

**Economics 312: Labor & Human Resource Economics**  
**Montana State University**  
**Spring 2017**

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**Instructor:** Isaac Swensen

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**Class:** 9:25-10:40 Tue & Thur in LINH 113

**Office Hours:** Mon 8:30-9:30 & Thur 1:00-2:00

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**Course Description:** This course introduces the basic models and tools needed to analyze labor-market issues and familiarizes students with common topics in labor economics. The core material focuses on economic modeling of labor supply, labor demand, human capital investment, and wage determination. The course also covers issues such as unemployment, unions, discrimination, and the government's role in the labor market. In covering these topics, an underlying objective is to promote a better understanding and appreciation of empirical tools used in applied labor economics research.

**Prerequisites:** ECNS 204

**Textbook:** McConnell, Brue, and Macpherson (MBM) *Contemporary Labor Economics*. Older editions are acceptable. You will find the lectures to be more valuable if you read the relevant material in the book before it is presented in class. The website for the book provides additional materials to support your study: [http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0073375950/student\\_view0/index.html](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0073375950/student_view0/index.html)

**Other Reading:** When appropriate, related research papers and news articles will be posted on the class website (D2L). I will notify you when I post them and they will be part of your graded assignments.

**Course Website:** All class assignments will be posted on D2L (<https://ecat.montana.edu>). It remains your responsibility to keep current on the posted and in-class announcements and important dates.

**Grading Policy:** The graded coursework will consist of homework assignments, a written project, quizzes, a midterm exam, and a final exam. Your final course grade will be determined as follows:

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7% Homework/Pop Quizzes
15% Written Project
23% Quizzes
25% Midterm Exam (Tue, 3/1/16)
30% Final Exam (Thur, 5/4/17, 12:00-1:50)

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Once all coursework is graded, I will assign final letter grades based on a curve. Note that this implies there will not be a pre-determined numerical grading scale for this course. Unless there has been a legitimate grading error, **once final letter grades are awarded, I will not consider changing a grade.**

**Homework / Pop Quizzes:** Homework will be assigned nearly every week and will be graded based on completion. Unless otherwise noted, you are welcome to work together on assignments, but each student must write up and submit their own work. Assignments must be handed in no later than the end of class on the day it is due. **Homework will not be accepted after this deadline.** Also, the grader is authorized to deduct up to five percentage points for homework that is unstapled, disorganized, or without a name. I will drop the lowest homework score for each student. To facilitate in-class discussion related to the assigned readings, expect several short pop quizzes covering the key points of the readings.

**Written Project:** The objective of the written project is to help students develop a better understanding of economic research methods and improve written and analytical skills. The project requires each student to find a general interest news article reporting on a labor economics research paper and submit a detailed written report summarizing the academic article and evaluating the accuracy of the news article. Additional information will be provided regarding the project specifics and deadlines.

**Quizzes:** 6 quizzes will be given throughout the course. See below for the tentative quiz dates.

**Exams:** All exams are cumulative. No makeup exams will be given. **Do not take this class if you know that you cannot make one of the scheduled exams.**

**Other:** I reserve the right to add or subtract assignments.

**On cell phone use:** Please turn cell phones to the off position or vibrate mode during lecture. If there is a legitimate reason for you to be within reach during class times, please see me prior to using your phone. All cell phones must be turned off during examination periods.

**Students with Disabilities:** If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements with me immediately.

**Academic Integrity:** If you cheat you will receive an F in the class. Academic dishonesty (from plagiarizing work to cheating on exams) will not be tolerated and violations will be reported to the University. If you suspect another student of cheating, it is in your best interest to notify me immediately.

**Outline of Course Material:** The following is a tentative schedule of lectures. Expect adjustments throughout the term.

Week of 1/12: Intro & MBM, Chapter 1

Week of 1/17: MBM, Chapter 2

Week of 1/24: MBM, Chapter 2

- **Quiz 1: In Class, Thursday, 1/26**

Week of 1/31: MBM, Chapter 2/3

Week of 2/7: MBM, Chapter 3/4

- **Quiz 2: In Class, Tuesday, 2/7**

Week of 2/14: MBM, Chapter 4

- **Quiz 3: In Class, Thursday, 2/16**

Week of 2/21: MBM, Chapter 5 / Midterm Review

Week of 2/28: Midterm / MBM, Chapter 5

- **Midterm Exam: In Class, Tuesday, 2/28**

Week of 3/7: MBM, Chapter 6

- **Class Project: Turn in progress report, Thursday, 3/9**

Week of 3/14: No Class

- **Spring Break, No Class Tuesday, 3/14**
- **Spring Break, No Class Thursday, 3/16**

Week of 3/21: MBM, Chapter 6/7

- **Quiz 4: In Class, Thursday, 3/23**

Week of 3/28: MBM, Chapter 7

Week of 4/4: Chapter 7/Compensating Differentials

- **Quiz 5: In Class, Thursday, 4/6**

Week of 4/11: Chapter 10

Week of 4/18: Discrimination

- **Written Project Due by Thursday, 4/20**
- **Quiz 6: In Class, Thursday, 4/20**

Week of 4/25: Project Review / Final Review

**Final Exam: 12:00-1:50pm Thur, May 4 in our usual classroom**