

# ECON 4234 Labour Economics and Human Resources

Spring 2021

Hong Kong University of Science & Technology

Course website: <https://canvas.ust.hk>

## Course Syllabus

<u>Class meetings</u>	Tue & Thu	3:00 – 4:20 pm	<a href="#">Zoom meeting 936-9264-7762</a>
<u>Tutorials</u>	Fri	6:00 – 6:50 pm	

### Instructor

Professor Sujata VISARIA  
Department of Economics  
Zoom [443-411-2019](#)

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Office hours: Fri 9:30 – 11:00 am

### Teaching Assistants

SHI Xiang

Department of Economics  
Zoom [935 8984 8795](#); [Passcode: ECON4234](#)

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Office hours: Mon 9:00 – 10:00 am

## Course description

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Labour is a factor of production. But it is a special factor of production, because it is provided by human beings. Humans voluntarily make labour supply decisions. Also, labour market outcomes translate directly into human wellbeing.

Labour economics is a study of how labour markets function and the determinants of outcomes such as the extent of employment and the wage level. Topics we will cover include education & training, labour supply and welfare programmes, migration, minimum wages and discrimination. All topics will be motivated by real-world examples and policy questions, so that you can see how this field of economics can enhance our understanding of how the world works.

## Course Intended Learning outcomes (CILOs)

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Students who complete this course successfully will be able to:

1. define key concepts related to labour markets
2. explain the optimisation process behind labour supply and demand, analyse labour market equilibria and welfare programmes
3. understand and analyse the effects of migration on labour markets, both in the short and long term
4. understand and analyse the effects of minimum wages on labour market outcomes

5. discuss different theories about the role of human capital in labour markets
6. analyse the phenomenon of labour market discrimination, design ways to measure it and analyse its labour market consequences
7. communicate own thoughts and analysis about economic phenomena and economic logic in written and oral formats

## **Prerequisites**

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You must have taken at least ECON 3133 or ECON 3014 or equivalent courses successfully to enrol in this course.

I will assume that you know core concepts in calculus and microeconomics. Please review these if you feel uncertain.

## **Learning environment**

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### **Meetings/Lessons**

We will meet online via Zoom meeting ID 936-9264-7762. Only HKUST authenticated users will be eligible to join. Please click through “Zoom meeting” on our Canvas website.

Your active participation is essential to make our classes a success. Barring temporary technical problems, I encourage and expect you to join with both audio and video.<sup>1</sup> Group chat will be on for the first few minutes of every meeting, and may be turned on again from time to time if needed. However for most of the meeting, the chat function will be turned off. This helps to avoid parallel conversations that may distract other students.

So as to get to know you a bit better, you are invited to submit a “[Hello, I am...](#)” video through Flipgrid. You can use this video to tell everyone a bit about yourself, and your expectations and possible concerns about this course. You can also view your classmates’ videos and leave them comments/likes. The video is optional, but please do submit it if you can. Submissions will close on February 18 at 11:59 pm.

I would like our meetings to be interactive. You are always welcome to ask questions or make comments related to the material we are discussing. Please “raise your hand” in the Zoom meeting, and I will call on you. I may also pose a question and ask for volunteers to answer, or ask a specific question to a specific student. We will also use Zoom polls as a way to check understanding. It is important that you are actively participating throughout!

We will not hold regular tutorials, but you can use the time slot to work with your team members on team exercises.

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<sup>1</sup>If you have privacy concerns, please contact me and we can discuss them.

If in the future the university changes to “mixed-mode” our meeting arrangements may change. I will keep you informed through the course website.

## Learning resources

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- The slides for our class discussions will be posted on the [course website](#) on Canvas. Please note that these slides are not a substitute for attending class.
- The Zoom meeting will also be recorded and a link provided through Canvas.
- Any videos that are shown during the class meeting will also be provided separately through Canvas.
- We will also use the Canvas course website for announcements, to administer quizzes, collect your assignments, and to post your scores. Please check it regularly.
- The textbook for the course is George Borjas’s *Labor Economics* (Eighth Edition). An e-book version of the eighth edition can be purchased from the campus book store through [this](#) link. The library has the [seventh edition](#) and you can also use that. If there is any confusion about which sections we are referring to, please clarify with me or Shi Xiang. If I refer to any additional material during our lectures, I will provide references to it on the course website.

## Assessment scheme

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### **Class Participation 15%**

Your participation score will depend on your active participation in the class meetings. This will be evaluated through your attendance in the class meetings, and participation in the Zoom polls that will be conducted from time to time. Students who actively ask questions, answer questions and make comments will also receive extra credit.

### **Homework Assignments/Quizzes 35%**

- There will be three homework assignments. They will appear on Canvas as quizzes. They will test your understanding of material that has been discussed in class or in your readings.
- Assignments will include both multiple choice questions and long-answer questions. You may be expected to submit graphs (which can be hand-drawn, or drawn on a computer or tablet) in the form of pdf files. If hand-drawn, we strongly recommend [scanning](#) the image to maximise contrast and resolution, and minimise file size. This will help ensure you can upload the file smoothly.

- Each assignment will have a stated deadline and must be submitted before the deadline is up. Late submissions are generally not possible. See exact dates in the Course Schedule.

### **Analysis of Real-world Questions (Team Exercise) 30%**

There will be three team exercises (dates in Course Schedule) where you will apply your knowledge to analyse a real-world question. During class time, you will work with a team in a break-out room to put together your analysis in a Powerpoint presentation. You will submit your work through Canvas at the end of the class. (This is called the draft submission.) You will receive feedback the next day, and each team will revise their work, and submit a revised version two days later. In the following class meeting, the entire class will view selected presentations and we will conclude our discussion of this topic.

Each team exercise will be worth 10% of your grade (draft: 4%; revised: 6%). Evaluation rubrics will be provided on the Canvas course website.

### **Analysis of Real-world Questions (Individual Final Quiz) 20%**

Each student will **individually** answer a final quiz about the three team exercises you worked on during the course. This quiz will be held during the final exam slot decided by the ARO.

## **ECON 4670: Economics Research and Communication**

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This course *does not* automatically help you pass ECON 4670. However, interested students may take their work from the team exercise and write a 10-page *individual* paper for ECON 4670 by mid-June 2021. **I cannot accept more than 20 students. Students who wish to pursue this option should inform me no later than 9 February. If this option is over-subscribed, I will randomly pick 20 students and inform you by 11 February.** Further details about the requirements for ECON 4670 will be provided to accepted students after 15 March.

## **Academic honesty**

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Academic dishonesty is immoral and unfair, and I take a very serious view of it. You must be aware of [HKUST's policy on academic integrity](#), and abide by its provisions. I will report all cases of suspected misconduct to the Dean's Office, and their decision will be final and binding.

Please be especially careful not to plagiarize. Many students plagiarize without realizing what they are doing. Any text that you quote directly from another source must be included in quotation marks, and referenced correctly. If you do not include quotation marks, the words must be your own. If we detect plagiarism on written assignments we will penalise it.

Table 1: Course Schedule

Class	Date	Topics	Events	Reading	Assigned	Due <sup>a</sup>
L1-2	Feb 2-4	Introduction, Some Employment Facts	Borjas Ch. 2			
L3-4	Feb 9-11	Labour Supply	Borjas Ch. 3	Quiz 1 9/2	Quiz 1 18/2	
L5-6	Feb 16-18	Social Welfare Programmes	Borjas Ch. 3	Quiz 2 18/2	Quiz 2 2/3	
L7-L8	Feb 23-Mar 2	Labour Demand	Borjas Ch. 4			
L9-10	Mar 4-9	<i>Team Exercise: Automation</i>		TE 1 4/3	TE 1 7/3	
L11-12	Mar 11-16	Migration	Borjas Ch. 4			
L13-14	Mar 18-23	Minimum Wages	Borjas Ch. 4			
L15-16	Mar 25-30	<i>Team Exercise: Living Wages</i>		TE 2 25/3	TE 2 28/3	
L17-20	Apr 8-20	Human Capital	Borjas Ch. 6	Quiz 3 13/4		
L21-23	Apr 20-27	Discrimination	Borjas Ch. 9		Quiz 3 22/4	
L24-25	Apr 29-May 4	<i>Team Exercise: Detecting Bias</i>		TE 3 29/4	TE 3 2/5	
L26	May 6	Wrap-up				
	Date TBD by ARO	Individual Final Quiz				

<sup>a</sup>Quizzes are due by 3 pm; Team Exercise draft submissions due by 5 pm, and Team Exercise revised submissions due by 9 pm on the due date.