

Econ 277 Economic History of the Americas

Syllabus

Spring 2021

Course Meetings:

Sec 51: Mondays & Wednesdays, 10:30 am – 11:45 am, BH-AUD

Sec 52: Mondays & Wednesdays, 12:00 pm – 1:15 pm, T-102

Contact Details

Instructor: Prof. Dustin Frye

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 2 pm – 3 pm; and by appointment

Website: Moodle

Course Description

This course examines selected topics related to the economic development of the U.S. Economy. In designing the course, I had two objectives in mind. First, topics have been chosen to provide a perspective on the development of the American economy from the Colonial period to the mid-twentieth century. Second, this is a course in applied economics. To that end, topics have been chosen to illustrate how evidence and theory are combined and tested to further our understanding of particular historical events. The economist, through training, tends to become an expert in the construction and manipulation of theory or applied econometric methods. The historian tends to become an expert on sources, evidence, and their reliability. An economic historian should be well versed in both.

Textbook and Course Materials

Textbook. There is no required textbook for the course. Readings are available through Moodle. There are two recommended books for the data work associated with the course. *R Graphics Cookbook* is an excellent manual for illustrating data and *R for Data Science* is a very good resource for cleaning and manipulating data.

Moodle. We will be using Moodle for this course. Be sure to check Moodle for course updates, posted assignments and grades, and lecture materials. Lecture notes will generally be posted in advance of the lecture we cover them in.

Prerequisites

Economics Prerequisites: Econ 102

Relevant math techniques and economic concepts will be briefly reviewed when necessary, but you are responsible for the math and econ requirements of this course. If you need extra help with the quantitative components of the course, please visit the Quantitative Reasoning Center (QRC) for help.

Grading

There are four components to your course grade.

1. Participation (5%)
2. Problem Sets (15%)
3. Group Research Proposal (20%)
4. Two Midterm Exams (30% Each)

Participation

In an effort to foster more discussion and engagement in the course, we'll have required readings that you should complete before coming to class. We will have two types of readings. The first is a collection of more general readings from books, textbooks, and other survey articles. The second is a set of academic journal articles that highlight recent contributions to the field. The readings are listed in the Tentative Course Schedule below and will be posted to Moodle well in advance. You are expected to read the general readings in their entirety, but only the introduction of the academic journal articles prior to attending class.

Problem Sets

A key part of the course is working with historical data. Over the term there will be three problem sets focusing on data work to help reinforce these skills. As an urban economist I believe there are large positive spillover effects from collaborating with others. I encourage you to work on the problem sets in groups of up to four people and if you work in a group you only need to submit one problem set for the group.

Group Research Proposal

The objective of this assignment is to move you from being consumers of economics to producers of economics. The goal is for you to work in a group and develop a research proposal, similar to the early stages of academic research. This can feel like a daunting task, so you are going to be working in groups of up to four. The project has five separate components, which you'll be working on throughout the semester: a topic proposal, literature review, specifying research question and data identification, empirical approach, and a final presentation. We will talk more about each stage in the process as we move through the semester.

Midterm Exams

There will be two midterm exams. The first is scheduled for Monday, March 29th in class. The second will take place during the scheduled final exam slot. Check your calendar for weddings, birthdays, funerals, or any other travel plans. If you have plans you should drop the class immediately. I will not allow you to take the exam early or late.

The format of the exams will be short answer questions, graphical or mathematical problems, or short essay. Please bring a #2 pencil and a calculator to every exam. Any material covered in lecture and/or in the assigned readings is fair game for the exams.

Tentative Schedule & Reading List

Why Economic History (Feb 17th – Feb 22nd)

1. Long-Run Growth

Nunn N. The Importance of History for Economic Development. *Annual Review of Economics*. 2009; 1 (1): 65-92.

2. Colonialism & Institutions

Acemoglu, Daron, and Simon Johnson, James A. Robinson. "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation." *The American Economic Review* 91.5 (2001): 1369-1401.

Sokoloff, Kenneth L., and Stanley L. Engerman. "Institutions, factor endowments, and paths of development in the new world." *Journal of Economic perspectives* 14.3 (2000): 217-232.

Western Settlement and the Frontier (Feb 24th - Mar 8th)

1. Property Rights

Libecap, Gary D., and Dean Lueck. "The demarcation of land and the role of coordinating property institutions." *Journal of Political Economy* 119.3 (2011): 426-467.

Hornbeck, Richard. "Barbed wire: Property rights and agricultural development." *Quarterly journal of Economics* 125.2 (2010).

2. Indigenous Development

Dippel, Christian. "Forced coexistence and economic development: evidence from Native American Reservations." *Econometrica* 82.6 (2014): 2131-2165.

Carlson, Leonard A. "The Dawes Act and the decline of Indian farming." *The Journal of Economic History* 38.1 (1978): 274-276.

Dippel, Christian, Dustin Frye, and Bryan Leonard. *Property Rights without Transfer Rights: A Study of Indian Land Allotment*. No. w27479. National Bureau of Economic Research, 2020.

Northern Industrial Development (Mar 15th – Apr 7th)

1. Manufacturing

Walton & Rockoff: Chapter 10

2. Urban & Industrial Development

Atack & Passell: Ch 17

Data Day: 1 - 3

3. Immigration

Boustan: Introduction

Abramitzky, Ran, Leah Platt Boustan, and Katherine Eriksson. "Europe's tired, poor, huddled masses: Self-selection and economic outcomes in the age of mass migration." *The American Economic Review* 102.5 (2012): 1832-1856.

The Southern Economy (Apr 12th – Apr 14th)

1. Agriculture and Slavery

Atack & Passell: Ch 11

2. Reconstruction & Persistence

Atack & Passell: Ch 14

Feigenbaum, James, James Lee, and Filippo Mezzanotti. "Capital Destruction and Economic Growth: The Effects of Sherman's March, 1850-1920." NBER Working Paper w25392 (2018).

Economic Integration (Apr 19th – May 19th)

1. Transportation Networks

Walton & Rockoff: Ch 16

Atack, Jeremy, et al. "Did railroads induce or follow economic growth?: Urbanization and population growth in the American Midwest, 1850–1860." *Social Science History* 34.2 (2010): 171-197.

Donaldson, Dave, and Richard Hornbeck. "Railroads and American Economic Growth: A “Market Access” Approach." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* (2016): qjw002.

Data Day: 4 – 6

2. Migration and Economic Mobility

Ferrie, Joseph P. "History lessons: The end of American exceptionalism? Mobility in the United States since 1850." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 19.3 (2005): 199-215.

Ward, Zachary. "Intergenerational mobility in American history: accounting for race and measurement error." Mimeo. (2020)

3. Booms, Busts, Banks and the Changing Role of Government

Lind: Ch 11

Fishback, Price V., William C. Horrace, and Shawn Kantor. "Did New Deal grant programs stimulate local economies? A study of Federal grants and retail sales during the Great Depression." *The Journal of Economic History* 65.01 (2005): 36-71.

Group Project Presentations (May 24th)

Other Stuff

Late Work Policy

Assignments are due at the beginning of class, not at the end or later that day. You are welcome to make up any assignment late but each day the assignment is late it reduces the potential score by 50%. Assignments turned in after the beginning of class are considered one day late. In order to submit an assignment, you must be present at the beginning of class and stay through the entire class.

Calculators

Neither graphing calculators nor cell phone calculators will be allowed during exams!!!

Do not ask me to use either type on an exam; I will not make an exception and the answer will be a definitive "No." Please be sure to obtain an acceptable calculator type (any type of calculator other than a graphing calculator or cell phone calculator) to use for exams.

Academic Dishonesty:

Presenting the work of someone else as you own is a serious affront to the other students and to me. Anyone suspected of committing academic dishonesty will be immediately turned into the Dean of Studies.

Religious Holidays:

Although classes will be held on religious holidays, students may have excused absences for any conflicting religious practice. Students who will miss class in order to observe a holy day

must notify the instructor in advance and arrange to make up any work missed. This general policy applies to all religious holidays observed by students and is not restricted to those observances recognized as major holidays for our community.

Disabilities:

Academic accommodations are available for students registered with the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity (AEO). Students in need of ADA/504 accommodations should schedule an appointment with the course instructor early in the semester to discuss any accommodations for this course that have been approved by the Office for AEO.