

**Economics 420**  
**Professor Joel Mokyr**  
**Winter 2022**

**The New Economics of History: Syllabus and Readings**

Note: This is a course in economic history. The course will be devoted to recent papers in economic history written in the language of modern economics and relying on its methods. In the past decades, a great deal of economic history has been written by scholars (some full-time economic historians, others part-timers and interlopers) applying economic theory and econometric methods to historical issues. These papers have produced and utilized new and innovative methods and databases and come up with new insights. The purpose of the course is to survey a sample of this recent literature, provide it with more historical context and motivation, and stimulate similar research.

The course will consist of two weekly lectures of 110 minutes each, given in person subject to the usual caveats. Each meeting will be devoted to a different topic that has been of concern to researchers in the field. Class attendance, in person is required and will be monitored, and non-attending students may be dropped from the course.

**Structure:** Following two weeks of introductory lectures, each class will be devoted to 2 papers or packages of papers (4 per week).

**Requirements:** from week 3 on, a subset of the papers discussed in class and listed on the Reading List (the one that can be chosen by students are marked with an \*) will be assigned to one student who will prepare a written 3-4 pp. “mock referee report” on the paper consisting of a brief summary, background, motivation, data and techniques employed, persuasiveness and significance of the results, flaws and doubts (if any). This report is due **no later than 2 days** before the lecture on the paper, and the student will present the report in class after my introductory lecture on the topic.

The report (and the brief presentation based on it) should contain a summary description and assessment of the paper: topic, significance, main data and methodology, conclusions, and assessment. The presentation should be 25-30 minutes, not more. *I will mercilessly cut you off after 30 minutes.* After the presentations, I may respond to some of the student reports and we will have 10 minutes for questions and general discussion of the material.

The rules for these reports/presentations are:

1. Make sure to observe the deadline and time limits.
2. No joint work, each report/presentation will discuss one paper by one student.
3. Papers will be allocated by me, through a first come first serve mechanism, subject to various constraints. Please submit a list of 5 papers in declining order of preference starting right after the end of the first lecture on January 4.
4. Further details and instructions will be provided during the first week of January and the first week of classes.

Exact details will depend on the number of students taking the course for credit and I will circulate this information as soon as I know more. After the first round of allocation, I will allow Pareto-improving trades. It would help a great deal if everyone could register for the course well in advance, so that I can do the planning based on the number of students.

In addition to these class presentations, the grades will be determined by a substantial research paper, due *one year after the end of the course*. The paper should be original and based on research. It must be historical, and display an understanding of the context and environment of the past.

Joint papers are acceptable as long as  $n \leq 2$ , but the quality of joint work is expected to be proportionally higher than in solo papers.

Papers submitted for this class have historically fallen under three categories:

- Publishable papers (A) --- many of them are (eventually) published or : novel research papers, using original historical data or narratives, advanced theory and/or econometric methods, consisting of original and solid research.
- Non-publishable but acceptable papers (B)
- Non-acceptable papers (returned for revision).

All papers and chapters articles on the reading list have been placed on the canvas site of this course. They will be found in the “files section” of the Canvas site.

## **Reading List, by week.**

Please Note: Items marked by \* are items that may be presented by a student, the other papers will be presented by me, but *both* should be read by all students. The exact number of asterisked papers will be adjusted as needed.

### **Week 1:**

*Lecture 1:* Jan 4: General outline and introduction to modern economic history.

*Lecture 2:* Jan. 6: Ancient Origins of Economic Civilization

Andrea Matranga, “The Ant and the Grasshopper: Seasonality and the Invention of Agriculture,” Working paper, 2019.

Mayshar, Joram, Moav, Omer and Neeman, Zvika. “Geography, Transparency and Institutions,” *American Political Science Review*, 2017, pp. 622-626.

Samuel Bowles and Jung-Kyoo Choi, "The Neolithic Agricultural Revolution and the Origins of Private Property," *Journal of Political Economy* 2019, vol. 127, no. 5, pp. 2186-2228.

**Week 2:**

*Lecture 1:* Jan 11: Malthusian Models in economic history

Ashraf, Quamrul and Galor, Oded. “Dynamics and Stagnation in the Malthusian Epoch,” *American Economic Review* 101 (August 2011), pp. 2003–2041.

Rohan Dutta et al., “Entertaining Malthus: Bread, Circuses, and Economic Growth,” *Economic Inquiry* Vol. 56, No. 1, January 2018, 358–380.

*Lecture 2:* Jan. 13: The Great Puzzle of Fertility Decline

Hans-Joachim Voth and Nico Voigtländer, “How the West Invented Fertility Restriction,” *American Economic Review*, 2013, pp. 2227-64.

Brian Beach and W. Walker Hanlon, “Culture and the Historical Fertility Transition .” Working Paper.

**Week 3:**

*Lecture 1:* January 18, Cities and Urbanization in the Past

Maarten Bosker, Eltjo Buringh, and Jan Luiten van Zanden, “From Baghdad to London: unraveling urban development in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, 800–1800” *Review of Economics and Statistics*, October 2013, 95(4): 1418–1437.

\*Michel Serafinelli and Guido Tabellini, "Creativity over Time and Space," forthcoming, *Journal of Economic Growth*, 2022.

*Lecture 2:* January 20: Universities and Intellectuals in the Past

\*Davide Cantoni and Noam Yuchtman, “Medieval Universities, Legal Institutions, and the Commercial Revolution,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 2014, pp. 823-87.

Jeremiah Dittmar, “The Economic Origins of Modern Science: Technology, Institutions, and Markets” working paper, 2019.

**Week 4:**

*Lecture 1:* January 25: The Mysteries of Persistence (1)

\* Package: Joachim Voth, “Persistence: Myth and Mystery.” In Alberto Bisin and Giovanni Federico, eds., *Handbook of Historical Economics* London: Academic Press, 2021, pp. 243-267; Abad, Leticia A. and Noel Maurer “History Never Really Says Goodbye: A Critical Review of the Persistence Literature” *Journal of*

*Historical Political Economy*, 2021, 1: 31–68; \*Kelly, Morgan. 2021. “Persistence, Randomization, and Spatial Noise” unpublished.

\* Guiso, Luigi, Sapienza, Paola, and Zingales, Luigi. 2014. “Long Term Persistence.” *Journal of the European Economic Association*, Volume 14, Issue 6, 1 December 2016, pp. 1401–1436.

### *Lecture 2: January 27: The Mysteries of Persistence (2)*

\*Hans-Joachim Voth and Nico Voigtländer, “Persecution Perpetuated: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Semitic Violence in Nazi Germany,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 2012 pp. 1339-92

\*Melissa Dell, 2010. “The Persistent Effects of Peru’s Mining *Mita*.” *Econometrica* Volume 78, Issue 6, pp. 1863–1903, November.

### **Week 5:**

#### *Lecture 1: February 1: Economic issues in Early Modern Europe 1: Macroinventions before the Industrial Revolution*

Lars Boerner and Battista Severgnini, “Time for Growth,” Working Paper, 2019.

\*Jeremiah Dittmar, 2011. “Information Technology and Economic Change: The Impact of the Printing Press.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* Vol. 126, No. 3 (August), pp. 1033–72

#### *Lecture 2: February 3: Economic Issues in Modern Europe 2: The Economics of the Reformation*

\*Davide Cantoni, Jeremiah Dittmar and Noam Yuchtman, “Religious Competition and Reallocation: the Political Economy of Secularization in the Protestant Reformation” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 2018, pp. 2037–96.

\*Jeremiah E. Dittmar, and Ralf Meisenzahl, “Public Goods Institutions, Human Capital, and Growth: Evidence from Early Germany.” *Review of Economic Studies*, March 2020, pp. 959–996.

### **Week 6:**

#### *Lecture 1: February 8: Institutions 1: The New Institutional Economic history*

Alberto Alesina and Paola Giuliano, “Culture and Institutions”, *Journal of Economic Literature*, 2015, pp. 898–944.

\*Acemoglu, Daron, Johnson, Simon, and Robinson James. "Institutions as a Fundamental Cause of Economic Growth." In the *Handbook of Economic Growth*, edited by Philippe Aghion and Steven Durlauf, Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2005, pp. 385-465.

*Lecture 2:* February 10: Institutions 2: Long- and short term institutional change.

Jonathan F. Schulz, "Kin-networks and Institutional Development," Working paper, December 2021.

\*Diego Puga and Daniel Trefler. 2014. "International Trade and Institutional Change: Medieval Venice's Response to Globalization" *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* (2014) 129 (2), pp. 753-821.

## **Week 7:**

*Lecture 1:* February 15: Religion and Culture in the past

Sasha O. Becker and Ludger Woessmann. 2009. "Was Weber Wrong? A Human Capital Theory of Protestant Economic History." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, May 2009, pp. 531-96; Davide Cantoni. 2014. "The Economic Effects of the Protestant Reformation: Testing the Weber Hypothesis in the German Lands" *Journal of the Eur. Economic Assoc.* August 2015 13(4), pp. 561–598 [Package].

\*Roland Benabou, Davide Ticchi and Andrea Vindigni, "Forbidden Fruits: The Political Economy of Science, Religion, and Growth." Working paper, 2020.

*Lecture 2:* February 17: Culture, Religion, and Economic Growth

\*Voigtländer, Nico and Mara P. Squicciarini, "Human Capital and Industrialization: Evidence from the Age of Enlightenment" *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, November 2015, pp. 1825-83.

\*Mara P. Squicciarini. 2020. "Devotion and Development: Religiosity, Education, and Economic Progress in Nineteenth-Century France." *American Economic Review*, 110(11): 3454–3491

## **Week 8:**

*Lecture 1:* February 22: The Economics of Technology and the Industrial Revolution

Morgan Kelly, Cormac Ó Gráda and Joel Mokyr, "Precocious Albion: A New Interpretation of the British Industrial Revolution" *Annual Review of Economics* . 2014, pp. 1-27.

\*Walker Hanlon, "Necessity is the Mother of Invention: Input Supplies and Directed Technical Change." *Econometrica*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (January 2015), pp. 67-100.

*Lecture 2:* February 24: The Industrial Revolution and the Class Struggle.

\*Matthias Doepke and Fabrizio Zilibotti, 2008. "Occupational Choice and the Spirit of Capitalism," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 123(2), pp. 747-793, May.

\*Oded Galor and Omer Moav, "Das Human Kapital: A Theory of the Demise of the Class Structure". *Review of Economic Studies*, 73, pp. 85-117 (January 2006).

## **Week 9:**

*Lecture 1:* March 1: The Economics of Nazism

\*Shanker Satyanath, Nico Voigtländer, Hans-Joachim Voth. 2017. "Bowling for Fascism: Social Capital and the Rise of the Nazi Party." *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 125, no. 2.

\*Leander Heldring, "Bureaucracy as a tool for politicians: Evidence from Weimar and Nazi Germany" working paper.

*Lecture 2:* March 3: The Economics of Antisemitism

Sascha O. Becker and Luigi Pascali, "Religion, Division of Labor and Conflict: Anti-semitism in German Regions over 600 Years." *American Economic Review* 2019, 109(5), pp. 1764–1804

\*Robert W. Anderson, Noel Johnson and Mark Koyama, "Jewish Persecutions and Weather Shocks: 1100-1800." *Economic Journal* Volume 127, Issue 602 June 2017, pp. 924–958

## **Week 10:**

*Lecture 1:* March 8: Europe vs. China

\*Jesús Fernández-Villaverde, Mark Koyama, Youhong Lin, and Tuan-Hwee Sng, 2020. "The Fractured-Land Hypothesis." Working paper.

Greif, Avner and Tabellini, Guido, 2016. "The Clan and the City: Sustaining Cooperation in China and Europe." *Journal of Comparative Economics*, Vol. 45, 2017, pp. 1-35.

\*Shiue, Carol H. and Wolfgang Keller. 2007. "Markets in China and Europe on the Eve of the Industrial Revolution" *American Economic Review*, Vol. 97 (4), pp. 1189-1216.

*Lecture 2:* March 10: To be determined.