**, starting in week 3.

There will be 10-13 pencil and paper mini quizzes in the lecture, each counts for 1%. I will use these to flag difficult concepts, get feedback and measure attendance. If you come late or leave early without approval or explanation you will receive a zero. I drop the lowest score (which is another way of saying that you can miss one lecture after week 2). Some part of this component is reserved for meaningful in lecture participation – I value good questions and comments, as well as examples. I am aware that speaking up in a larger class requires more courage for some, and I will take this into account: try it!

15% **Quiz**

The quiz (“midterm”) is 40 minutes on Friday Jan 30 during the TA session.

20% **Presentation**

In the second half of the course every student will present 10-15 minutes in the TA session. Details will be posted on Canvas.

20% **Small Homework Assignments**

There will be four problem sets, which will vary from theory exercises, reflecting on literature and small data assignments. Data assignments can be done in R or Stata. Every assignment is 5%, and grading will be based on effort (completion). There is a 12 hour grace period after the deadline, followed by a 5%-point deduction for every hour after that. Instructions and deadlines will be posted on Canvas.

30% **Final exam**, 2 hours to be scheduled in the exam period.

=> You may **not** use **any AI** for any of these components, unless explicitly stated.

Tentative Class Schedule

(Changes and additional readings will be announced on Canvas)

		Lecture	TA Session
1	Jan 5	Labor markets: Overview	ESH: Chapters 1-2
2	Jan 7	Labor Demand: Theory	ESH: Chapters 3-4
	Jan 9		No TA session
3	Jan 12	Labor Demand: Applications	
4	Jan 14	Labor Supply: Theory	ESH: Chapter 6
	Jan 16		Problem Sets
	Jan 19	MLK – no class	
5	Jan 21	Labor Supply: Theory	ESH: Chapter 7
6	Jan 23*	Labor Supply: Applications	No TA session due to MLK
7	Jan 26	Labor Market Equilibrium	
8	Jan 28	Frictions in the Labor Market	ESH: Chapter 5
	Jan 30		Quiz classes 1-7
9	Feb 2	Compensating wage differentials	ESH: Chapter 8
10	Feb 4	Compensating: Applications	
	Feb 6		Presentations**
11	Feb 9	Human Capital: Theory	ESH: Chapter 9
12	Feb 11	Human Capital: Applications	
	Feb 13		Presentations**
13	Feb 16	Worker mobility: Theory	ESH: Chapter 10
14	Feb 18	Worker mobility: Applications	
	Feb 20		Presentations**
15	Feb 23	Pay and productivity	ESH: Chapter 11
16	Feb 25	Job Search	
	Feb 27		Presentations**
17	Mar 2	Unemployment	ESH: Chapter 15
18	Mar 4	International Trade	ESH: Chapter 16
	Mar 6		Presentations**
TBD		Final Exam	

* Due to celebrating Dr Martin Luther King day we have class on Friday 3-4.20pm. Lecture attendance is not required and I will record the class.

** You are required to attend the entire TA session in which you present. All other presentations are optional (e.g. if you want to give moral support to a friend who is presenting).

Grades and Grading

If you believe that your grade on a quiz or exam question is incorrect or unfair, please submit your concerns in writing to me within a week of the quiz or exam being returned. Fully summarize what you believe the problems are and why. I will respond in writing. Note that your grade on that question can go up or down (but down-grading will never happen for obvious mistakes in grading).

Make-up Exams and Quizzes

I know life happens so you may have a conflict due to travel for academics/sports/ or job interviews, religious holidays, family emergencies, and sickness. In the case of travel or religious holidays, you must email me at least one week beforehand. In the event of an emergency or illness, you must provide proof that the excuse is legitimate (e.g., a doctor's note). We will then schedule your makeup exam or quiz. If you miss class for any reason, you should get notes and announcements from a classmate.

In-Class Etiquette

People learn more and perform better when they feel **safe and respected**. I will always strive to treat you fairly and give you the respect that you deserve. I expect you to treat me and your peers with respect in return. Part of respecting me and your classmates is creating a learning environment with minimal distractions. All **phones and laptops** should be put away during class time. Please come to class on-time. Please use a **name-tent** during the lecture, Harris students should have one and there are empty tents and markers in the back of the classroom.

I would also encourage you to use **pen and paper** rather than a tablet to take notes. [Research](#) suggests that people learn better when they write by hand rather than type notes. Typing tends to lead to transcription rather than synthesis.

Academic Integrity

The Harris School has a formal policy on academic integrity that you are expected to adhere to. Examples of academic dishonesty include (but are not limited to) turning in someone else's work as your own, copying solutions to past years' problem sets, and receiving any unapproved assistance on exams. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this course. All cases of cheating will be referred to the Dean of Students office, which may impose penalties per the Harris School Disciplinary Procedures. If you have any questions regarding what would or would not be considered academic dishonesty in this course, please do not hesitate to ask.

Use of AI

I expect AI to have limited benefits in this course, except for one or two places (and I will indicate in the course where that is and how AI can be useful). AI can provide a shortcut for skipping the learning for some of the graded work, but cannot do the learning for you. I do consider use of AI in assignments where AI is not allowed academic dishonesty (and so should you – you put your name on work that is not your own and take credit for that).

General Resources Available to Students

- [Harris Academic Support Programs and Handbook](#)
- [Student Wellness](#)
- [University Learning Resources](#)

Harris School and University of Chicago Policies

- [Harris School Policies](#)
- [University General Policies](#)
- [University Academic Policies](#)
- Policies on [audio and video recordings](#) and [deletion](#).