

# Economics 4524 : Economic History of the United States

Spring 2021 • REC C250 (or Online) • Monday · Wednesday · Friday • 11:30-12:20pm

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Office: Online • Office Hours: Friday, 9:30-11am

## Description

The United States has experienced sustained economic growth over most of its history. More recently growth has slowed and outcomes across space have diverged. Economists, policymakers, and pundits have strained for explanations. This course will look to the past to understand the sources of economic growth throughout US history, the integration of different groups into the economy over time, and the reasons for optimism or pessimism about future prospects. Course topics cover the history of the United States from the colonial times to the present.

## Grading

*Weekly Reading Summary (20%)*: Students are required to post a summary of the reading for each on [Canvas](#) by Monday 11am of the week the reading is listed. The summary should identify the question addressed in the reading, discuss the evidence used by the author(s), and provide a brief analysis of the conclusion. You must complete ten reading summaries to receive full credit for this part of the course. There are no summaries due on [1/18](#) or [3/8](#).

*Midterm Exam (35%)*: There will be one take-home midterm exam due on [3/10](#). The midterm exam will cover material from week 1 to week 7 on the **Course Outline** below.

*Final Exam (45%)*: There will be a take-home final exam due in the final exam period. Students will be required to analyze data and answer questions based on reading and lecture material from the entire course.

## Course Materials

The required readings are marked with a “★” and background readings are marked with a “†” on the **Course Outline** below. The background readings are optional but may provide useful background for studying for exams. Many of these readings are from Jeremy Atack and Peter Passell’s *A New Economic View of American History from Colonial Times to 1940*, which is available from the bookstore. Other readings—including all required readings—and all lectures slides will be made available on [Canvas](#).

## Course Policies

*Accommodation for Disabilities*: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in

a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or [dsinfo@colorado.edu](mailto:dsinfo@colorado.edu) for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) under the Students tab on the Disability Services website.

*Religious Holidays:* Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, please review the course schedule at the beginning of the semester and see me regarding any anticipated conflicts due to religious observances. See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

*Classroom Behavior:* Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

*Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation:* The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering a positive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, exploitation, harassment, dating or domestic violence, and stalking), discrimination, and harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or [cureport@colorado.edu](mailto:cureport@colorado.edu). Information about the OIEC, university policies, [anonymous reporting](#), and the campus resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

*Honor Code:* All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of

academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu); 303-492-5550). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](#).

## Course Outline

### 1. Introduction to the Course (1/15, 1/20, 1/22)

\*Sokoloff & Engerman, “Institutions, Factor Endowments, and Paths of Development”

†A&P, pp. xiii–xxi, 1–25.

### 2. The Colonial Economy (1/25, 1/27, 1/29)

\*Galenson, “The Rise and Fall of Indentured Servitude in the Americas”

†Carlos & Lewis, “Indians, the Beaver, and the Bay”

†A&P, pp. 26–53.

### 3. The Revolution and Early Republic (2/1, 2/3, 2/5)

\*Irwin, “The Welfare Cost of Autarky”

†Sokoloff, “Inventive Activity in Early Industrial America”

†A&P, pp. 54–80.

### 4. Agricultural Development (2/8, 2/10, 2/12)

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

†A&P, pp. 274–298, 376–426.

### 5. Slavery (2/15, 2/19)

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

†A&P, pp. 299–375.

### 6. The Civil War (2/22, 2/24, 2/26)

\*Goldin & Lewis, “The Economic Cost of the American Civil War”

†A&P, pp. 299–375.

### 7. The Debate over Railroads (3/1, 3/3, 3/5)

\*Hornbeck & Rotemberg, “Railroads, Reallocation, and the Rise of Manufacturing”

†A&P, pp.

## **8. Midterm (3/8, 3/10, 3/12)**

Take-home midterm exam due on **3/10** at 12:30pm on Canvas.

## **9. The Second Industrial Revolution (3/15, 3/17, 3/19)**

\*Lamoreaux & Sokoloff, “The Geography of Invention in the American Glass Industry”

†A&P, pp. 143–211, 427–492

## **10. The Age of Mass Migration (3/22, 3/24, 3/26)**

\*Collins & Zimran, “Immigrants’ Changing Labor Market Assimilation”

†Abramitzky & Boustan, “Immigration in American Economic History”

## **11. Education and Human Capital (3/29, 3/31, 4/2)**

\*Goldin, “America’s Graduation from High School”

\*Carruthers & Wanamaker, “Separate and Unequal in the Labor Market”

†Goldin, “The Human-Capital Century and American Leadership”

## **12. The Great Depression (4/5, 4/7, 4/9)**

\*Hausman, “Fiscal Policy and Economic Recovery”

†A&P, pp. 583–647

## **13. World War II (4/12, 4/14, 4/16)**

\*Higgs, “Wartime Prosperity”

†Thompson, “How Much Did the Liberty Shipbuilders Learn?”

## **14. Intergenerational Mobility (4/19, 4/21, 4/23)**

\*Chetty et al, “The Fading American Dream”

\*Leonhardt, Cox, & Miller, “An Atlas of Upward Mobility”

## **15. The Future of US Economic Growth (4/26, 4/28)**

\*Gordon, “The Ascent and Descent of Growth”

\*Mokyr, Vickers, & Ziebarth, “The History of Technological Anxiety”