

December 11, 2015

Topics in Economic History

University of California, Berkeley

Economics 210B
Spring 2016
51 Evans Hall
Mondays, 12-2 PM

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Syllabus and Reading List

This course will provide students with an introduction to the research frontier in economic history, focusing on a “carefully curated” list of recent books in the field. We will undertake a critical reading of these books, focusing on both their strengths and weaknesses. General questions will include the following. Does the topic justify a book-length treatment? Does the author successfully sustain his/her argument throughout the book? What is the role of books, as opposed to articles, in research in economic history (and in economics more generally). Supplementary readings are provided to point up this last question. Most sessions will be student led (students will take charge of presenting the author’s argument and stimulating classroom discussion).

We have put the books in question on reserve and will make additional copies available insofar as possible.

Requirements for the course are three, and grades for the semester will attach equal weights to the three components. First, doing the readings, attending meetings and participating in class discussions. Second, leading a class meeting devoted to a book. Third, submitting a 10-page memo at the end of the semester describing three potential research ideas loosely based on topics discussed in the course of the semester.

Class Schedule and Readings

January 25. Introductory Meeting

February 1. Philip Hoffman, *Why Did Europe Conquer the World?* Princeton: Princeton University Press (2015).

Supplementary reading: Patrick O’Brien, “Ten Years of Debate on the Origins of the Great Divergence,” *Reviews in History* <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1008> ; Jack Goldstone, “The Rise of the West – or Not? A revision to Socio-economic History,” manuscript (2001), <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/10/114.html> .

February 8. Robert C. Allen, *The British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2009).

Supplementary reading: Jane Humphries, “The Lure of Aggregates and the Pitfalls of the Patriarchal Perspective: A Critique of the High Wage Economy Interpretation of the

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British Industrial Revolution,” *Economic History Review* 66:3 (2013), pp.693-714. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-0289.2012.00663.x/pdf>

February 15. Holiday—No Class Meeting

February 22. Stanley Engerman and Kenneth Sokoloff, *Economic Development in the Americas since 1500: Endowments and Institutions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2012).

Supplementary readings: Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson and James Robinson, “The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation,” *American Economic Review* 91:5 (2001), pp.1369-1401. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2677930?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

Also Jeffrey Sachs, Reply to Acemoglu and Robinson’s Response to My Book Review,” December 2012, <http://jeffsachs.org/2012/12/reply-to-acemoglu-and-robinsons-response-to-my-book-review/>

February 29. Mauricio Drelichman and Joachim Voth, *Lending to the Borrower from Hell: Debt, Taxes and Default in the Age of Philip II*, Princeton: Princeton University Press (2014).

Supplementary reading: Sebastian Edwards, “Sovereign Default, Debt Restructuring, and Recovery Rates: Was the Argentinean ‘Haircut’ Excessive?” NBER Working Paper no. 20964 (February 2015), <http://www.nber.org/papers/w20964> .

March 7. Peter Temin and Joachim Voth, *Prometheus Shackled: Goldsmith Banks and England’s Financial Revolution after 1700*, New York: Oxford University Press (2012).

Supplementary reading: Douglass North and Barry Weingast, “Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England,” *Journal of Economic History* 49:4 (1989), pp.803-832. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2122739?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

March 14. Charles Calomiris and Stephen Haber, *Fragile by Design: The Political Origins of Banking Crises and Scarce Credit*, Princeton: Princeton University Press (2014).

Supplementary reading: Paul De Grauwe, “The Banking Crisis: Causes, Consequences and Remedies,” Centre for European Policy Studies Policy Brief (November 2008). <http://aei.pitt.edu/11706/1/1758.pdf>

March 21. Spring Recess—No Class Meeting

March 28. Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*, New York: Knopf (2014).

Supplementary reading: Seth Rockman, “What Makes the History of Capitalism Newsworthy?” *Journal of the Early Republic* 34:3 (2014), pp.439-466. https://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_the_early_republic/v034/34.3.rockman.pdf

April 4. Robert Gordon, *The Rise and Fall of American Growth: The U.S. Standard of Living Since the Civil War*, Princeton: Princeton University Press (2016).

Supplementary reading: Joel Mokyr, “The Next Age of Invention: Technology’s Future is Brighter than Pessimists Allow,” *City Journal* (Winter 2014), pp.12-20. http://www.city-journal.org/2014/24_1_invention.html

April 11. Gregory Clark, *The Son Also Rises: Surnames and the History of Social Mobility*, Princeton: Princeton University Press (2015).

Supplementary readings: Joseph Ferrie, “History Lessons: The End of American Exceptionalism? Mobility in the U.S. Since 1850,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 19:3 (2005), pp.119-215. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4134980?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

Jason Long, “The Surprising Social Mobility of Victorian Britain,” *European Review of Economic History* 17:1 (2013), pp.1-23. <http://ereh.oxfordjournals.org/content/17/1/1.abstract>

April 18. Werner Troesken, *Water, Race and Disease*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press (2004).

Supplementary reading: Stuart Galishoff, “Germs Know No Color Line: Black Health and Public Policy in Atlanta, 1900-1918,” *Journal of the History of Medicine* 40 (1985), pp.22-41. <http://jhmas.oxfordjournals.org/content/40/1/22.full.pdf>

April 25. Gavin Wright, *Sharing the Prize: The Economics of the Civil Rights Revolution in the American South*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press (2013).

Supplementary readings: John Donahue and James Heckman, “Continuous versus Episodic Change: The Impact of Civil Rights on the Economic Status of Blacks,” *Journal of Economic Literature* 29:4 (1991), pp.1603-1643. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2727792?origin=JSTOR-pdf> .

Richard Freeman, “Black Economic Progress after 1964: Who Has Gained and Why?” in Sherwin Rosen (ed.), *Studies in Labor Markets* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). <http://www.nber.org/chapters/c8913.pdf>