
Spring 2024

ECON 343 Economics of Immigration

Instructor information

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Course information

Lecture times: MW 11 am - 12:20 pm
Lecture room: Tech Lecture Room 5
Discussion section: N/A
Prerequisite(s): ECON 281, ECON 310-1,
and ECON 310-2

Course description

The course explores the economic determinants and consequences of immigration on markets, with a primary focus on the labor market. The course relies on the tools of econometrics and economic theory to explore key elements of international migration with an emphasis on the effects of immigrants on receiving countries. The course takes a mathematical approach to explore questions such as who migrates and why, how immigrants do in the receiving country and the effects of immigrants on natives.

We will weave in data analysis using software such as Stata or R, policy documents, empirical papers, and information from the media to enrich our understanding of immigration issues and highlight how economists are thinking about them. Immigration is a contentious issue that involves both positive and normative analyses. Although we may be presented with the same set of facts, we may arrive at different conclusions, which is absolutely fine. We all come from various backgrounds and bring different viewpoints and experiences to this community, which means that we have so much to learn from each other. The purpose of this class is to train you *how* to think, not *what* to think.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, the student should be able to apply theoretical and econometric methods to evaluate and discuss the:

- (i) foundations of an individual's decision to migrate;
- (ii) difference between economic migrants and refugees, their different motivations and outcomes in the host country;
- (iii) factors affecting the economic performance of migrants in host countries;
- (iv) implications of economic assimilation for host country economies and
- (v) effects of government policy on migration flows.

Readings

Textbooks:

The growing cost of textbooks is alarming and raises concerns about affordability and equitable access to required course material. Consequently, there is no required text for this course. If you plan to pursue further studies in immigration economics or want to learn more about it, the suggested texts below are great resources. The lecture slides are also curated from these texts and many other open-access resources.

- Immigration Economics, George J. Borjas, Harvard University Press, 2014. (**GB**; *Suggested*)
- The Economics of Immigration. Bansak, Cynthia, Nicole B. Simpson, and Madeline Zavodny. Routledge, 2020. (**BSZ**; *Suggested*)

Course materials include skeletal lecture notes, which you must fill in occasionally, and empirical papers. Please read the [reading guide](#) (available in Canvas) to help structure your review of the articles and know what is required of you during our class discussions.

Articles:

- We will read quite a few academic articles over eight weeks. These articles are listed in the course schedule section. All articles will be available for download in Canvas.
- Please follow the [reading guide](#) (available in Canvas) to help structure your review of the articles and know what is required of you during our class discussions.
- To keep updated on the latest policy developments concerning U.S. immigration, visit the [Center for Immigration Studies](#)' website. They are an independent, non-partisan think-tank devoted exclusively to the research of U.S. immigration policy. This can also be a great source for topic ideas. [Migration Policy Institute](#) is another great source of information and international migration data.

Assessments

This course has three components that will determine your final grade:

(i) **Midterms: 50%**

Midterms 1 and 2 typically consist of essay-type and short-answer questions based on the course content. An essential learning objective is to improve your critical thinking and problem-solving skills. As such, exams will be calculator-free, and no sheet cheats are allowed. You are strongly encouraged to form study groups to prepare for exams and collaborate on the problem sets.

(ii) **Problem sets: 30%**

There will be three problem sets throughout the course, and at least one will involve the use of software such as Stata or R. The problem sets are meant to reinforce class materials and help you to think more deeply about research questions regarding immigration.

(iii) **Point-based Immigration System (Group proposal & Presentation): 20%**

A large part of our class discourse focuses on immigration policies and how we can apply economic tools to expand our understanding of and respond to the challenges and opportunities of immigration.

The United States has tried to reform its immigration system without much progress. It remains inflexible and restrictive while other countries have reformed their systems. For example, some countries have adopted point systems to gauge whether applicants should be issued work visas. Prospective immigrants earn points based on several characteristics, such as age, language skills, and job skills.

A U.S. senator has asked your group to design such a point system for the United States. The senator has requested that the system be designed so that 50 points will generally be enough for a visa.

- The goal is for you to utilize the knowledge and skills gained throughout the quarter to propose a comprehensive immigration policy for the U.S. There are many ways to approach this project, and your group will be tasked to use the course models, concepts, and empirical papers, along with other resources and data, to support your proposition.
- As part of your proposal, your group will prepare a presentation pitch for the senator that explains the logic behind your immigration point system. The presentation must include the economic reasoning behind your point system, and discuss whether non-economic characteristics were rewarded. Finally, the proposal (and presentation) must explicitly identify the point structure and criteria for awarding points.
 - To receive full points, you must also provide feedback on the paper presentations made by your classmates.
- Groups, with a designated leader, have been randomly assigned in CANVAS. You can access your group allocations [here](#). We encourage you to contact your group members (or leader) early to assign tasks based on your comparative advantage and jointly submit a single assignment. Presentations will occur during the last week of classes (week 9). Your group will have 15 minutes to present and slides must be submitted as a pdf by class time. Further details and a grading rubric will be provided later in class.

Course policies

Grades

I strictly adhere to the Department's grading policy, where a curve *may be* applied to determine your overall grade. In other words, if applicable, the curve is usually computed when all problem sets, quizzes, and exam scores have been tallied *but can be applied after any exam during the quarter*. The Economics department determines the curve, so **the instructor has absolutely no input about this grade distribution**. The historical average grade for 300-level Econ courses corresponds to a 3.05 GPA or a B, which is consistent with the average grade across all 200-level Econ courses. Please check the course [grade book](#) periodically to ensure that all your grades for assignments, quizzes, and exams are correct.

To be consistent with other Econ 300-level courses, the nominal grade cutoffs shown below *may be* used or cutoffs consistent with *the department's curve*. Further explanation of the curve is available on page 6.

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|------------------|------------------|
| • A → ≥ 95% | • C+ → 77% – 79% |
| • A- → 90% – 94% | • C → 74% – 76% |
| • B+ → 87% – 89% | • C- → 65% – 73% |
| • B → 84% – 86% | • D → 61% – 64% |
| • B- → 80% – 83% | • F → ≤ 60% |

Exams & Assignments

All midterms are administered in person in our classroom. **For students with ANU accommodations, you must log in to your ANU student portal and register to write your exams at their designated testing site, where all your testing accommodations are honored.**

Exam grading protocol:

We use [Crowdmark](#), an online grading software, to grade all exams. You already have access to this platform using your NU login credentials. On exam days, you will be sent a unique Crowdmark link to upload each exam page, including the name page. We typically allot 5 - 10 minutes at the end of each exam for you to properly upload

each page. To upload your exam, take a photo of each page separately, then click on your unique Crowdmark link sent to your email or Canvas inbox. The link will take you to a blank version of the exam. You will populate the exam by uploading the photos under the correct page. That is, **your photo of page 1 should be uploaded under page 1, your photo of page 2 should be uploaded under page 2, etc.** This is relatively straightforward, but be sure that the page you're uploading matches the page number in Crowdmark. This [video](#) walks you through the steps to submit an assignment on Crowdmark.

Exam content:

It's essential to recognize that ECON 343 is an upper-level class at an esteemed institution, where we expect you to apply economic reasoning and utilize the models and theoretical concepts introduced in class to analyze current events and novel situations. This approach, commonly referred to as 'Mastery' in academia, underscores the importance of understanding and applying economic principles beyond rote memorization.

With this in mind, I want to emphasize that **trying to pass the class solely by memorizing answers from past exams or worksheets is not wise.** True mastery of the material requires a deeper understanding and the ability to apply economic concepts to diverse contexts.

Requests for re-grading:

Regrade requests must be submitted to me in writing up to one week after your work is returned. Your written explanation should address legitimate concerns such as mistakes or oversight. Please do not approach me or the TA with an oral request before making the written request. Further details of this policy are explicitly outlined [in this linked document](#).

Late assignments:

Owing to the dynamic nature of higher education and advancements in technology, instructors are often tasked with pivoting in creative and efficient ways while ensuring that learning goals and course objectives are achieved. One of the ways instructors have adapted is through course norm-setting. Our classroom is not just a safe space for difficult and diverse discussions; it is also an equitable class environment where everyone can work toward achieving their desired grade outcomes. Resources will be openly available for everyone to fully engage with the course, regardless of their background or exposure to economics. To this end, I will not extend the deadline to individual students. Aside from University-approved accommodations, it would be unethical to make exceptions for some and not for others and certainly unfair to those who respect this policy and do not ask for special accommodations.

Final Exam:

This course is governed by the policies and stipulations outlined by the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences (WCAS). As expected, WCAS has a strict policy on final exams. Specifically, **final grade changes are ONLY permitted to correct a clerical or computational error.** [Grade changes](#) requested for the following reasons are not allowed:

- Redoing work or submitting extra work;
- Reexamination;
- A makeup examination administered without authorization by the Office of Undergraduate Studies and Advising;
- Reevaluation of one student's work after the grades of others in the class have been submitted to the Registrar's Office.

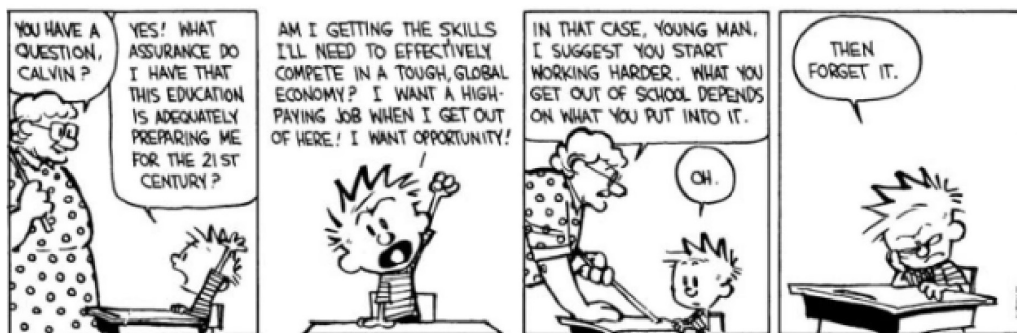
As a student, you have the right to see your graded work and to receive an explanation of any grade based on the published grading policy in a class. This is the main reason we grade via Crowdmark and have student hours. Please utilize them as frequently as you need.

Responsibility

As the instructor of the course, I take responsibility for providing timely and consistent uploads of the relevant course content and resources that will facilitate the achievement of the course objectives. I am committed to a fair, equitable, and transparent grading process to help you achieve mastery of the course content and motivate you. To this end, I will maintain a flexible schedule to provide academic assistance and adjust, where feasible, to the vicissitudes of life.

I reserve the right to resolve any remaining ambiguities and revise the course schedule and other pertinent aspects of the course as needed.

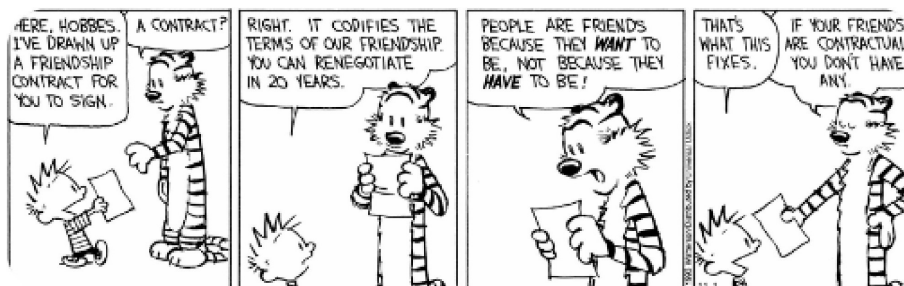
You are responsible for taking the initiative to participate in all aspects of the course that will enable your successful completion. This is not a self-paced course! You have to complete the weekly readings and problem sets and study for the exams. If you are looking for a class you can visit for a few minutes each week, read papers at the last second, and still pull an A or Pass, then this class is *definitely not it*. However, if you are looking for a course that helps you gain a deeper understanding of how to apply economic tools to the topic of immigration and contribute to policy debates, then this is that course and so much more! If you put in the effort, I think your hard work will pay off, and you will leave the class knowing way more than you did when you started.



Contract

A **syllabus is a contract** between students and the instructor that provides information about the course and provides a commitment device to prevent arbitrary behavior. By enrolling in this course, it is assumed that you are familiar with and agree to all policies outlined in this contract. **Should you find that these terms are not suitable for any reason, you have several options to opt out of this agreement. These include dropping the course by May 3 or petitioning for a course withdrawal by May 24.**

In the event that new guidelines issued by the Provost are released after the start of the quarter and supersede the course policy, please note that the content outlined in this syllabus is subject to change at the instructor's discretion.



Frequently asked questions and answers

Q: What are your basic expectations for the class?

A: **Professional conduct is always expected, regardless of the mode of delivery.** I expect that you will arrive at lectures on time, participate in and be respectful towards each others' views during class discussions. We are part of a respectful college community, so comments and language should be appropriate for this setting, including addressing your instructor appropriately (Professor or Professor McKenzie). Tolerance and respect towards each other must always be displayed. We all come from various backgrounds and bring different viewpoints and experiences to this community, which means that we have so much to learn from each other. We can show respect for differences by seeking to understand, asking questions, clarifying our understanding, and/or respectfully explaining our own perspectives. This way, everyone walks away with a new perspective of seeing an issue and respecting others with different values or beliefs.

I firmly adhere to Northwestern's policy on [institutional equity](#). Our classroom is a safe space where students from different backgrounds can connect around the common goal of learning and applying economic concepts to create a measurable impact on our lives and those around us.

I also hope you will study for at least 2-3 hours and complete reading assignments for every lecture hour. I want you to challenge yourself and have fun while doing it! This can be a really rewarding class! We all have to make decisions at one point. The materials taught in this course can help you beyond your university life by exposing you to tools that will help you make sense of this dynamic and complex world.

Q: I am sick on the day of the exam or have a personal emergency and can't make it to class on exam day. What should I do?

A: Firstly, if you are unwell while on campus, you should contact the [Student Health Services](#) immediately and your student advisor or the [Office for Student Assistance & Support Services](#) (SASS).

If for **valid reasons, with proofs (a note from the Dean's office or other school advisors)**, you miss an exam, **please notify me immediately**. Advanced notice is always preferred, and **proofs must be emailed within 36 hours of the missed exam to validate your absence**. Viva voce reports will not be accepted, and you will earn zero on the missed exam(s). Missing class for work, a job interview, or a prescheduled family event **would not** constitute an excused absence.

Under no circumstances will individual exceptions be made when determining grades. This applies to extending deadlines if you forget to complete an assignment. I will not make individual exceptions unless you have an officially approved absence from the university (health center, academic advisor, etc.). Therefore, in the event of a missed exam with valid documentation, your score will be adjusted accordingly. The weight will be redistributed, with the remaining midterm accounting for 40% of the grade and the group proposal carrying a weight of 30%. If you don't report your missed exam **and** provide valid proofs, you will earn zero on the exam. **There are no exceptions to this.**

If you miss both Midterms, you will have to drop the class since we will not have sufficient evidence to assess your performance.

Q: I arrived late for an exam. Will I be given extra time?

A: Unfortunately, no. The classrooms and exam proctors are usually only available during the allotted time. We simply don't have enough resources to facilitate extra time beyond the end of the exam. That said, please make every effort to arrive at the exam on time.

Q: How does the grading work?

A: A central theme in my pedagogical approach is to create an equitable class environment where everyone can work toward achieving their desired grade outcome. Some students are incredibly talented, but an exam may reflect something else. The variation in assessment type encourages metacognitively aware students to excel in areas of their greatest strengths, which acts as a compensating adjustment for weaker areas.

Due to the structure of the course, you must take the midterms to receive an overall score in CAESAR. Exams will not be rescheduled for any reason unless apocalyptic. Exams will not be rescheduled if you miss one.

You can opt for a Pass/No Pass option (see further details on your grading options [here](#)). If you select this option, **to pass the class, you will need to score 70% (C-) or better on each component of the course assessment.**

Q: What do you mean by a “curve” and why does it seem so ambiguous?

A: A curve, more formally grading on a curve, means adjusting students’ scores after an exam based on a predetermined distribution, usually a bell curve (see the illustration below). The Department of Economics determines this distribution to mitigate the vicious cycle of [grade inflation](#), which has permeated higher education. Though this practice is evidently contentious, in the words of renowned Economist Thomas Sowell, “there are no solutions, only trade-offs”.

To understand grade curving in the context of this class, it is best to consider your “*real score*” (r), that is, the nominal score (i) adjusted for grade inflation or a measure of your performance relative to the class (π). Conceptually, this is the Fisher equation applied to grading. That is,

$$r = i - \pi$$

where π can be negative or zero. In very rare cases, π could be positive. The ambiguity of grading on a curve is that π is unknown and difficult to predict *ex-ante*. ***In this course, π is determined after all exams have been graded, the measures of central tendency for the class are derived, and the department’s grade distribution is considered.***



Q: Will you be lenient if I'm caught cheating, using ChatGPT, plagiarizing, or engaging in unethical behavior?

A: No. You will likely get an "F", and your case will be escalated to the Dean, who will take further action. While you are encouraged to form study groups to discuss assignments and lecture notes, your graded work must result from your independent effort. In fact, **any form of cheating, including improper use of content generated by artificial intelligence, constitutes a violation of Northwestern's academic integrity policy**. Turnitin, which is already in use at Northwestern, is expanding its system to include artificial intelligence detection. You are required to comply with the policies found in the booklet, "Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic Guide", which can be found here: <https://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html>

Q: What is the proper use of ChatGPT and other AI tools in this course?

A: There are situations and contexts within this course where you can use AI tools to help generate ideas, brainstorm, and gather information about the typical understanding of a topic. However, it is well-known that AI-generated content is often incomplete, inaccurate, and may contain built-in biases that could be offensive. Therefore, we are obliged to be mindful of these considerations, as well as the [University's Academic Integrity and AI guidelines](#). Accordingly, the responsible use of AI tools in this course is outlined as follows⁴:

1. **Clear Identification:** You must clearly identify the use of AI-based tools in your work. Any work utilizing AI-based tools must be marked as such, including the specific tool(s) used. For instance, if you use ChatGPT-3, cite it as follows: "ChatGPT-3. (YYYY, Month DD of query). 'Text of your query.' Generated using OpenAI. [Insert Link]." I recommend creating a paper trail for each assignment, including screenshots and timestamps of the prompts used and answers provided.
2. **Transparency:** You must be transparent in how you used the AI-based tool, explaining what work constitutes your original contribution. An AI detector such as GPTZero (<https://gptzero.me/>) may be employed to verify AI-driven work. My recommendation is to create a paper trail for each assignment, taking screenshots and time stamps of the prompts used, answers provided, etc.
3. **Copyright and Intellectual Property:** You must ensure that your use of AI-based tools does not violate any copyright or intellectual property laws.
4. **Quizzes:** AI-based tools are not allowed for quizzes, which will be administered via the Lockdown browser and proctored.
5. **Exams:** Midterms and the Final Exam will be conducted in person, during which the use of technology, including calculators, will be prohibited.

This policy is not exhaustive, and as an academic community, we are still navigating the proper use of this transformational tool. As demonstrated in this policy, I do not support the complete restriction of AI generative tools, as they will likely become a required skill in the labor market soon. Therefore, my goal is to prepare you as thoroughly as possible to meet the future demands of employers and develop metacognitive habits. However, like any powerful tool, AI must be used responsibly. [This policy may evolve as we receive new information, and any changes will be communicated through Canvas.](#)

⁴I want to acknowledge that this policy draws from various sources, including [Professor Lance Eaton's](#) compilation of syllabi policies for AI generative tools, [Dr. Spencer Ross'](#) guidelines for the responsible use of AI in the MKTG 4300 Social Media Marketing course, and ChatGPT-3. Specifically, in the case of the latter, I provided the text and input it into ChatGPT with the following prompt: "You are an economics professor at a prestigious university. Can you edit this for grammar and clarity and provide suggestions regarding the responsible use of AI tools in the classroom?". The output suggests that the message is clear and well-structured. However, it offered some suggestions, including the use of bold-faced sentence headers, as seen in items 1 - 5 above, and made grammatical changes like replacing "transformational" with "transformative," changing "complete restriction" to "complete restriction of," and rephrasing "build metacognitive habits" to "develop metacognitive habits."

Q: Should I email you if I have questions about an assignment or exam?

A: Though I welcome all your questions, **I strongly suggest you post all questions relating to assignments, exams queries, or anything you need clarification on via the [class discussion board on Canvas](#)**. We have chosen this platform for communication as we do not have a TA assigned to this course. Utilizing this platform allows us to efficiently address all queries here, ensuring that everyone can benefit from the information provided.

As such, class-related questions will not be answered via email. Of course, **for personal matters**, please don't hesitate to contact me and **put "ECON 343: [subject of email]" in the subject line of your email**. Due to the many emails I receive daily, I will likely miss your email if you don't adhere to this. **Please allow 24 - 48 hours to receive a reply.**

Q: I won't be able to attend class, can I ask my friend to record the lecture?

A: No. Unauthorized student recording of classroom or other academic activities (including advising sessions or office hours) is prohibited. Unauthorized recording is unethical and may also violate University policy and state law. Students requesting the use of assistive technology as an accommodation should contact [AccessibleNU](#). Unauthorized use of classroom recordings – including distributing or posting them – is also prohibited. Under the University's [Copyright Policy](#), faculty own the copyright to instructional materials – including those resources created specifically for the purposes of instruction, such as syllabi, lectures and lecture notes, and presentations. Students cannot copy, reproduce, display, or distribute these materials. Students who engage in unauthorized recording, unauthorized use of a recording, or unauthorized distribution of instructional materials will be referred to the appropriate University office for follow-up.

At the *instructor's discretion*, portions of the class will be recorded for educational purposes and made available to students enrolled in the class. Your instructor will communicate how you can access the recordings.

Q: What are additional student support resources that I need to know about?

A: Northwestern has abundant resources to meet your basic needs for a holistic college experience. Below, I list a few that I think you should know about.

– [NUHelp](#): Students can find useful resources for safety and security, academic support, and mental and physical health and well-being at the [NUhelp website](#) and [App](#).

– [AccessibleNU](#): Northwestern University is committed to providing the most accessible learning environment as possible for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact AccessibleNU to move forward with the university's established accommodation process (✉ accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; ☎ 847-467-5530). If you already have established accommodations with AccessibleNU, please let me know as soon as possible, preferably within the first two weeks of the term, so we can work together to implement your disability accommodations. Disability information, including academic accommodations, is confidential under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

– [Wellness and Mental Health](#): Northwestern University is committed to supporting the wellness of our students. Student Affairs has multiple resources to support student wellness and mental health. If you are feeling distressed or overwhelmed, please reach out for help. Students can access confidential resources through the [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#), [Religious and Spiritual Life \(RSL\)](#) and the [Center for Awareness, Response, and Education \(CARE\)](#).