

ECO 353H1-F  
Special Topics: Sports Economics  
Winter 2023

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This applied economics course explores various aspects of the economics of sports and sports leagues, including both theoretical and empirical analysis. We will consider a number of topics, including:

- The business of professional sports: how do teams and leagues make money?
- Analysis of leagues' competitive balance policies
- Player relations issues including analysis the drivers of players' salaries
- The relationship between college and professional sports

**Instructor:** Laura Turner

**Email contact:** [lmf.turner@utoronto.ca](mailto:lmf.turner@utoronto.ca). Please email from your U of T e-mail account and **make sure ECO 353 is in the subject line.**

**TA and TA contact:** tba

**Class:** Monday 10am – 1pm in AH 400 (located on St. Joseph St., East of Queens Park Crsc)

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 2:30pm-5pm by Zoom appointment. It's best to make an appointment in advance, but I am online during this window if you want to make a last-minute appointment. I'm also available to chat after class most weeks.

## COURSE MATERIALS

1. Berri, David, Sports Economics. New York: Worth, 2018.
2. Additional readings for the mini-essays will be provided as e-resource links via Quercus.

ECN 729 follows Berri's text reasonably closely, with some supplemental material and some omissions. Berri's text can be purchased as an e-text (recommended) directly from the publisher, MacMillan. Although the text is required, and fairly cheap to purchase as an e-text, you do not *absolutely* have to buy it to do well in the class. Just remember that Berri is one of the foremost experts in sports econ and you may find his perspective as a useful contrast/companion to mine.

## COURSE TOPICS AND SCHEDULE

Each week we will cover between 1.5 to 2.5 hours of lecture content, depending on whether we also have a tutorial. I will post the slides for the lecture on Sundays prior to the Monday lecture and we will cover them in the first part of class. Either myself or the Alex will host a tutorial during the second half of the class, approximately every other week starting in Week 3. The tutorials are mainly to help you prepare your data assignments and will cover regression in R and excel, data collection from relevant sports databases, calculation of player impact metrics, and some technical concepts covered in the class.

The approximate schedule is:

**Week 1:** Introduction; Supply and Demand (Class: January 9)

**Week 2:** Market Size and Wins (Class: January 16)

**Week 3-4:** Monopoly and Sports (Class: January 23 and 30; first essay due February 4)

**Week 5:** Competitive balance (Class: February 6)

**Week 6:** Labour Negotiations in Sports (Class: February 13)

### **Winter Study Break**

**Week 7:** The Economic Value of Playing Talent (I) (Class: Feb 27; first data assignment due Mar 4)

**Week 8:** The Economic Value of Playing Talent (II) (Class: March 6)

**Week 9:** Modern Sports Analytics (with a focus on analytics in the NBA) (Class: March 13)

**Week 10:** Moneyball and its Legacy (Class: March 20; second essay due March 25)

**Week 11:** Discrimination in Sports and Women's Professional Sports (Class: March 27)

**Week 12:** The Economics of College Sports and the NCAA (Class: April 3; second data assignment due April 8)

## COURSE EVALUATION

The evaluation will be based on a combination of (up to) four assignments and an exam:

- 1) Two mini-essays (max 1000 words): 20% each, due midnight Saturday of Weeks 4 and 10
- 2) Two data analysis projects worth 25% each, due midnight Saturday of Weeks 7 and 12
- 3) Final Exam 10%-55% April, date TBD

You may opt to skip **one** of the mini-essays **and/or one** of the data projects with the marks being reweighted to the exam.

**For students who opt to skip at least one assignment:** If you skip one data project **and** one mini-essay, your exam will be worth 55%. If you skip one data project **but** submit both mini essays, the exam will be worth 35%. If you skip one mini essay **but** submit both data projects, the exam will be worth 30%. **Note if you skip both mini essays, one will automatically count zero toward your grade and the same for the data assignments.**

**For students who complete all four assignments (both essays and both data projects):** Students who complete all four assignments will write an exam worth only 10%. This is recommended for those who are more comfortable with course work than with final exams. However, in addition I will throw out your worst assignment grade (either a mini-essay or a data project) and re-weight it toward the exam if this improves your overall mark. **The option to throw out your worst assignment at the end is only available to students who submit all four assignments.**

### Essays:

The mini-essays will involve reading a published article in sports economics from The Journal of Sports Economics or a similar journal and answering a question motivated by the subject of the article in the context of the recent course material. The article/question combinations to choose from will be provided on Quercus at the end of Week 2 (for the first essay) and the end of Week 8 (for the second) respectively.

The essays must be individual work and will be submitted to Ouriginal via Quercus. If you find that your paper has a similarity score that is quite high (higher than around 25%) you may want to check in with me by email that your essay is ok. Often there is a legit reason for high similarity scores, but it can be a red flag for your essay. It's best to check.

### Data Analysis projects:

The first data analysis project will involve investigating the determinants of revenue within a given sports league and time frame, and using this analysis to assess the economic prospects of a specific team. The second analysis project will involve calculating the economic value of a professional athlete using methods covered in the course. For the analytics projects, group work is allowed (not required) but groups must be formed and approved in advance of the due date. You can choose to

work in groups of 2, or 3. However, groups of 2 will receive -2 off the top of their assignment and groups of 3 will receive -3 off the top of their assignment. Details of the projects will be posted at the end of Week 4 and Week 9 respectively.

### **MISSED OR LATE WORK POLICY**

No prolonged extensions on any assignments will be granted for any reason; I'll make exceptions of a few hours for emergencies like computer crashes. I also usually leave the assignment window open for an hour or two after the due time in case you mistime your completion of the assignment slightly. But longer extensions will not be granted. If you need to skip an assignment for health or personal reasons that's fine. As noted above, you can skip up to one mini essay and one data project and simply re-weight the marks to the exam.