

Econ 365: Topics in Economic History

Professor: Mark Koyama

E-mail: mkoyama2@gmu.edu **Expected timing of email replies:** 24 hours for answers requiring quick replies (excluding weekends); 48 hours for longer replies.
(Virtual) Office Hours: By appointment via Zoom. Contact me by email first. My physical office is in Carow Hall (Room 8).

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?
- The impact of colonialism
- 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. **October 10.**
- Two Book Summaries. This is worth 15%. These are *both* due **November 7.**

- Research paper. This is worth 30%. The due date for the final paper is **December 1 (end of day)**.
- Final. This is worth 30% of your final grade. This is due on **December 7**

There will be two exams in this course, one midterm and a final. The midterm and final exams will only be rescheduled for a University condoned reason and I will ask for a note from your doctor.

Exams will consist of a mix of short essay questions. They will focus on the readings and lectures.

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. 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 book is required:

- Mark Koyama and Jared Rubin, *How the World Became Rich* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022 This is the single most important book for the course.

The following books are highly recommended. I may upload selections onto Blackboard but you will benefit from reading these in their entirety.

- Timur Kuran, *The Long Divergence* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010
- Jared Rubin, *God, Power, and Printing: The Roots of Economic Success and Stagnation in Europe and the Middle East* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017
- Jared M. Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999
- Robert C. Allen, *The British Industrial Revolution in a Global Perspective* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009
- Joel Mokyr, *The Lever of Riches* Oxford, U.K.: 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 supported 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.

To get an A in your research paper you will have to read the optional readings as well as the required readings.

All written work will be run through both anti-plagiarism software and software to detect use of artificial AI. Any such use will result in an automatic F and may entail further sanctions.

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>

Use on ChatGPT or other similar software also constitutes cheating. I will check all exams and research papers for sign of AI use and will automatically fail students who have used it. 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

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).

3. 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 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 Week 1: August 22 — Introduction

- Mark Koyama and Jared Rubin, *How the World Became Rich* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022 Chapters 1*
- Joel Mokyr, *The Lever of Riches* Oxford, U.K.: Oxford UP, 1990 Chapter 1

3.2 Week 2: August 29

- Mark Koyama and Jared Rubin, *How the World Became Rich* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022 Chapters 2*
- Jared M. Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999 Chapter 3

3.3 Week 4: September 5

- Mark Koyama and Jared Rubin, *How the World Became Rich* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022 Chapters 5*
- Quamrul Ashraf and Oded Galor, Dynamics and Stagnation in the Malthusian Epoch, *American Economic Review* 101, Nr. 5 August 2011

Optional Extra readings

- Gregory Clark, *Farewell to Alms* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007 Chapters 1-7*

3.4 Week 5: September 12

- 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
- Richard H. Steckel, Heights and human welfare: Recent developments and new directions, *Explorations in Economic History* 46, Nr. 1 2009

Optional Extra readings

- Howard Bodenhorn, Timothy W. Guinnane and Thomas A. Mroz, Sample-Selection Biases and the Industrialization Puzzle, *The Journal of Economic History* 77, Nr. 1 2017

3.5 Week 5: September 19

- Gregory Clark, *Farewell to Alms* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007 Chapters 4*
- 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

Optional Extra readings

- John Hajnal, Two Kinds of Preindustrial Household Formation System, *Population and Development Review* 8, Nr. 3 1982

3.6 Week 6: September 26

- Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence, China, Europe and the making of the modern world economy* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2000 Introduction
- 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*

3.7 Week 7: October 3

- 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
- Loren Brandt, Debin Ma and Thomas G. Rawski, From Divergence to Convergence: Reevaluating the History behind China's Economic Boom, *Journal of Economic Literature* 52, Nr. 1 2014 pp. 45-81

Midterm October 10

3.8 Week 8: October 12 – Why not the Middle East 1

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

3.9 Week 9: October 17 — Why not the Middle East 2

- Jared Rubin, *God, Power, and Printing: The Roots of Economic Success and Stagnation in Europe and the Middle East* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017 Chapters 1, 2 ,3*

3.10 Week 10: October 24 — Political Institutions and the Rise of Europe

- Jared Rubin, *God, Power, and Printing: The Roots of Economic Success and Stagnation in Europe and the Middle East* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017 Chapters 6 and 7*
- Mark Koyama and Jared Rubin, *How the World Became Rich* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022 Chapter 7*
- 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

Optional Extra Papers

3.11 Week 11: October 31 — Colonial Institutions

- Mark Koyama and Jared Rubin, *How the World Became Rich* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022 Chapter 6*

Optional Extra Papers

- Nathan Nunn, The Long-Term Effects of Africa's Slave Trades, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol 123, Nr. 1 2008
- William F. Maloney and Felipe Valencia Caicedo, The Persistence of (Subnational) Fortune, *Economic Journal* 126, Nr. 598 2016
- Felipe Valencia Caicedo, The Mission: Human Capital Transmission, Economic Persistence, and Culture in South America*, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 134, Nr. 1 10 2018

3.12 Week 11: November 7– The Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment

- Joel Mokyr, The Intellectual Origins of Modern Growth, *The Journal of Economic History* 65, Nr. 2 2005*
- Joel Mokyr, *Culture of Growth* Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2016 Chapters 10, 11, and 12

Optional Extra Paper

- Mara P. Squicciarini and Nico Voigtländer, Human Capital and Industrialization: Evidence from the Age of Enlightenment, *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 130, Nr. 4 2015

3.13 Lesson 12: November 14 —The Industrial Revolution

- Mark Koyama and Jared Rubin, *How the World Became Rich* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022 Chapter 9*
- 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
- Joel Mokyr, *The Lever of Riches* Oxford, U.K.: Oxford UP, 1990 Chapters 5 and 10

Optional Extra Papers

- 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
- Morgan Kelly and Cormac Ó Gráda, Adam Smith, Watch Prices, and the Industrial Revolution *, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 131, Nr. 4 09 2016
- Morgan Kelly, Joel Mokyr and Cormac Ó Gráda, The Mechanics of the Industrial Revolution, *Journal of Political Economy* 131, Nr. 1 2023

3.14 Lesson 13: November 28 — The Spread of the Industrial Revolution

- Mark Koyama and Jared Rubin, *How the World Became Rich* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022 Chapter 10*
- 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, U.K.: Oxford UP, 1990 Chapter 10

Optional Extra Papers

- 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

3.15 December 5— Review

3.16 Deadline for Research Paper (Midnight December 1)

Note this is a hard deadline. I deduct at least a grade 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 your 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
- Bodenhorn, Howard, Guinnane, Timothy W. and Mroz, Thomas A.: Sample-Selection Biases and the Industrialization Puzzle, *The Journal of Economic History* 77, Nr. 1 2017, 171–207
- Brandt, Loren, Ma, Debin and Rawski, Thomas G.: From Divergence to Convergence: Reevaluating the History behind China’s Economic Boom, *Journal of Economic Literature* 52, Nr. 1 2014, 45–123
- 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 M.: *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999
- 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
- Hajnal, John: Two Kinds of Preindustrial Household Formation System, *Population and Development Review* 8, Nr. 3 1982, 449–494
- 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, Mokyr, Joel and Ó Gráda, Cormac: The Mechanics of the Industrial Revolution, *Journal of Political Economy* 131, Nr. 1 2023, 59–94
- 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
- Koyama, Mark and Rubin, Jared: *How the World Became Rich* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022
- Kuran, Timur: *The Long Divergence* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010

- 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
- Maloney, William F. and Caicedo, Felipe Valencia: The Persistence of (Subnational) Fortune, *Economic Journal* 126, Nr. 598 2016, 2363–2401
- 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 Growth, *The Journal of Economic History* 65, Nr. 2 2005, 285–351
- Mokyr, Joel: *Culture of Growth* Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2016
- Mokyr, Joel: *The Lever of Riches* Oxford, U.K.: Oxford UP, 1990
- Nunn, Nathan: The Long-Term Effects of Africa’s Slave Trades, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol 123, Nr. 1 2008, pg. 139–176
- Pomeranz, Kenneth: *The Great Divergence, China, Europe and the making of the modern world economy* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2000
- Rubin, Jared: *God, Power, and Printing: The Roots of Economic Success and Stagnation in Europe and the Middle East* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017
- 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
- Steckel, Richard H.: Heights and human welfare: Recent developments and new directions, *Explorations in Economic History* 46, Nr. 1 2009, 1–23
- Valencia Caicedo, Felipe: The Mission: Human Capital Transmission, Economic Persistence, and Culture in South America*, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 134, Nr. 1 10 2018, 507–556
- 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