Advanced Labor Economics: Econ 9220  
Fall Semester 2017 (CRN: 90937)  
Tuesday, 4:30 – 7:00pm  
Aderhold Learning Center 230

Instructor: Dr. Jonathan Smith  
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Course Description & Objective:
The goals of ECON 9220 are for you to understand theoretical and empirical labor economics, ranging from the canonical papers to the most recent research. By doing so, you will be in a position to begin your research and successfully contribute to the field.

Labor economics is a broad field and we will only cover a small fraction of it. You are strongly encouraged to stay up to date with current research by reading top journals. Important articles in labor economics are published in leading general interest and labor journals. Leading labor journals are the *Journal of Labor Economics*, *Journal of Human Resources*, and *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*. Additional labor journals include *Industrial Relations*, *Journal of Labor Research*, *Labour Economics*, and *Research in Labor Economics*. There are also several good journals related to sub-fields like the economics of education, children, crime, and demography/populations. A valuable collection of survey articles is contained in the seven-volume *Handbook of Labor Economics* (Vols. 1, 2 in 1986; Vols. 3A, 3B, 3C in 1999; Vols. 4A, 4B in 2011). It is also worth joining the NBER labor studies subscription list. You may find the textbook useful as a resource, though it is not required: Pierre Cahuc, Stephané Carcillo, and André Zylberberg, *Labor Economics*.

Course Requirements and Grading Policy:

*Grading overview*
- Two problem sets – 20% (10% each)  
- Exam – 30%  
- Research paper proposal and presentation – 30%  
- Participation and Research Chat – 20%

*Problem sets* – Problem sets will largely be empirical and require Stata but will also include some questions that show a command of the theory (e.g., solving equilibrium conditions). You can work with one other person and hand in your solutions together.
Exam – The exam will be an assessment of all course lectures and assigned readings. It will be preparation for your qualifying exam. There will be some theory (e.g., setting up and solving a model), some empirical work (e.g., interpretation or results, critical analyses, empirical models), and some discussion on the state of the literature (e.g., best methods and findings).

Research paper proposal and presentation – The goal of this portion is to start you on a chapter of your dissertation that will ultimately result in publishable research. Your 10-15 page proposal should demonstrate a command of the relevant literature, clearly state your contribution, and detail your methods. If it is an empirical paper, you also need to discuss the data you use or expect to use. You are encouraged to try to get the data and run some analyses, though, this is not required. If you select a topic that is scheduled late in the semester (or even next semester), please read the papers listed in the syllabus and come speak to me for more guidance. Your research paper is intended to evolve into a dissertation essay or publishable paper, so do not go down a road that does not interest you or is infeasible. On October 10th you need to hand in a mini-proposal, approximately 2-3 pages, with at least two related references.

Final proposals and presentation of proposals are due the last day of class, November 28th. The presentation will be roughly 15 minutes each, similar to that of a conference presentation. You should use slides and leave your classmates and me with a full understanding of your idea. This is also a time to receive comments to improve the proposal, if you choose to continue the research. The presentations will continue on December 12th, the final exam slot. All students should be prepared to present on November 28th and the order will be determined by lottery.

More details on the research proposal will be discussed in class. But feel free to run numerous ideas by me prior to going too far down any path.

Participation and Research Chat – You are expected to attend all classes in addition to seminars that cover labor. Your classmates and I will benefit from your participation, so ask and answer questions and be a critical consumers of research. You are also expected to come prepared to class by reading the assigned papers (marked with an asterisk). I also include numerous other important papers - reading them is optional but encouraged. They may help you in your proposal and future research.

Depending on the number of students, groups of approximately 2-3 students will be in charge of leading a “Research Chat” based on one of the papers below marked with a double asterisk. I will lead a discussion on the details of the papers. Your group’s job is to lead a discussion about potential research that builds on the papers. For example, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the paper and how can they be improved? Can the paper be replicated in another setting? Are there other data or methods to address the topic? Are there related identification strategies, experiments, or natural experiments that can answer the question? The goal is to present some potential research ideas that build on the paper and encourage your classmates to add to the conversation and help develop ideas and co-authors. More information will be provided in class.
Important Dates:
- October 3rd – Problem set #1 due
- October 10th – Mini-proposal due
- November 7th – Problem set #2 due
- November 14th - Exam
- November 28th and December 12th – Final proposal and presentations

Academic Honesty and Disability Services
All students are responsible for knowing GSU’s Policy on Academic Honesty as published in On Campus: The Undergraduate Co-Curricular Affairs Handbook (Section 409). Students who wish to request accommodation for a disability may do so by registering with the Office of Disability Services. Students may only be accommodated upon issuance by the Office of Disability Services of a signed Accommodation Plan and are responsible for providing a copy of that plan to instructors of all classes in which an accommodation is sought.

Note: The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary. Also, your constructive assessment of this course plays an indispensable role in shaping education at Georgia State University. Upon completing the course, please take time to fill out the online course evaluation.
Detailed Schedule and Readings (those marked with an * or ** are required)

1. August 22nd – Static Labor Supply (Method – DID)


3. **September 5th – Labor Demand (Method - Instrumental Variables)**


4. **September 12**th – Unemployment and Search


5. **September 19th – Unemployment Insurance (Method – Regression Discontinuity)**


6. **September 26th – Selection and Methods Lab, Catch Up**


7. **October 3rd – Wage Dispersion and Compensating Differentials**


8. October 10th – Imperfect Labor Markets and Efficiency Wages


9. **October 17th – Mandates, Licensing, and Unions**


10. October 24\textsuperscript{th} – Immigration


11. October 31st – Peer Effects


**12. November 7th – Recent Topics in Labor Economics**


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13. **November 14th** – Exam

14. **November 28th** – Presentations

15. **December 12th (4:15-6:45pm in Aderhold 230)** – Presentations