

Economics 8534 : Economic History of the United States

Spring 2021 • Online • Monday · Wednesday • 12:45-2:00pm

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Description

This is a course in the economic history. The goal is to provide PhD students an introduction to debates, methods, and recent topics in the economic history of the American past. Topics covered include institutions and culture, agricultural development, transportation and economic integration, immigration, innovation, the Great Depression, regions and cities, the welfare state, media and politics, and interventions in foreign affairs by the US government. We will emphasize the role of history in understanding economic process as well as the use of theory, data, and computation in addressing research questions.

Statistical Software & Data

Students must have access to **Stata**. This can be downloaded through University of Colorado's Office of Information Technology. I also recommend that students download (for free) and become familiar with **QGIS**.

In addition, students should familiarize themselves with census data at the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) and county-level data at the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR). IPUMS includes complete count data for the US Census from 1850 to 1940 (except 1940). These data can be combined with information from the Census Linking Project to create samples of individuals or family members linked over time. From ICPSR, students should download the following series: Historical, Demographic, Economic, and Social Data, 1790-2002 (#2896); United States Agriculture Data, 1840-2012 (#35206); and U.S. County-Level Natality and Mortality Data, 1915-2007 (#36603).

Grading

Participation (10%): Students are required to attend class and actively participate in discussion of readings and lectures.

Data Assignment (10%): Students are required to complete one assignment using data from the Historical Statistics of the United States and ICPSR. This is due on [1/29](#).

Replication (30%, 10% presentation + 20% assignment): Students are required to complete a presentation and replication of one published economic history paper. The presentations

will take place on **2/1** and **2/3** and the replication will be due on **3/5**.

Paper (**50%**, 5% proposal presentation + 15% final presentation + 30% final paper): Students are required to complete a presentation and final research paper on an economic history topic of their choice. The proposal presentations will take place on **3/15**. The final presentations will take place on **4/26** and **4/28** and the final paper will be due on **5/3**.

Background Reading

The *Oxford History of the United States* series provides excellent overviews of the United States since the founding. Students interested in conducting research in economic history should become familiar with these volumes. I am happy to provide other recommendations on specific time periods or topics that you may be interested in.

Course Outline

1: Introduction (1/18, 1/20)

Fogel, “The Specification Problem in Economic History,” *JEH*

Collins et al, “The Future of Economic History,” *JEH*

*Eichengreen, “Economic History and Economic Policy,” *JEH*

*Jaworski, “Specification and Structure in Economic History,” *EEH*

2: Institutions (1/25, 1/27)

North, *Structure and Change in Economic History*

Acemoglu & Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*

[†]Lee & Lemieux, “Regression Discontinuity Designs in Economics,” *JEL*

*Dell, “The Persistent Effects of Peru’s Mining *Mita*,” *Ecta*

*Abad & Maurer, “The Long Shadow of History?”

*Lamoreaux & Wallis, “Fixing the Machine that Would Not Go of Itself”

3: *Presentations of Replication Papers* (2/1, 2/3)

4: Culture (2/8, 2/10)

Ball et al, “Clustering of 770,000 Genomes,” *Nature Communications*

[†]Oster, “Unobservable Selection and Coefficient Stability,” *JBES*

*Giuliano & Nunn, “Understanding Cultural Persistence and Change,” *ReStud*

*Bazzi, Fiszbein, & Gebresilasse, “Frontier Culture,” *Ecta*

5: Slavery (Discussion, 2/15)

Fogel & Engerman, *Time on the Cross*

*Rhode & Olmstead, “Biological Innovation and Productivity Growth,” *JEH*

*Rhode & Olmstead, “Slave Productivity in Cotton Picking”

*Hilt, “Revisiting Time on the Cross After 45 Years,” *Capitalism*

6: Railroads (2/22, 2/24)

Fogel, *Railroads and American Economic Growth*

*Donaldson, “Railroads of the Raj,” *AER*

*Donaldson & Hornbeck, “Railroads and American Economic Growth,” *QJE*

*Hornbeck & Rotemberg, “Railroads, Reallocation, and the Rise of American Mfg”

7: Globalization and Immigration (3/1, 3/3)

O’Rourke & Williamson, *Globalization and History*

Hatton & Williamson, *The Age of Mass Migration: Causes and Economic Impact*

Abramitzky & Boustan, “Immigration in American Economic History,” *JEL*

[†]Abramitzky et al, “Automated Linking of Historical Data,” *JEL*

*Jaworski & Keay, “Openness to Trade and the Spread of Industrialization”

*Abramitzky, Boustan, & Eriksson, “A Nation of Immigrants,” *JPE*

*Karadja & Prawitz, “Exit, Voice, and Political Change,” *JPE*

8: Innovation and Technology (3/8, 3/10)

Schmookler, “Economic Sources of Inventive Activity,” *JEH*

*Moser, “Patents and Innovation: Evidence from Economic History,” *JEP*

[†]Imbens & Wooldridge, “Recent Dev in the Econometrics of Program Evaluation,” *JEL*

*Jaworski & Hanlon, “Spillover Effects of Intellectual Property Protection”

*Giorcelli, “The Long-Term Effects of Management and Technology Transfers,” *AER*

9: *Paper Proposal Presentation* (3/15), Meetings on 3/17

10: The Welfare State (3/22, 3/24)

Bailey & Goodman-Bacon, “The War on Poverty’s Experiment in Public Medicine,” *AER*

†Sloczynski, “Interpreting OLS Est When Treatment Effects Are Heterogeneous,” *ReStat*

*Aizer et al, “The LR Impact of Cash Transfers to Poor Families,” *AER*

*Fetter & Lockwood, “Government Old-Age Support and Labor Supply,” *AER*

11: Cities (3/29, 3/31)

Glaeser, *Cities, Agglomeration, and Spatial Equilibrium*

Boustan, *Competition in the Promised Land*

*Michaels, Rauch, & Redding, “Urbanization and Structural Transformation,” *QJE*

*Shertzer & Walsh, “Racial Sorting and the Emergence of Segregation,” *ReStat*

12: Highways (4/5, 4/7)

Baum-Snow, “Did Highways Cause Suburbanization?” *QJE*

Jaworski & Kitchens, “National Policy for Regional Development,” *ReStat*

*Jaworski, Kitchens, & Nigai, “Highways and Globalization”

13: Civil Rights (4/12, 4/14)

Wright, *Sharing the Prize*

Cook et al, “Competition and Discrimination in Public Accommodations”

*Kuziemko & Washington, “Why Did the Democrats Lose the South?” *AER*

*Derenoncourt & Montialoux, “Minimum Wages and Racial Inequality,” *QJE*

14: Media & Ideology (4/19, 4/21)

Jensen et al, “Political Polarization and the Dynamics of Political Language,” *Brookings*

†Gentzkow, Kelly, & Taddy, “Text as Data,” *JEL*

*Dittmar & Seabold, “New Media and Competition,” *JPE*

*Gentzkow, Shapiro, & Taddy, “Measuring Group Diff in High-Dimensional Choices,” *Ecta*

15: *Final Presentation* (4/26, 4/28), *Final Paper* due on 5/3