

Econ 7400: Economic History
Spring 2021
M W 1:25 – 2:45

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The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the sub-discipline of Economic History, with a (rather strong) emphasis on US topics. We will examine some classic debates in the field as well as emerging areas of research. It is hoped that you will gain insight into both the topics under study and the methods that economic historians use to study them.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the semester, a student who is successful in this class

- (1) Will have become familiar with a range of approaches to the study of Economic History,
- (2) Will have gained detailed understanding of many of the most active areas of inquiry in US Economic History, and
- (3) Will have developed skills and experience in writing professional-quality critical essays and original research in Economic History

There is no textbook for the class. The articles and chapters we read will be made available through Canvas. If you have not studied US economic history before, and in particular if you have limited knowledge of US history, you may want to pick up a textbook to use as reference. Some useful ones include

Atack and Passell, A New Economic View of American History: From Colonial Times to 1940 (Norton 1994).

Walton and Rockoff, History of the American Economy with Economic Applications (South Western, various editions).

Hughes and Cain, American Economic History (Addison Wesley, various editions).

You should be able to find used copies, especially of older editions, through Amazon, Powells, and other sources.

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services (CDS), 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

Mechanics of the Course:

For each topic, I will provide some background and discuss the primary readings. For most topics, some “supplemental readings” are also listed. These readings will be available through Canvas. Each student will write five short (approximately five page) critical essays during the semester, with each essay covering one of these supplemental readings. I will circulate a sign up sheet early in the semester to ensure that we get coverage of a broad set of readings. Students will

also lead our discussion of the readings that they choose to write about. Your critical essays should include a summary of the article, a critique of the assumptions of the model/the econometric approach/ the quality of the data (whatever is most relevant), and some ideas for improvement or extension of the article. These essays should be designed to generate class discussion of the given article and related topics. You must also prepare a one-page handout for the class to promote discussion of the article. You may also prepare a Powerpoint (or other type of) presentation. Your essays, handouts, and slides (if any) should be e-mailed to me by 5 pm on Monday for a Wednesday presentation or by 5 pm Saturday for a Monday presentation. I will then make all of these files available to the class to help promote discussion. Each critical essay/presentation counts for 10 percent of your grade.

Of course, all students are responsible for doing all of the reading and being prepared to discuss the material in class. Participation in these discussions will constitute 5 percent of your final grade.

We will have a final, take-home exam during exam week. This will be an essay exam designed to help you review and integrate the material from the semester. The exam will be worth 15 percent of your grade. The exam will be distributed on Monday, 4/26. It will be due on Friday, 4/30, at 5 p.m.

The remaining 30 percent of your grade will be accounted for by a research project (described below).

Research Projects:

Each student will choose some narrow topic in economic history for intense study and will write a research paper of about 15 pages on that topic. Your paper does **not** have to focus on US topics, but it must fall within the domain of “economic history” in some meaningful sense (it must focus on a topic that is at least 30 years old, or it must examine the evolution of some economic phenomenon over a very long period, 30 years or more). The resulting paper should (1) pose an interesting question and motivate the importance of that question, (2) review and evaluate the relevant literature and identify how answering the question at hand will contribute to the literature, (3) develop some testable hypotheses which will allow us to answer the question, (4) identify and make some preliminary evaluation of evidence for testing these hypotheses. There are several steps in the completion of the research project:

- **On Monday, 3/1**, each student should turn in a page identifying their general area of interest, proposing some potential narrow topics, and listing some of the relevant literature (at least four potential sources other than items listed on the syllabus). We will discuss these general topics in class on 3/1. This part of the assignment is worth 5 percent of your semester grade.
- **On Monday, 3/22**, each student should turn in a paragraph-long description of a narrow topic, along with an outline for the rest of the paper and an updated list of references. We will discuss these outlines in class on 3/22. This part of the assignment is worth 5 percent of your semester grade.
- **On Wednesday, 4/14**, each student will turn in a rough draft of their paper. We will use this class session to discuss the projects. This part of the assignment is worth 5 percent of your semester grade.
- **The final papers will be due on the last day of class (Monday, 4/26) during class, and we will discuss them on that day.** The final paper is worth 15 percent of your semester grade. More details concerning sources and format will be given during the first couple of weeks of the semester.

Other Important Dates:

Monday, 2/15: President's Day, No Class

Monday 3/1 to Friday 3/12: Online/IVC Instruction Only

Monday, 4/5: “Non-Instructional Day” – No Class
Monday, 4/26: Take Home Final Distributed
Friday, 4/30, 5 p.m.: Take Home Final Due

Schedule of Topics and Readings:

Note that topics and readings may change (with advance notice) to suit the pace of the course and the interests of the students.

Topic 1: Introduction to Methods and Materials of Economic History (1/20)

Primary Readings:

- McCloskey, D.N., “Does the Past Have Useful Economics?” Journal of Economic Literature 1976, p. 434-461.
- Arrow, K. J., “Maine and Texas,” American Economic Review 75:2 (1986), p. 320-323.
- Solow, R. M., “Economic History and Economics,” American Economic Review 75:2 (1986), p. 328-331.
- Whaples, R., “Where is There Consensus Among American Economic Historians? The Results of a Survey on Forty Propositions,” Journal of Economic History 55:1 (1995), p. 139-154.
- Nunn, N., “The Importance of History for Economic Development,” NBER Working Paper 14899 (April 2009).

Topic 2: Overview of European and New World Growth (1/25 and 1/27)

Primary Readings

- Crafts, N.F.R., “Industrial Revolution in England and France: Some Thoughts on the Question, ‘Why was England First?’” Economic History Review 1977, p. 429-41.
- Meisenthal, Ralf and Joel Mokyr, “The Rate and Direction of Invention in the British Industrial Revolution: Incentives and Institutions,” NBER Working Paper 16993, April 2014.
- Voth, Hans Joachim, “Time and Work in Eighteenth-Century London,” Journal of Economic History 58:1 (March 1998), p. 29-58.
- Engerman, Stanley L., and Kenneth L. Sokoloff, “Factor Endowments, Inequality, and Paths of Development among New World Economies,” NBER Working Paper 9259, October 2002.
- Engerman, Stanley L., and Kenneth L. Sokoloff, “The Evolution of Suffrage Institutions in the New World,” Journal of Economic History 65:4 (December 2005), p. 891-921.

Topic 3: Markets in the Colonial and Early Antebellum Periods (2/1 and 2/3)

Primary Readings:

A. Colonial Population and Labor Markets:

- Wells, Robert V., “The Population of England’s Colonies in America: Old English or New Americans?” Population Studies 46 (March 1992).
- Galenson, David W., “The Rise and Fall of Indentured Servitude in the Americas: An Economic Analysis,” Journal of Economic History 44 (March 1984).

B. Markets in Rural New England:

- Henretta, James A., “Families and Farms: Mentalite in Pre-Industrial America,” William and Mary Quarterly 3rd Series 35 (January 1978).
- Rothenberg, Winifred, “The Market and Massachusetts Farmers,” Journal of Economic History 41:2 (June 1981).

Supplemental Readings:

- Clark, Christopher, “The Household Economy, Market Exchange, and the Rise of Capitalism in the Connecticut Valley, 1800-1860,” Journal of Social History 13:2 (Winter 1979).
- Grubb, Farley, and Tony Stitt, “The Liverpool Emigrant Servant Trade and the Transition to Slave Labor in the Chesapeake, 1697-1707: Adjustments to War,” Explorations in Economic History 31:3 (July 1994).

Topic 4: Manufacturing in the Antebellum US (2/8 and 2/10)

Primary Readings:

- Field, Alexander James, “Sectoral Shift in Antebellum Massachusetts: A Reconsideration,” Explorations in Economic History 15:2 (April 1978).
- Goldin, Claudia and Kenneth Sokoloff, “The Relative Productivity Hypothesis of Industrialization: The American Case, 1820-1850,” Quarterly Journal of Economics (1984).
- Sokoloff, Kenneth L., “Was the Transition from Artisanal Shop to the Non-Mechanized Factory Associated with Gains in Efficiency? Evidence from the US Manufacturing Censuses of 1820 and 1850,” Explorations in Economic History 21 (1984), p. 351-382.

Supplemental Readings:

- Marglin, Stephen A., “What Do Bosses Do?: The Origins and Functions of Hierarchy in Capitalist Production,” Review of Radical Political Economics 6 (1974), p. 60-112.
- Landes, David S., “What Do Bosses Really Do?” Journal of Economic History 46:3 (September 1986), p. 585-623.
- Clark, Gregory, “Factory Discipline,” Journal of Economic History 54:1 (March 1994), p. 128-163.

Topic 5: Technological Change and Productivity in the 19th Century (2/17 and 2/22)

Primary Readings:

- Sokoloff, Kenneth, “Inventive Activity in Early Industrial America: Evidence from Patent Records, 1790-1846,” Journal of Economic History 48:4 (December 1988).
- Lazonick, William and Thomas Brush, “The ‘Horndal Effect’ in Early US Manufacturing,” Explorations in Economic History 22 (1985).
- Olmstead, Alan L. and Paul W. Rhode, “The Red Queen and the Hard Reds: Productivity Growth in American Wheat 1800-1940,” Journal of Economic History 62:4 p. 929-966.

Supplemental Readings:

- Comin, Diego, William Easterly, and Erick Gong, “Was the Wealth of Nations Determined in 1000 BC?” AEJ: Macro 2 (July 2010), p. 65-97.
- Attack, Jeremy, Robert A. Margo, and Paul W. Rhode, “‘Automation’ of Manufacturing in the Late 19th Century: The Hand Machine Labor Study.” Journal of Economic Perspectives 33:2 (Spring 2019), p. 51-70.

Topic 6: Health and the Standard of Living in the US (2/24 and 3/1)

Primary Readings:

- Steckel, Richard H., “Stature and the Standard of Living,” Journal of Economic Literature 33:4 (December 1995).
- Fogel, Robert W., “Economic Growth, Population Theory, and Physiology: The Bearing of Long-Term Processes on the Making of Economic Policy,” American Economic Review 84 (June 1994).
- Haines, Michael R., Lee A. Craig, and Thomas Weiss, “The Short and the Dead: Nutrition, Mortality, and the ‘Antebellum Puzzle’ in the United States,” Journal of Economic History 63:2 (June 2003), p. 382-413.

Supplemental Readings:

- Ferrie, Joseph, and Karen Rolf, “Socioeconomic Status in Childhood and Health after Age 70: A New Longitudinal Analysis for the US, 1895-2005,” Explorations in Economic History 48:4 (December 2011), p. 445-460.
- Zimran, Ariell, “Transportation and Health in the Antebellum United States, 1820-1847,” Journal of Economic History 80:3 (September 2020).

Topic 7: Immigration (3/3 and 3/8)

Primary Readings:

- Abramitzky, Ran, and Leah Boustan, “Immigration in American Economic History,” NBER Working Paper 21882, January 2016.
- Ferrie, Joseph, “The Wealth Accumulation of Antebellum European Immigrants to the US, 1840-1860,” Journal of Economic History 54:1 (March 1994).
- Abramitzky, R., L. Boustan, and K Eriksson, “Europe’s Tired, Poor, Huddled Masses: Self-Selection and Economic Outcomes in the Age of Mass Migration,” American Economic Review 102:5 (August 2012), p. 1832-1856.

Supplemental Readings:

- Peri, Giovanni, “The Labor Market Effects of Immigration: A Unified View of Recent Developments,” in Maloney and Korinek, eds., Migration in the 21st Century: Rights, Outcomes, Policy. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Cloud and Galenson, “Chinese Immigration and Contract Labor in the Late 19th Century,” Explorations in Economic History 24 (1987), p. 22-42.

Topic 8: Slavery, the South, and the Civil War (3/10 and 3/15)

Primary Readings:

- Whatley, Warren C., and Rob Gillezeau, “The Fundamental Impact of the Slave Trade on African Economies,” in Rhode, Rosenbloom, and Weiman, eds., Economic Evolution and Revolution in Historical Time. CA: Stanford University Press, 2011, p. 86-110.
- David, Paul and Peter Temin, “Slavery: The Progressive Institution?” Journal of Economic History September 1974.
- Temin, Peter, “The Post-Bellum Recovery of the South and the Cost of the Civil War,” Journal of Economic History 26:4 (December 1976).
- Wright, Gavin, “Slavery and Anglo-American Capitalism Revisited,” Economic History Review 73:2 (2020).

Supplemental Readings:

- Lee, Chulhee, “Wealth Accumulation and the Health of Union Army Veterans, 1860-1870,” Journal of Economic History 65:2 (June 2005).
- Brinkley, Garland, “The Decline in Southern Agricultural Output, 1860-1880,” Journal of Economic History 57:1 (March 1997).

Topic 9: Labor Markets, Unemployment, Mobility, and Poverty in the 19th and 20th Centuries (3/17 and 3/22)

Primary Readings

- Rosenbloom, Joshua L., and William A. Sundstrom, “Labor Market Regimes in US Economic History,” NBER Working Paper 15055, June 2009.
- Keyssar, Alexander, Out of Work: The First Century of Unemployment in Massachusetts. NY: Cambridge University Press, 1986, ch. 1, 2.
- Hannon, Joan Underhill, “Poverty in the Antebellum Northeast: The View from New York State’s Poor Relief Rolls,” Journal of Economic History 44:4 (December 1984), p. 1007-32.

Supplemental Readings:

- Rosenbloom, Joshua, “One Market or Many? Labor Market Integration in the Late Nineteenth-Century United States,” Journal of Economic History 50:1 (March 1990), p. 85-107.
- Clark, Gregory, and Marianne Page, “Welfare Reform, 1834,” UC-Davis Working Paper 08-7, 2009.

Topic 10: Intergenerational Mobility in History (3/24)

Primary Readings:

- Maloney, Thomas N., and Ken R. Smith, “Family Structure and Intergenerational Mobility: Evidence from the Utah Population Database.” Working paper, February 2020.
- Olivetti, Claudia, M. Danielle Paserman, and Laura Salisbury (2018). “Three-generation Mobility in the United States, 1850-1940: The Role of Maternal and Paternal Grandparents.” Explorations in Economic History 70, p. 73-90.
- Ager, Philip, Leah Platt Boustan, and Katherine Eriksson, “The Intergenerational Effects of a Large Wealth Shock: White Southerners After the Civil War,” NBER working paper 25700, March 2019.

Supplemental Reading

- Feigenbaum, James J. (2018). “Multiple Measures of Historical Intergenerational Mobility: Iowa 1915 to 1940.” The Economic Journal 128 (July), F 445-F481.

Topic 11: Women and Work in the 19th and 20th Centuries (3/29 and 3/31)

Primary Readings

- Alesina, A., Giuliano, P., and Nunn, N., “On the Origins of Gender Roles: Women and the Plough,” IZA Discussion Papers No. 5735 (May 2011).
- Goldin, Claudia, and Lawrence F. Katz, “The Power of the Pill: Oral Contraceptives and Women’s Career and Marriage Decisions,” Journal of Political Economy 110:4 (2002), p. 740-70.
- Goldin, Claudia, “A Grand Convergence: Its Last Chapter,” American Economic Review 104:4 (April 2014), 1091-1119.

Supplemental Readings

- Bertrand, Marianne, Claudia Goldin, and Lawrence F. Katz, “Dynamics of the Gender Gap for Young Professionals in the Corporate and Financial Sectors,” NBER Working Paper 14681 (January 2009).
- Kossoudji, Sherrie A., and Laura Dresser, “Working Class Rosies: Women Industrial Workers During World War II,” Journal of Economic History 52:2 (June 1992).

Topic 12: African American Labor and Racial Inequality (4/7 and 4/12)

Primary Readings

- Maloney, Thomas N., and Warren C. Whatley, “Making the Effort: The Racial Contours of Detroit’s Labor Markets, 1920-1940,” Journal of Economic History 55:3 (September 1995).
- Donohue, John H. III, and James Heckman, “Continuous vs. Episodic Change: The Impact of Civil Rights Policy on the Economic Status of Blacks,” Journal of Economic Literature 29:4 (Dec. 1991)
- Derenoncourt, Ellora, “Can You Move to Opportunity? Evidence from the Great Migration.” Working paper, December 2019.

Supplemental Readings:

- Sundstrom, William A., “The Color Line: Racial Norms and Discrimination in Urban Labor Markets, 1910-1950,” Journal of Economic History 54:2 June 1994.

- Ananat, Elizabeth Oltmans, “The Wrong Side(s) of the Tracks: The Causal Effects of Racial Segregation on Urban Poverty and Inequality,” American Economic Journal: Applied Economics 3 (April 2011), p. 34-46.

Topic 13: The Great Depression, The New Deal, and the Growth of the Public Sector (4/14 and 4/19)

Primary Readings:

- Romer, Christina D., “The Nation in Depression,” Journal of Economic Perspectives 7:2 (Spring 1993), p. 19-39.
- Higgs, Robert. “Crisis, Bigger Government, and Ideological Change: Toward an Understanding of the Ratchet,” chapter 4 in Higgs, Crisis and Leviathan: Critical Episodes in the Growth of American Government. NY: OxfordUniversity Press, 1987.
- Lindert, Peter H., “The Rise of Social Spending 1880-1930,” Explorations in Economic History 31:1 (January 1994).
- Alesina, Alberto, Edward Glaeser, and Bruce Sacerdote, “Why Doesn’t the US Have a European-Style Welfare State,” NBER Working Paper 8524, October 2001.

Supplemental Readings:

- Lindert, Peter H., “What Limits Social Spending?” Explorations in Economic History 33:1 (January 1996).
- Fishback, Price V., William C. Horrace, and Shawn Kantor, “Did the New Deal Grant Programs Stimulate Local Economies? A Study of Federal Grants and Retail Sales during the Great Depression,” Journal of Economic History 65:1 (March 2005), p. 36-71

Topic 14: Post-World War II US Economic Performance, and Rising Inequality (4/21 and 4/26)

Primary Readings:

- Nelson, Richard R. and Gavin Wright, “The Rise and Fall of American Technological Leadership: The Postwar Era in Historical Perspective,” Journal of Economic Literature 30 (December 1992), p. 1931-1964.
- Gordon, Robert J., “Is US Economic Growth Over? Faltering Innovation Confronts the Six Headwinds,” NBER Working Paper 18315, August 2012.
- Goldin, Claudia, and Lawrence F. Katz, “Decreasing (and then Increasing) Inequality in America: A Tale of Two Half-Centuries,” in Welch, ed., The Causes and Consequences of Increasing Inequality. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, p. 37-82.
- Levy, Frank, and Peter Temin, “Inequality and Institutions in Twentieth-Century America,” in Rhode, Rosenbloom, and Weiman, eds., Economic Evolution and Revolution in Historical Time. CA: Stanford University Press, 2011, p. 357-386.
- Farber, Henry S., Daniel Herbst, Ilyana Kuziemko, and Suresh Naidu (2018). “Unions and Inequality Over the 20th Century.” NBER Working Paper 24587.

Supplemental Readings:

- Pope, Clayne, “Measuring the Distribution of Material Well-Being: US Trends,” Journal of Monetary Economics 56 (2009), p. 66-78.
- Collins, William J., and Gregory T. Niemesh (2019). “Unions and the Great Compression of Wage Inequality in the US at Mid-Century: Evidence from Local Labor Markets.” Economic History Review 72(2), 691-715.