

# Econ 365: Topics in Economic History

Professor: Mark Koyama

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**Virtual Office Hours:** By appointment via Zoom. You are welcome to use “Ask the Professor” forum available in the Blackboard Discussion Board or send an email anytime.

## 1 Course Outline

This online course is an introduction to economic history. We will address the following questions: Why were societies in the past so poor? What factors determined the growth of population? Why did innovation and technological progress take-off in western Europe but not in East Asia or in the rest of the world? What caused the industrial revolution? How did the industrial revolution spread?

### Topics

We will cover the following topics during the course.

- Introduction—What is Economic Growth?
- Why was there no sustained growth before 1750?
- Measuring living standards in the past
- Why not China?
- Why not the Middle East?
- Why Europe?
- The Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment
- The Industrial Revolution
- The Spread of the Industrial Revolution

### Course Requirements

- Midterm Exam. This is worth 25% of your final grade.
- Two Book Summaries. This is worth 15%.

- Research paper. This is worth 30%. You get 5% for handing in an acceptable draft proposal for your research paper on time and 25% for the research paper itself. The due date for the draft proposal is **November 1**. The due date for the final paper is **December 3**.
- Take-Home Final. This is worth 30% of your final grade. The first book summary is due on **October 1**. The second book summary is due on **November 1**.

There will be two exams in this course, one midterm and a final. **The midterm will be on October 16**. The final a take-home. You are required to take the final, failure to do so will result in an F for the course.

Exams will consist of a mix of short definitions, multiple choice, and essay questions. They will focus on the readings and lecture videos.

## Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the appropriate economic theory and apply it correctly to analyze questions in economic history.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the relevant historical background, especially as it relates to the question of the origins of economic growth.
3. Apply detailed knowledge of the relevant literature and write a research tackling one specific question from the class.

But the midterms and exams will be based on material I go through during the lectures. There is no study-guide. You are responsible for making your own notes for the class.

## Research Paper

This course fulfills the Writing Intensive requirement in the Economics major. It does through the completion of a research paper along with various assignments leading up to the paper.

I will assign suggested titles and readings for the writing assignment during the semester. You will write a 1 page proposal of how you plan to answer the research question by November 1. The final essay should be about 15 pages long (1.5 spacing and including footnotes and bibliography). It is extremely important that your essay surveys the relevant literature and is properly referenced. The paper should be written in grammatically correct English. Avoid jargon where possible. Note that your grade for the research paper will be based on the quality of your prose as well as the quality of your research. Please make use of GMU's Writing Center for tips and advice on academic writing:

<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>

There will be opportunities over the course of the semester to get feedback on your writing and to discuss it with me.

I will take half a letter grade off your grade if you don't hand it in when it is due and an additional half a letter grade off for every 24 hours that the paper is late. You should submit a hard copy of the paper at the start of class.

# Readings

This course is more reading intensive than most economics courses and you will be expected to familiarize yourselves with plenty of new historical information. Hopefully you should find the books and articles assigned *interesting* and *relevant*. But if you are not prepared to do a lot of reading and to assimilate lots of new information, this is not the course for you!

The following books are required:

- Timur Kuran, *The Long Divergence* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010
- Jared Rubin, *Rulers, Religion, and Riches: Why the West got rich and the Middle East did not* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017
- Walter Scheidel, *Escape from Rome* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019
- Robert C. Allen, *The British Industrial Revolution in a Global Perspective* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009
- Joel Mokyr, *The Lever of Riches* Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 1990

All of these books are available fairly cheaply as paperbacks.

There will be additional readings (journal articles and chapters) each week. All the articles I assign will be easily accessible on the internet (if they are not I will provide an electronic copy) but it will be up to you to download them (and read them!) before class. You are expected to know these readings for the both exam and for class discussion. Selected book chapters from the reading list will be available online.

You may find yourself feeling overwhelmed by new information and dates ('what was the Glorious Revolution again' ... 'when did the Qing dynasty rule China?' ...). In this case I expect you take charge of your own learning and to be entrepreneurial. Wikipedia is a great source for factual information so make use of it to check dates and facts and to get additional background information (but don't rely on it for interpretation and certainly do not plagiarize it!).

I will also link to videos and multimedia sources as well.

## Learning Objectives

- This course will give students new insights into the origins of economic growth and development. They will improve their understanding of how historical events shape economic outcomes today.
- Students will learn how to interpret historical data on wages, prices, and population and how to use this data to assess how living standards have evolved over time.
- Students will employ techniques and concepts from microeconomic and macroeconomics to better understand history.

- This course will give students an opportunity to develop their communication and presentation skills.
- This course will give students an opportunity to develop their writing abilities, specifically their ability to research and write a longer research paper.

## Grades

This is the assessment criteria I employ to assess the research essays.

- A The essay demonstrates an excellent command of the relevant economic theory and historical context. The work is supported by a broad and rich range of readings and research. In particular, the student shows the ability to go beyond rewriting the existing source material and shows fair and originality in their argument.
- B The essay demonstrates a good command of the relevant economic theory and historical context and is support by solid research. The student has a good understanding of the relevant material and is able to deploy it in a clear and effective manner.
- C The essay demonstrates some understanding of the relevant economic theory and historical context. It shows evidence of some research. But the essay is weakened by either citing irrelevant source material or by errors in the application of their economic or historical reasoning.
- D The essay demonstrates a weak understanding of the relevant economic theory and historical context. It is supported only by weak or inappropriate evidence. The essay has serious errors or mistakes.

Students can schedule a meeting to discuss grades either to better understand their grade or if they believe a mistake has been made in grading. However, let me be clear about what to expect from such conversations. It is not acceptable for a student to come to me with a general objection, such as “I thought I did better on this paper” or “I need an A”. Your grade is based on your *work*, not on your expected performance or you as a person. I only change grades, if a mistake has been made in the grading process. There is no opportunity to “fix” grades. I do not offer extra assignments or extra credit at the end of the semester to help you reach the grade you want. If I did so, I would offer the opportunity to everyone in the class. If I add in other elements to your grade that do measure actual learning, such as your desired GPA or graduate school ambitions, I would be corrupting the purpose of grading and acting unethically.

## 2 Course Policies

### 1. George Mason University Honor System and Code

#### *Honor Code*

George Mason University has an Honor Code, which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited.

All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee.

Plagiarism (statements from Mason Web Site)

Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving that person credit.

<http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm#plagiarism>

Please familiarize yourself with the Honor System and Code, as stated in the George Mason University Undergraduate Catalog. When you are given an assignment as an individual, the work must be your own. Some of your work may be collaborative; source material for group projects and work of individual group members must be carefully documented for individual contributions.

The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. Mason has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using the appropriate format for this class. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.

#### **2. Class Registration**

Students are responsible for verifying the accuracy of their own schedules. Students need to check PatriotWeb regularly to verify that they are registered for the classes that they think they are. This is particularly important since students are no longer dropped for nonpayment. Faculty may not allow a student who is not registered to continue to attend class and may not grade the work of students who do not appear on the official class roster.

Deadlines each semester are published in the Schedule of Classes available from the Registrar's Web Site [registrar.gmu.edu](http://registrar.gmu.edu)

After the last day to drop a class, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons. Undergraduate students may choose to exercise a selective withdrawal. See the Schedule of Classes for selective withdrawal procedures.

#### **3. Accommodations for students with disabilities:**

Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time

during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email:ods@gmu.edu — Phone: (703) 993-2474

The need for accommodations should be identified at the beginning of the semester and the specific accommodation has to be arranged through the Office of Disability Resources. Faculty cannot provide accommodations to students on their own (e.g. allowing a student extra time to complete an exam because the student reports having a disability).

#### **4. Basic Course Technology Requirements**

Activities and assignments in this course will regularly use the Blackboard learning system, available at <https://mymason.gmu.edu>. Students are required to have regular, reliable access to a computer with an updated operating system (recommended: Windows 10 or Mac OSX 10.13 or higher) and a stable broadband Internet connection (cable modem, DSL, satellite broadband, etc., with a consistent 1.5 Mbps [megabits per second] download speed or higher. You can check your speed settings using the speed test on this website.)

Activities and assignments in this course will regularly use web-conferencing software (Blackboard Collaborate / Zoom). In addition to the requirements above, students are required to have a device with a functional camera and microphone. In an emergency, students can connect through a telephone call, but video connection is the expected norm.

#### **5. Course Materials and Student Privacy**

Videorecordings of class meetings that are shared only with the instructors and students officially enrolled in a class do not violate FERPA or any other privacy expectation. Videorecordings that only include the instructor (no student names, images, voices, or identifiable texts) may be shared without violating FERPA (but see below, University Policies: Privacy, for some qualifications and recommendations)

All course materials posted to Blackboard or other course site are private to this class; by federal law, any materials that identify specific students (via their name, voice, or image) must not be shared with anyone not enrolled in this class.

Videorecordings — whether made by instructors or students — of class meetings that include audio, visual, or textual information from other students are private and must not be shared outside the class Live video conference meetings (e.g. Collaborate or Zoom) that include audio, textual, or visual information from other students must be viewed privately and not shared with others in your household or recorded and shared outside the class

Some/All of our synchronous meetings in this class will be recorded to provide necessary information for students in this class. Recordings will be stored on Blackboard [or other secure site] and will only be accessible to students taking this course during this semester.

This course requires the use of LockDown Browser and a webcam for online exams. The webcam can be built into your computer (internal webcam) or can be the type of webcam that plugs in with a USB cable (external webcam). Watch this short video to get a basic understanding of LockDown Browser and the webcam feature. A Quick Start Guide for Students is also available.

You will need the following system requirements for online exams:

- Windows: 10, 8, 7
- Mac: OS X 10.10 or higher
- iOS: 10.0+ (iPad only). Must have a compatible LMS integration [Details].
- Web camera (internal or external) microphone
- A reliable internet connection
- Prior to your first exam, you must install LockDown Browser following the step-by-step instructions.

To ensure LockDown Browser and the webcam are set up properly, do the following:  
Start LockDown Browser, log into Blackboard and select this course.

- Locate and select the Help Center button on the LockDown Browser toolbar. Run the Webcam Check and, if necessary, resolve any issues or permissions your computer prompts.
- Run the System & Network Check. If a problem is indicated, see if a solution is provided in the Knowledge Base. Further troubleshooting is available through the ITS Support Center. Exit the Help Center and locate the practice quiz named.
- Upon completing and submitting the practice quiz, exit LockDown Browser.

When taking an online exam that requires LockDown Browser and a webcam, remember the following guidelines:

- Ensure you're in a location where you won't be interrupted.
- Turn off all other devices (e.g. tablets, phones, second computers) and place them outside of your reach.
- Clear your desk of all external materials not permitted — books, papers, phones, other devices.
- Before starting the test, know how much time is available for it, and that you've allotted sufficient time to complete it.
- Remain at your computer for the duration of the test. Make sure that your computer is plugged into a power source, or that battery is fully-charged.
- If the computer or networking environment is different than what was used previously with the Webcam Check and System & Network Check in LockDown Browser, run the checks again prior to starting the test

To produce a good webcam video, do the following:

- Do not wear a baseball cap or hat with a brim that obscures your face

- Ensure your computer or tablet is on a firm surface (a desk or table). Do NOT have the computer on your lap, a bed, or any other surface where the device (or you) are likely to move. If using a built-in (internal) webcam, avoid tilting the screen after the webcam setup is complete.
- Take the exam in a well-lit room and avoid backlighting, such as sitting with your back to a window.
- Remember that LockDown Browser will prevent you from accessing other websites or applications; you will be unable to exit the test until all questions are completed and submitted.

Sharing of instructor-created materials, particularly materials relevant to assignments or exams, to public online “study” sites is considered a violation of Mason’s Honor Code. I have created unique material for this specific class. Sharing this online without my permission is unethical.

### **6. Religious Holidays**

As per GMU policy, I will do my best to accommodate student absences due to religious holidays (or for other university sanction reasons). Please let me know within the first two weeks of the semester whether the midterm exam dates conflict with the dates of major religious holidays on which the student will be absent or unavailable due to religious observances.

## 3 Main Reading List

### 3.1 Lesson 1 Introduction

- Gregory Clark, *Farewell to Alms* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007 Chapter 1
- Walter Scheidel, *Escape from Rome* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019 Chapters 1
- Joel Mokyr, *The Lever of Riches* Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 1990 Chapter 1

### 3.2 Lesson 2: Guns, Germs and Steel

- Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997 Chapters 4-11

### 3.3 Lesson 3: The Malthusian Model

- Gregory Clark, *Farewell to Alms* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007 Chapters 2 and 7
- Quamrul Ashraf and Oded Galor, Dynamics and Stagnation in the Malthusian Epoch, *American Economic Review* 101, Nr. 5 August 2011

### 3.4 Lesson 4: Living Standards in the Past

- Gregory Clark, *Farewell to Alms* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007 Chapters 3 and 5
- Robert C. Allen, The Great Divergence in European Wages and Prices from the Middle Ages to the First World War, *Explorations in Economic History* 38 2001

### 3.5 Lesson 5; Markets & Demography in Europe and Asia

- Gregory Clark, *Farewell to Alms* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007 Chapters 4\*
- Carol H. Shiue and Wolfgang Keller, Markets in China and Europe on the Eve of the Industrial Revolution, *American Economic Review* 97, Nr. 4 September 2007\*
- Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence, China, Europe and the making of the modern world economy* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2000 Chapter 2
- Jan Luiten van Zanden and Tine de Moor, Girlpower. The European Marriage Pattern (EMP) and Labour Markets in the North Sea Region in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Period, *Economic History Review* 2009

### 3.6 Lesson 6: Why not China?

- Joel Mokyr, *The Lever of Riches* Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 1990 Chapter 9
- David S. Landes, Why Europe and the West? Why Not China?, *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20, Nr. 2 Spring 2006
- Stephen Broadberry, Hanhui Guan and David Daokui Li, China, Europe, and the Great Divergence: A Study in Historical National Accounting, 980–1850, *The Journal of Economic History* 78, Nr. 4 2018
- Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence, China, Europe and the making of the modern world economy* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2000 Introduction and Chapter 1
- Jean-Laurent Rosenthal and R Bin Wong, *Before and Beyond Divergence* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011 Chapters 1-2

### 3.7 Lesson 7: Why not the Middle East 1

- Timur Kuran, *The Long Divergence* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010 Chapters 1-4 and 14

### 3.8 Lesson 8: Why not the Middle East 2

- Jared Rubin, *Rulers, Religion, and Riches: Why the West got rich and the Middle East did not* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017 Chapters 1, 2, 3

### 3.9 Lesson 9: Why Europe?

- Jared Rubin, *Rulers, Religion, and Riches: Why the West got rich and the Middle East did not* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017 Chapters 6 and 7
- Walter Scheidel, *Escape from Rome* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019 Chapter 10
- Jack A. Goldstone, Efflorescences and Economic Growth in World History: Rethinking the “Rise of the West” and the Industrial Revolution, *Journal of World History* 13, Nr. 2 2002
- Van Zanden Jan Luiten, Eltjo Buringh and Maarten Bosker, The rise and decline of European parliaments, 1188–1791, *The Economic History Review* 65, Nr. 3 2012
- Mattia Fochesato, Origins of Europe’s north-south divide: Population changes, real wages and the ‘little divergence’ in early modern Europe, *Explorations in Economic History* 70 2018

### **3.10 Lesson 10: The Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment**

- Joel Mokyr, The Intellectual Origins of Modern Economic Growth, *The Journal of Economic History* 65, Nr. 02 June 2005
- Joel Mokyr, *Culture of Growth* Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2016 Chapters 10, 11, and 12
- Mara P. Squicciarini and Nico Voigtländer, Human Capital and Industrialization: Evidence from the Age of Enlightenment, *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 130, Nr. 4 2015

### **3.11 Lesson 11: The Industrial Revolution**

- Robert C. Allen, *The British Industrial Revolution in a Global Perspective* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009
- Robert C. Allen, The high wage economy and the industrial revolution: a restatement, *Economic History Review* 68, Nr. 1 February 2015
- Morgan Kelly and Cormac Ó Gráda, Adam Smith, Watch Prices, and the Industrial Revolution \*, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 131, Nr. 4 09 2016
- Joel Mokyr, *The Lever of Riches* Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 1990 Chapters 5 and 10
- Morgan Kelly, Joel Mokyr and Cormac Ó Gráda, Precocious Albion: A New Interpretation of the British Industrial Revolution, *Annual Review of Economics* 6, Nr. 1 2014
- Joel Mokyr, *The British Industrial Revolution: An Economic Perspective. 2nd edition* Colorado, U.S.A: Westview Press, 1999 Chapter 1

### **3.12 Lesson 12: The Spread of the Industrial Revolution**

- Joel Mokyr, *The Gift of Athena: Historical Origins of the Knowledge Economy* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2002 Chapter 3
- Robert C. Allen, American Exceptionalism as a Problem in Global History, *The Journal of Economic History* 74, Nr. 2 June 2014
- Joel Mokyr, *The Lever of Riches* Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 1990 Chapter 10
- Sascha O. Becker, Erik Hornung and Ludger Woessmann, Education and Catch-Up in the Industrial Revolution, *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics* 3, Nr. 3 July 2011

### 3.13 Deadline for Research Paper (6 pm. December 3)

Note this is a hard deadline. I deduct at least a grade for every for every day a paper is late. I also do not accept excuses such as (1) “my laptop crashed, has a virus, could not connect to the internet”; (2) or “my parent, sibling had an emergency”. If you are unwell you need a doctor’s note that explains why it meant that you were unable to write the paper on time. Write your paper **Before** the deadline in order to avoid such emergencies impacting our ability to submit your paper.

## References

- Allen, Robert C.: The Great Divergence in European Wages and Prices from the Middle Ages to the First World War, *Explorations in Economic History* 38 2001, 411–447
- Allen, Robert C.: *The British Industrial Revolution in a Global Perspective* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009
- Allen, Robert C.: American Exceptionalism as a Problem in Global History, *The Journal of Economic History* 74, Nr. 2 June 2014, 309–350
- Allen, Robert C.: The high wage economy and the industrial revolution: a restatement, *Economic History Review* 68, Nr. 1 February 2015, 1–22
- Ashraf, Quamrul and Galor, Oded: Dynamics and Stagnation in the Malthusian Epoch, *American Economic Review* 101, Nr. 5 August 2011, 2003–41
- Becker, Sascha O., Hornung, Erik and Woessmann, Ludger: Education and Catch-Up in the Industrial Revolution, *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics* 3, Nr. 3 July 2011, 92–126
- Broadberry, Stephen, Guan, Hanhui and Li, David Daokui: China, Europe, and the Great Divergence: A Study in Historical National Accounting, 980–1850, *The Journal of Economic History* 78, Nr. 4 2018, 955–1000
- Clark, Gregory: *Farewell to Alms* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007
- Diamond, Jared: *Guns, Germs, and Steel* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997
- Fochesato, Mattia: Origins of Europe’s north-south divide: Population changes, real wages and the ‘little divergence’ in early modern Europe, *Explorations in Economic History* 70 2018, 91–131
- Goldstone, Jack A.: Efflorescences and Economic Growth in World History: Rethinking the “Rise of the West” and the Industrial Revolution, *Journal of World History* 13, Nr. 2 2002
- Kelly, Morgan, Mokyr, Joel and Gráda, Cormac Ó: Precocious Albion: A New Interpretation of the British Industrial Revolution, *Annual Review of Economics* 6, Nr. 1 2014, 363–389
- Kelly, Morgan and Ó Gráda, Cormac: Adam Smith, Watch Prices, and the Industrial Revolution \*, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 131, Nr. 4 09 2016, 1727–1752
- Kuran, Timur: *The Long Divergence* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010
- Landes, David S.: Why Europe and the West? Why Not China?, *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20, Nr. 2 Spring 2006, 3–22
- Luiten, Van Zanden Jan, Buringh, Eltjo and Bosker, Maarten: The rise and decline of European parliaments, 1188–1791, *The Economic History Review* 65, Nr. 3 2012, 835–861
- Mokyr, Joel: *The Lever of Riches* Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 1990
- Mokyr, Joel: *The British Industrial Revolution: An Economic Perspective. 2nd edition* Colorado, U.S.A: Westview Press, 1999
- Mokyr, Joel: *The Gift of Athena: Historical Origins of the Knowledge Economy* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2002
- Mokyr, Joel: The Intellectual Origins of Modern Economic Growth, *The Journal of Economic History* 65, Nr. 02 June 2005, 285–351
- Mokyr, Joel: *Culture of Growth* Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2016
- Pomeranz, Kenneth: *The Great Divergence, China, Europe and the making of the modern world economy* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2000

- Rosenthal, Jean-Laurent and Wong, R Bin: *Before and Beyond Divergence* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011
- Rubin, Jared: *Rulers, Religion, and Riches: Why the West got rich and the Middle East did not* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017
- Scheidel, Walter: *Escape from Rome* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019
- Shiue, Carol H. and Keller, Wolfgang: Markets in China and Europe on the Eve of the Industrial Revolution, *American Economic Review* 97, Nr. 4 September 2007, 1189–1216
- Squicciarini, Mara P. and Voigtländer, Nico: Human Capital and Industrialization: Evidence from the Age of Enlightenment, *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 130, Nr. 4 2015, 1825–1883
- Zanden, Jan Luiten van and Moor, Tine de: Girlpower. The European Marriage Pattern (EMP) and Labour Markets in the North Sea Region in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Period, *Economic History Review* 2009, Forthcoming