

**COURSE SYLLABUS**  
Topics in Labor Economics  
North Carolina State University

Course ECG730, Spring 2012  
M & W 1:30 – 2:45pm  
01108 SAS Hall

**Instructor Information:**

Melinda Sandler Morrill, Assistant Professor

Contact info: [melinda\\_morrill@ncsu.edu](mailto:melinda_morrill@ncsu.edu)

Office: Nelson Hall 4144, Office hours by appointment.

**Course Summary:**

This course will cover topics in labor economics. By reviewing selected topics within applied microeconomics we will highlight the tools and techniques used by applied researchers to answer contemporary research questions.

We will cover topics falling roughly into the following categories: human capital, returns to school and experience, labor supply, wage inequality and discrimination, labor demand, and, as time allows, household production, marriage, divorce, fertility, immigration, health production, and aging. Specific topics covered may depend on students' interests.

**Prerequisites:**

Students should have satisfactorily completed Ph.D.-level courses in microeconomic theory and econometrics and should have a good working knowledge of microeconomic theory, applied econometrics, and calculus.

**Link to Course Website:** <http://www4.ncsu.edu/~msmorri/courses/ECG730>

Updated assignments and readings will be posted on the course website.

**Make-ups and Anticipated Absences, Disability Accommodations:**

If you need to miss a class for a religious observance or for another University-approved reason, please notify me within the first two weeks of class. Students requiring special accommodations for disabilities should schedule an appointment to discuss this within the first two weeks of class.

**Readings:**

Required and suggested readings will be posted on the course website at least one class period in advance and will be updated throughout the semester. Suggested papers for the presentation assignment will be distributed in the second week of classes. Students will be responsible for completing assigned readings throughout the semester.

**Evaluation:**

Students are expected to complete assigned readings prior to class. Class participation is strongly encouraged and students should be prepared with questions on assigned readings. Grades for the course will be based on the following assignments.

- (1) **Problem Sets:** There will be two written problem sets assigned during the semester. Students may work in groups. However, every student must hand in a unique copy of the homework assignment that indicates on the first page the names of all collaborators and the contributions made by each individual in the group. Students will have at least 7 days to complete the problem sets once assigned. Late homework will not be accepted, so please plan accordingly.
- (2) **In-Class Presentation:** All students will select one paper to present during class. A list of suggested papers and detail of the assignment will be provided during the second week of class. Students may select alternative papers to present with prior approval. Presentations will be “seminar style” with questions from the class throughout.

The presenter should identify the research question, discuss the methods used for analyzing the question, and present a summary of the main findings. In addition, the presenter should identify the main assumptions of the model and/or empirical strategy and discuss the reasonableness of these assumptions. In doing this, presenters should provide a critique of the work and possible extensions or alternative strategies that the authors might have chosen.

- (3) **Midterm Examination:** There will be one take-home midterm exam. Details of exam coverage and format will be given at least two weeks prior to the scheduled exam date.
- (4) **Final Paper and Presentation:** Students will be expected to complete a final project for the course. Students will be expected to prepare an original research paper (10-15 pages) and to present their research in class. Details on the assignment will be distributed separately. The paper should include a clear research question, an identification strategy, and preliminary, original empirical results.

Grades will be calculated according to the following weights:

- |                                  |         |
|----------------------------------|---------|
| (1) In-class presentation:       | 15%     |
| (2) Problem sets:                | 5% each |
| (3) Midterm Exam:                | 30%     |
| (4) Final Paper:                 | 30%     |
| (5) Presentation of Final Paper: | 15%     |

**PRELIMINARY Course Outline (we will not have time to cover all the topics included here):**

- (I) Introduction to Labor Economics
- (II) Human Capital, Returns to Schooling, Experience, Tenure, and Training
  - Returns to schooling (twin studies, IV methods)
  - Age-earnings profiles
- (III) Labor Supply
  - Static
  - Life-cycle and retirement
  - Elasticity: taxation, women's labor supply
- (IV) Labor Demand
  - Elasticity
  - Mandatory benefits: minimum wage laws, overtime premiums
- (V) Wage Inequality
  - Compensating wages, self-selection, equalizing differences, matching
  - Discrimination
  - Wage decompositions
- (VI) Topics in Economic Demography
  - Household production and sexual division of labor
  - Marriage and divorce
  - Immigration / Mobility
- (VII) Topics in Health Economics
  - Health production, income health gradient
  - Utilization of health services, RDD methods
  - Health insurance and labor markets