ECON 140 : Labor Economics Fall 2025

University of California, Merced

Instructor: Jose Rosa
Email: jrosa3@ucmerced.edu   **Office:** COB 373
Office Hours: Friday 12-2pm and Tuesday's 3-4pm; additional hours near exams (Zoom by request)
Class Format: In-person
Meets: Mon/Wed, 5:30–6:45 pm   **Location:** GRANITE PASS 125
Website: CatCourses (Canvas): announcements, files, and grades will be posted there.

Course Introduction

Labor markets are the primary source of income for most households. This course uses economic theory, data, and discussion to understand how labor markets work, why wages differ, and how policy shapes work and well-being. We actively practice with data (IPUMS CPS/ACS; Stata) and connect models to current debates.

Prerequisites

- **Statistics prerequisite:** C– or better in ECON 010 *or* POLI 010; *or* a score of 5 on AP Statistics.

- **Intermediate Microeconomics prerequisite:** C– or better in ECON 100 *or* MGMT 100.

Required Materials

- No required textbook. Concise lecture notes/handouts will be provided. Short readings/podcasts posted on CatCourses.

- Stata access (campus license or lab). Instructions on CatCourses.

- Free IPUMS CPS/ACS account: https://ipums.org.

Learning Outcomes

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Understand some theoretical models of labor supply and labor demand.

2. Building on your statistics background, learn to analyze and interpret labor market data using statistical programming software, including measuring labor economic disparities between groups.

3. Apply knowledge of theoretical models and data analysis skills to understand the factors that determine wages for an occupation.

4. Analyze contemporary debates on labor market policies.

Programmatic Learning Outcomes

This course's Goals and Learning Outcomes meet several of the Economics Program Learning Outcomes, the Management & Business Economics (MBE) Program Learning Outcomes, and the General Education (GE) Program Learning Outcomes listed below. For a map of the specific PLOs that this course satisfies, please refer to the program curriculum maps.

Economics Program Learning Outcomes

1. Describe the underlying economic incentives and tradeoffs associated with the decisions made by individuals, firms, international organizations and governments.

2. Apply economic concepts in analyzing policy debates and evaluating policy outcomes.

3. Design and conduct research that can inform managerial and economic policymaking, including by collecting, analyzing and interpreting data using relevant software.

4. Demonstrate critical, evidence-based thinking about economic phenomena, whether encountered in coursework or in media reports, so that students can evaluate the accuracy of hypotheses presented.

5. Communicate clearly and cogently in written and oral form in academic and professional environments.

MBE Program Learning Outcomes

1. Describe the underlying economic incentives and tradeoffs associated with the decisions made by individuals, firms, organizations, institutions and governments.

2. Apply theories and concepts from disciplines in Management and Business Economics (e.g., accounting, economics, statistics, finance, and marketing) to business management situations.

3. Communicate clearly and cogently in written and oral form within professional and academic environments.

4. Design and conduct research that can inform managerial and economic policymaking, in part by collecting, analyzing and interpreting data using relevant software.

5. Describe and evaluate the relevant ethical and social issues associated with different economic and business ventures.

General Education Program Learning Outcomes

1. Life at the Research University: Asking Questions.

2. Reasoning: Thinking Critically.

3. Communication: Explaining and Persuading.

4. Cultural and Global Awareness: Engaging with Differences.

5. Citizenship: Contributing to the Public Good.

Culminating Experience and Writing in the Discipline

This course is designated as a *Culminating Experience.* We will pull together and demonstrate program learning by applying theory and data skills to real-world labor market questions and by producing substantial written work (Writing in the Discipline).

Grading

Component	Weight
Attendance/Participation	10%
Homework (5; lowest dropped)	25%
Occupational Analysis Project (milestones, poster, final talk)	35%
Midterm Exams (3 at 10% each)	30%
Total	100%

Attendance/Participation (10%). Interactive class — questions and discussion encouraged. CatCourses will drop at least your first three missed meetings from the calculation.

Homework (25%). Five problem sets reinforce exam topics and build toward your project. Collaboration is encouraged; submissions must be your own. Lowest score dropped; late work generally not accepted without documented reasons.

Project (35%). *Occupational Analysis*: choose an occupation and apply labor economics throughout the term. Milestones include short write-ups, and a final presentation.

Exams (30%). Three midterms (closed book/notes).

Grading Scale

A+: 98–100; A: 93–97.99; A-: 90–92.99; B+: 87–89.99; B: 83–86.99; B-: 80–82.99; C+: 77–79.99; C: 73–76.99; C-: 70–72.99; D+: 67–69.99; D: 63–66.99; D-: 60–62.99; F: <60.

Registrar Dates (Fall 2025)

- Instruction begins: **Wed, Aug 27, 2025**
- Labor Day (no classes): Mon, Sep 1, 2025
- Course withdraw window: Thu, Sep 18 – Wed, Nov 5, 2025
- Veterans Day (no classes): Tue, Nov 11, 2025
- Non-Instructional Day: Wed, Nov 26, 2025 (**no class**)
- Thanksgiving Holiday (no classes): Thu–Fri, Nov 27–28, 2025
- Instruction ends: **Fri, Dec 12, 2025**
- Final exams: **Sat, Dec 13 & Mon–Fri, Dec 15–19, 2025**

Weekly Schedule (Mon/Wed pattern; tentative)

Subject to adjustment for pace and learning needs. Detailed readings and problem sets posted on CatCourses.

Week	Dates	Topics / Assessments
W0	Wed **Aug 27**	Syllabus; course intro;
W1	Mon Sep 1; Wed Sep 3	(Labor Day **no class Monday**); Labor Supply
W2	Mon Sep 8; Wed Sep 10:	Labor Supply
W3	Mon Sep 15; Wed Sep 17	Labor Demand
W4	Mon Sep 22; Wed Sep 24	Labor Demand
W5	Mon **Sep 29**; Wed Oct 1	**Midterm 1 (Mon)**;
W6	Mon Oct 6; Wed Oct 8	Labor Equilibrium
W7	Mon Oct 13;Wed Oct 15	Human Capital
W8	Mon Oct 20; Wed Oct 22	Human Capital & Wage Structure
W9	Mon Oct 27; Wed Oct 29	Labor Mobility
W10	Mon Nov 3; Wed Nov 5	Labor Discrimination
W11	Mon Nov 10; Wed Nov 12	**Midterm 2 (Mon)**
W12	Mon Nov 17; Wed Nov 19	Inequality & Labor Unions
W13	Mon Nov 24; Wed **Nov 26**	TBD (Mon). **No class Wed** (Non-Instructional Day).
W14	Mon Dec 1; Wed Dec 3	Unemployment **Presentation Day Wed**
W15	Mon Dec 8; Wed Dec 10	**Midterm 3 (Wed)**

Classroom Norms and Communication

We succeed by asking questions and learning from errors: Participate, be respectful, and support peers. Use CatCourses for Q&A so answers help everyone. Email is for private matters; include ECON 140 in the subject.

Office Hours & Asking Questions

We learn by surfacing confusion early. Something I like to repeat a lot is *"Reveal what you don't know in class so you don't have to during assessment"* If you have questions :

- Come to student hours often (no question is too small). Bring a screenshot/photo of code, a short paragraph, or the exact problem number you're stuck on.

- Ask questions in class; if you're wondering, three others are too. I will pause frequently for Q&A.

- Use CatCourses for public questions so answers help everyone; email me for private matters.

Generative AI in ECON 140: Use it—don't outsource your thinking

Why it's here. Generative AI can be a powerful learning tool: it can explain ideas in plain language, generate extra practice, and give you immediate feedback. Experimental evidence shows

AI assistance can raise performance, especially for learners who start with fewer advantages which can diminish outcome gaps.[1] Recent classroom research also finds AI tutors can improve learning efficiently.[2]

Good uses (encouraged as study aids) use AI to:

- Brainstorm approaches, unpack confusing definitions, or get alternative explanations.

- Draft outlines, rubrics, study plans, and practice questions.

- Debug code or Stata syntax and generate *checkable* pseudocode.

- Improve clarity/grammar in your own writing (you remain the author).

Not allowed without explicit permission do *not* use AI to:

- Generate final answers or whole assignments and submit them as your own work.

- Fabricate citations, data, or statistical output; copy solutions from AI without verifying.

- Use any AI or internet assistance during quizzes/exams (unless explicitly stated).

Disclosure requirement. When AI meaningfully assists a homework or project, include an *AI Assistance Statement* at the top of your submission, e.g.: "I used [ChatGPT/Khanmigo/etc.] to: (i) brainstorm an outline; (ii) debug a loop; (iii) polish grammar. I verified all economic reasoning, calculations, and code. Any mistakes are my own."

Exams. Exams assess *your* knowledge. Unless explicitly stated, all quizzes/midterms/finals are *closed-AI* (no AI tools, no internet, no shared documents). Calculators only if specified.

Late/Make-up Policy

Extensions considered for documented illness, religious observance, or emergencies; contact me as soon as feasible. Exams must be taken in person at the scheduled time. If a conflict arises due to a university-sanctioned event, contact me at least two weeks in advance.

Academic Honesty

Please refer to the UC Merced Academic Honesty Policy for a detailed description of the academic honor code on campus.

You can view the UC Merced Academic Honesty Policy here: Academic Honesty Policy (UC Merced)

Use of AI tools: I am not prohibiting the use of AI in this course, but remember that AI is a tool, not a replacement for your own work. If your process relies too much on AI, you will not do as well on exams in the short run, nor leave the class having learned as much coding to help you in the long run.

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[1]Noy, S. & Zhang, W. (2023). *Experimental Evidence on the Productivity Effects of Generative AI. Science*, 381(6654), 187–192. doi:10.1126/science.adh2586.

[2]Kestin, G. et al. (2025). *AI tutoring outperforms in-class active learning.* Open-access summary: pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12179260/.

Student Accessibility

If you anticipate or experience barriers due to pregnancy, temporary medical condition, or injury, please feel welcome to contact me so we can discuss options. University of California, Merced is committed to creating learning environments that are accessible to all. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on a disability, please feel welcome to contact me privately so we can discuss options. In addition, please contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) at (209) 228-6996 or access@ucmerced.edu as soon as possible to explore reasonable accommodations. All accommodations must have prior approval from Student Accessibility Services on the basis of appropriate documentation.

Inclusive Learning

UCM's diversity is our strength. Please provide feedback on approaches, content, or language that can help make the course more inclusive, respectful, and effective for everyone.

Note: Syllabus subject to change with advance notice in class and on CatCourses.