LER 590: Workforce Policies and Partnerships

Should an HR Director make a partnership with a local community college to train workers? Do job training programs work? Does the minimum wage reduce employment? This class focuses on the evaluation and analysis of key labor market policies, programs, and interventions. The class has two primary goals. The first is to introduce students to key debates and challenges in the U.S. labor market. The second is a practical goal: to inform students about the various institutions and dynamics that they will face when seeking to hire and train workers in their future HR positions. The class will take a multi-disciplinary approach to the topics it addresses; most of the readings will be drawn from the economics, sociology, and public policy literatures.

Each week there will be a short quiz on that week's readings. Students will also write a short paper analyzing a policy topic during the semester. At the end of the course, students will work in groups to present an assessment of a labor market program, partnership, or practice. Classroom participation is essential. A note on readings: although I often require only selected pages from a given text, this class involves a commitment to keep up with a significant volume of reading assignments.

Texts are available on Compass.

Grading

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly quizzes</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written paper/memo</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>Class participation</td>
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<td>Final project/presentation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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Week 1: Introduction / How to Interpret Academic Papers / Primer on Labor Economics

Lecture / presentation in class.

Week 2: Labor Market Policy Context


Week 3: Education, Skills, and Tasks


**Week 4: Labor Market Intermediaries and Search / Matching**


**Week 5: Changing Job Structure and The Gig Economy**


Week 6: Will the Robots Steal Our Jobs?


Week 7: Job Training Programs


**Week 8: Minimum Wages / Living Wages / Wage & Hour Enforcement**


**Week 9: Gender and Racial Discrimination (Hiring and Workplace Practices)**


Week 10: Family Leave / Sick Leave


Livingston, Gretchen. 2013. "Among 38 Nations, U.S. is the Outlier When It Comes to Paid Parental Leave." Huffington Post, December 12, 2013. (Based on PEW Research Center data.)


Week 11: Safety Net Programs: Unemployment Insurance, Disability Insurance


**Week 12: Firm-level Innovations 1: High Performance Work Systems**

Osterman and Shulman, “How Firms Think.” In Good Jobs America, pp. 48-69.


**Week 13: Firm-level Innovations 2: Corporate Partnerships with Local High Schools, Votech Programs; Apprenticeships**


Symonds, William C., Robert Schwartz, and Ronald F. Ferguson. 2011. Pathways to prosperity: Meeting the challenge of preparing young Americans for the 21st century. Cambridge, MA:
Professor Andrew Weaver
LER Rm. 211

Pathways to Prosperity Project, Harvard University Graduate School of Education. Read pp. 9-13; 19-21; 23-37.


**Week 14: Skill Mismatch**


Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee. 2011 “Why Workers Are Losing the War Against Machines,” *The Atlantic.*


**Week 15: Final Project Presentations**

TBD.