

# ILRLE 2400 Economics of Wages & Employment

## Sophomore Writing Section – Fall 2021

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**Office Hours: Tuesdays from  
1:30 PM to 3:30 PM**

### Brief Course Description:

Should you work full time, part time, or not at all? Which job offer should you choose? How do you decide if an investment in higher education is right for you? How do companies decide how many workers to hire and what to pay them? Are human workers *really* going to be replaced by robots?

These questions have one thing in common: they can be answered using the tools of labor economics.

### Learning Outcomes:

**PREDICT** how changes in the economic environment impact labor demand, labor supply and equilibrium;  
**COMPARE** theories that explain unemployment, unequal wages for equally productive workers and discrimination;

**EVALUATE** policies designed to remediate unemployment and earnings inequality;

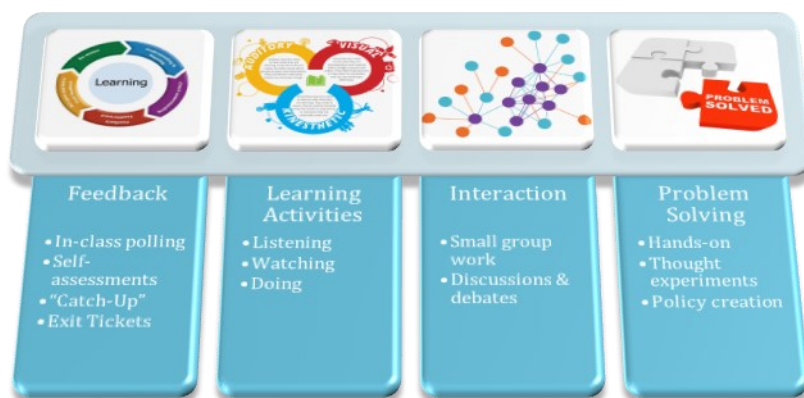
**WRITE WITH CLARITY** (to a non-professional reader) about technical concepts and procedures.

### Prerequisites:

ECON 1110 and ECON 1120, or permission of the instructor.

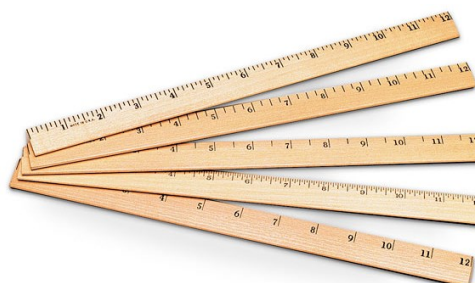
### Achieving the Outcomes:

- Lectures
- In-class problem solving
- Experiments
- Simulations
- Group work
- Student polling
- Exit tickets
- ... and other active learning opportunities!



### Measuring Our Achievement:

- Ungraded self-assessments
- Ungraded group discussions
- Graded homework
- Graded writing assignments
- Preliminary and final exams
- Analytical research paper

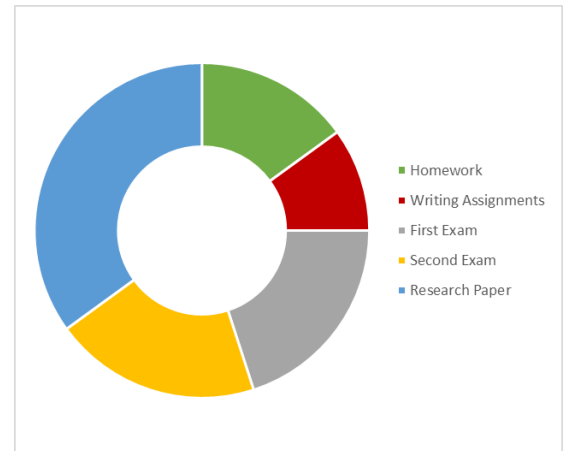


## Quantifying Our Achievement:

At the end of the semester, your final course grade will be calculated as follows:

- 15% Graded homework assignments
- 10% Graded writing assignments
- 20% First exam
- 20% Second exam
- 35% Analytical research paper

Letter grades will be assigned based on your overall course grade at the end of the semester. No letter grades will be assigned to the graded homework assignments, graded writing assignments, preliminary exam, final exam or research paper.



Upon successful completion of this section of ILRLE 2400, students *may* also be deemed to have completed ILR's advanced writing requirement. In determining whether credit for the writing requirement will be awarded, I will evaluate your analytical research paper and other writing assignments for effort, clarity and correctness. Students whose papers indicate a deficiency in expository skills may pass the course but will be required to take another writing course to satisfy the ILR advanced writing requirement. No student who fails the course overall will be deemed to have completed ILR's advanced writing requirement.

## Graded Homeworks:

Throughout the semester, we will be completing five (5) graded homework assignments. These assignments are built to help you develop mastery by practicing the application of the knowledge and skills we will work on in this class. It also helps you develop time management, organization, task completion and responsibility, life skills you will need throughout your college career and beyond.

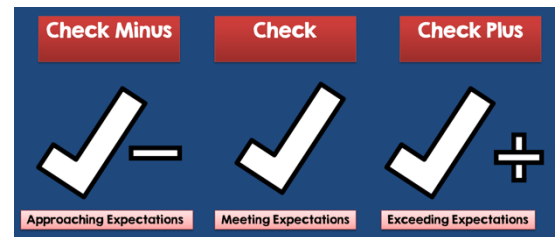


The schedule of graded homework assignments is given at the end of this syllabus. You are expected to submit your homeworks no later than the stated due date. If your assignment is submitted late, you will lose ten (10) points for each day past the due date, and no assignments will be accepted more than three (3) days past the due date.

## Graded Writing Assignments:

Throughout the semester, we will be completing 10 graded writing assignments. Each writing assignment will be based on a topic discussed in class. For each writing assignment, you will be writing a short (roughly two-page) essay that briefly summarizes all of the required readings on that topic and compares the views presented in those readings. Some of these views may be uncomfortable and/or controversial. The writing assignments are designed to not only improve your writing skills, but to assist you in thinking critically about some of the most pressing labor economics issues of the day.

Writing assignments will be graded on a check plus / check / check minus basis. These grades translate into numeric scores of 100, 85 and 70, respectively. In order to receive full credit for a graded writing assignment, it must be typewritten and submitted on time.



## Examinations:

All students are expected to sit for two examinations. **The first examination will take place on Thursday, October 7<sup>th</sup> during the scheduled class period. The second examination will take place on Tuesday, December 7<sup>th</sup> during the scheduled class period.**

If you have a conflict with one of the exam dates, please see me as soon as possible to discuss alternative arrangements. If you have a health, personal or other issue, please let me know as soon as you learn of this issue. Unexcused absences from any exam will result in a grade of zero (0) for that exam.

## Analytical Research Paper:

All students are expected to write an analytical research paper of approximately 8 – 10 pages. This is an essential component of the course, and will account for 35% of your overall course grade. I will work with each of you to develop a research question to be answered or a hypothesis to be tested. I will also work with each of you to assist you in developing the economic theory that will guide your analysis. You will then collect the data necessary to complete your analysis, and write a research paper presenting your analysis.

More information about the analytical research paper can be found at the end of this document.

## Readings, Case Studies and Multimedia Materials

The required labor economics textbook for this course is Ronald C. Ehrenberg and Robert S. Smith, *Modern Labor Economics: Theory and Public Policy*, 13<sup>th</sup> Edition (Routledge).

Additional required readings, case studies, and multimedia materials will be assigned periodically, and are indicated in the reading list at the end of this syllabus. Optional readings and materials will be suggested throughout the course and will be made available via the online learning management system. If you are unable to find a reading, please let me know right away.

## Students with Disabilities:

Your access in this course is important. Please provide me with your Student Disability Services (SDS) accommodation letter as early in the semester as possible so that I have adequate time to arrange your approved academic accommodations. If you need immediate accommodation for equal access, please speak with me after class or send an email message to me (with a cc to [sds\\_cu@cornell.edu](mailto:sds_cu@cornell.edu)). If the need arises for additional accommodations during the semester, please contact SDS.

## Religious Accommodations:

If you will be absent from class or have a conflict with a scheduled assignment or exam because of your observance of a holy day, please let me know during the first week of class so that we can make alternative arrangements.

## Student Athletes:

Students represent Cornell in 35 intercollegiate sports. If you are a student athlete, please provide me with your travel schedule as early in the semester as possible. You are responsible for contacting me regarding any conflicts, and we will work together to identify a reasonable resolution.

## Classroom / Community Responsibilities:

A large part of the academic experience is the challenging of viewpoints and exploring issues from differing perspectives. You are encouraged to express differences of opinion and challenge viewpoints in a mutually respectful manner that opens dialogue and does not threaten any member of the learning community. Our classroom environment will be a safe place for the open exchange of ideas by all participants. Each participant is responsible for ensuring that his or her own behavior promotes this.

There are five ground rules for my classroom. Each student is expected to understand and abide by these rules:

1. Arrive on time, prepared for class
2. Ask for clarification if you are confused
3. Take responsibility for the quality of the discussion
4. Challenge one another, but do so respectfully
5. Keep an open mind – enter with the expectation of learning something new.



Additionally, it is important that we take care of ourselves and each other. **I have an open-door policy – please see me if you want to talk about the course or anything else.**

## Academic Integrity:

You are expected to abide by the [Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity](#) and the [Campus Code of Conduct](#). Please read and understand these policies.

Any work submitted by a student in this course will be the student's own. You are permitted – and encouraged – to discuss course materials with your fellow students and work together to develop your understanding of concepts and applications. However, all graded assignments are to be completed by each student independently.

All course materials – including but not limited to readings, lecture slides and handouts, review sheets, problem sets, and examinations – are intellectual property belonging to the author(s). The buying, selling or (re)posting of any course materials or video or audio recordings of lectures is expressly prohibited; engaging in such behavior constitutes academic misconduct with serious consequences. If you have any questions, please let me know.

## Homework Assignment Schedule:

Assignment #	Chapters	Topics	Due Date
1	Ch. 1	Intro to Labor Economics	9/14/21
	Ch. 2	Overview of Labor Market	
2	Ch. 3	Demand for Labor	9/28/21
	Ch. 4	Labor Demand Elasticities	
3	Ch. 5	Labor Market Frictions	10/5/21
	Ch. 6	Supply of Labor	
4	Ch. 8	Compensating Wage Differentials	11/9/21
	Ch. 9	Investments in Human Capital	
	Ch. 11	Pay and Productivity	
5	Ch. 12	Labor Market Discrimination	11/30/21
	Ch. 14	Unemployment	
	Ch. 15	Earnings Inequality	

## Writing Assignment Schedule:

Assignment #	Topic	Due Date
1	<b>Narrative Essay:</b> If you could spend one day doing whatever you wish, how would you use your time?	8/31/21
2	<b>Compare-and-Contrast Essay:</b> How is your writing process similar to / different from the process outlined by Johnson, and how could you improve your process?	9/2/21
3	<b>Interpreting Empirical Research Papers:</b> Card and Krugman Empirical Paper	9/9/21
4	<b>Expository Essay:</b> Explain why the scale and substitution effects both lead to a decrease in labor usage when the wage rate increases.	9/16/21
5	<b>Causal Analysis Essay:</b> If the wage rate increases, what is the long run effect on the usage of labor and capital?	9/23/21
6	<b>Expository Essay:</b> Explain the nature of the backward-bending labor supply curve.	10/19/21
7	<b>Causal Analysis Essay:</b> What factor(s) explain why an individual would accept a job with a high risk of injury?	10/26/21
8	<b>Persuasive Essay:</b> Is a college education a right or a privilege?	11/2/21
9	<b>Persuasive Essay:</b> Why does wage discrimination still occur in today's labor markets?	11/16/21
10	<b>Expository Essay:</b> What are the causes of unemployment?	11/23/21

# The ILRLE 2400 Analytical Research Paper

During the semester, we will spend considerable time together working on the development and writing of your research paper. Writing an analytical research paper can feel like an overwhelming challenge, so we are going to break the process into manageable stages within two broad categories:

## A. Choosing an interesting – and feasible – topic that produces new knowledge or provides an insightful critique of the work of others.

One of the most difficult phases of doing research is developing a question that is both interesting and has the possibility of being answered. A good question is one whose answer is (a) not obvious, and (b) can be guided by, or understood through, the use of economic theory. The topic should be one that requires you to go beyond what is covered in our textbook. In most cases, your topic will require a statistical analysis of data that you collect:

*Is there a growing discrepancy between the “superstars” and “non-superstars” in professional baseball?*

The required analysis for your topic is something you and I will discuss when we meet individually. These analyses are feasible even if you have not yet taken a statistics course, and I will support you through every step of your analysis.

## B. Writing a paper that clarifies, for yourself and your intended audience, the question you are seeking to answer and your analysis of that question.

To assist you with this, your analytical paper must include the following sections:

- Introduction (your introduction must contain a one-sentence statement of the question or hypothesis being examined)
- What economic theory says about the question or hypothesis
- Analysis (data analysis, analysis of previous studies, analysis of relevant theoretical concepts)
- Conclusion

You may, of course, include other sections as is appropriate for your chosen question or hypothesis.

To ensure that you are making appropriate progress throughout the semester on your research paper, we will use the following milestones and due dates:

Milestone	Due Date
1. Initial typewritten submission of potential topics of interest to you	9/21/21
2. At least one in-person office discussion of your topic	Complete by 10/1/21
3. A one-sentence statement of your topic and outline of “Theory” section	10/14/21
4. An initial complete draft of the entire paper	11/11/21
5. At least one in-person office discussion of revisions to your draft	Complete by 11/23/21
6. Final submission of your entire paper	12/2/21

If you have any questions or concerns about the analytical research paper, please contact me at your convenience.

# AUGUST 2021

SUBJECT ILRL2400 Writing PERIOD Fall 2021

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SAT/SUN
WEEK						1
WEEK	2	3	4	5	6	7/8
WEEK	9	10	11	12	13	14/15
WEEK	16	17	18	19	20	21/22
WEEK 1	23	24	25	26 Ch 1 - What is Labor Economics?	27	28/29
WEEK 2	30	31 Ch 1 - Economic Models & Concepts  Writing 1 Due				

# SEPTEMBER 2021

SUBJECT ILRL2400 Writing PERIOD Fall 2021

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SAT/SUN
WEEK 2			1	2 Ch 1 Appendix - Regression Analysis	3	4/5
				Writing 2 Due		
WEEK 3	6	7 Ch 2 - Labor Market Concepts	8	9 Ch 2 - How Labor Markets Work	10	11/12
				Writing 3 Due		
WEEK 4	13	14 Ch 3 - Demand for Labor in the Short Run	15	16 Ch 3 - Demand for Labor in the Long Run	17	18/19
		HW 1 Due		Writing 4 Due		
WEEK 5	20	21 Ch 4 - Own Wage Elasticity	22	23 Ch 4 - Cross Wage Elasticity	24	25/26
		List of topics due		Writing 5 Due		
WEEK 6	27	28 Ch 5 - Frictions on the Employer Side	29	30 Ch 5 - Frictions on the Employee Side		
		HW 2 Due				
WEEK						



# OCTOBER 2021

SUBJECT ILRL2400 Writing PERIOD Fall 2021

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SAT/SUN
WEEK					1	2/3
WEEK 7	4	5 Review Class - Exam 1	6	7 Exam 1	8	9/10
WEEK 8	11	12 NO CLASS - FALL BREAK	13	14 Ch 6 - Labor Supply: Decision to Work  Thesis statement & theory outline	15	16/17
WEEK 9	18	19 Ch 7 - Labor Supply: Household Production  Writing 6 Due	20	21 Ch 8 - Compensating Wage Differentials	22	23/24
WEEK 10	25	26 Ch 9 - Human Capital Part 1  Writing 7 Due	27	28 Ch 9 - Human Capital Part 2	29	30/31
WEEK						

# NOVEMBER 2021

SUBJECT ILRL2400 Writing PERIOD Fall 2021

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SAT/SUN
WEEK 11	1	2 Ch 11 - Pay and Productivity Part 1  Writing 8 Due	3	4 Ch 11 - Pay and Productivity Part 2	5	6/7
WEEK 12	8	9 Ch 12 - Protected Characteristics and Labor Market Outcomes  HW 4 Due	10	11 Ch 12 - Theories of Discrimination  Initial draft of paper due	12	13/14
WEEK 13	15	16 Ch 14 - Unemployment Part 1  Writing 9 Due	17	18 Ch 14 - Unemployment Part 2	19	20/21
WEEK 14	22	23 Ch 15 - Income Inequality Part 1  Writing 10 Due	24	25 NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING	26	27/28
WEEK 15	29	30 Ch 15 - Income Inequality Part 2  HW 5 Due				
WEEK						

# DECEMBER 2021

SUBJECT ILRL2400 Writing PERIOD Fall 2021

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SAT/SUN
WEEK 15			1	2 Review Class - Exam 2	3	4/5
				Final Paper Due		
WEEK 16	6	7 Exam 2	8	9	10	11/12
WEEK	13	14	15	16	17	18/19
WEEK	20	21	22	23	24	25/26
WEEK	27	28	29	30	31	
WEEK						