Econ 823: Grad Seminar in European Economic History  

Course Outline and Reading List

This is a course on the economic history of modern Europe with special emphasis on the issues of industrialization and development from 1700-1914. The focus will be on acquainting the students with the core issues surrounding the study of European economic history. This includes: Introduction to the new economic history. Central issues of discussion and debate. Research methodology. Economic reasoning within larger historical debates. Using economics and convincing economists. Institutions and economic development. Developing the institutional narrative.

This course should help familiarize you with the work of some of the most prominent scholars in Cliometrics and the more promising, interesting and/or popular research topics (the three not necessarily going hand-in-hand). You will also be introduced to the process of becoming an academic researcher and the problems involved with finding a research topic suitable for your dissertation. To that end, you will be graded on three separate activities: class participation through formal presentation and informal discussion during the course and a term paper due on Friday May 7, 2021 before 4 pm.

The paper should contain a critical essay on one important issue in the study of economic history. The time period studied must be between 1600 and 1914 unless special permission is given. The nation or nations studied must be outside of North America. More important, you should test or attempt to study at least one specific hypothesis using historical data. The test need not be econometric. While it is normal to expect that this will involve some modeling and simple regressions, it is also possible to produce a good paper making clever use of tables and graphs. What is essential is that you learn how to make an analytically rigorous argument and sustain or reject it on the basis of empirical evidence. You might seek to apply an existing model to different data or repeat a test that already exists in the literature using different time periods. The final work should be about 15-25 pages in length, double-spaced in Times Roman 12 font. Everyone must consult with me before writing their papers. All topics will have to be approved in advance (by March 18, 2021).

The following constitutes a tentative reading list. Most of the books are available in the bookstore or are in the library on reserve. I recommend you purchase the Brewer, Clark, and Nye books. Most of the articles may be downloaded from JSTOR or authors’ websites.

Office hours by appointment online. Email jnye@gmu.edu.
I. Introduction – Cliometrics and the Universality of Economic Ideas

McCloskey, D.N. "Does the Past Have a Useful Economics?" JEL 1976 pp. 434-61.
North, D.C. 1974. “Beyond the New Economic History” JEH.

II. Extensive Growth: the Malthusian Debate in Economic History

Greg Clark. *Farewell to Alms* Chapters 1-9.

III. Economics and the Middle Ages: Slavery and The Open Fields Debate


IV. The State and Economic Development: Mercantilism and Economic Rivalry

Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*.
Nye, *War, Wine, and Taxes*.

V. Institutions and Colonialism


VI. The Industrial Revolution I.


VII. What About China?

Mokyr, “Why Was the Industrial Revolution a European Phenomenon?”


VIII. The Industrial Revolution: Debating Growth Statistics

Clark on the Industrial Revolution. *Farewell to Alms*.


Harley and Crafts, 1995 “Cotton Textiles and Industrial Output Growth During the Industrial Revolution.” *Econ History Review*.

IX. The Standard of Living Debate


Lindert and Williamson 1983 “English Workers’ Living Standards During the Industrial Revolution” *Econ History Review.*

Feinstein, 1998 “Pessimism Perpetuated: Real Wages and the Standard of Living in Britain during and After the Industrial Revolution,” *JEH.*


**X. Long Run Inequality**

Hoffman, Jacks, Levin, and Lindert, 2002. “Real Inequality in Western Europe Since 1500.” *JEH.*

**XI. France I: Introduction and Public Finance**


White, Eugene, 1989. “Was There a Solution to the Ancien Regime’s Financial Dilemma?” *JEH.*

**XII. France II: Agriculture**

Sicsic 1992. “City-Farm Wage Gaps in Nineteenth Century France.” *JEH*


**XIII. France III: Scale, size, and management**

Landes, 1949. “French Entrepreneurship and Industrial Growth in the Nineteenth Century” *JEH.*


Kinghorn and Nye, 1997 “The Scale of Production in Western Economic Development” *JEH.*

**XIV. Russia**


XV. To Be Announced