

Syllabus

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Course: Topics in Economic History

Professor:

2ND TRIMESTER 2026

COURSE OUTLINE

The course reviews the recent economic history literature of three two interrelated fields: development and political economy. More specifically, this literature covers the following topics: institutions, culture, human capital, income distribution, polity, fiscal state, and populism. Besides these themes, the course also addresses two cases: Britain during the Industrial Revolution and Latin America, from colonial times to the nineteenth century.

METHODOLOGY

The professor will present cases and the background literature in the lectures. Students will discuss the recent literature on the relevant topics in seminars. Students are required to:

- Hand in a 1,500 words (max) essay on one of the seminars. Students must propose and address one to three questions based on the reading list of a specific seminar. Do not simply describe each paper, try to link them through the proposed questions. Consider this task as an exercise in formulating research questions and writing literature reviews. The essay is individual and must be handed in before the seminar.
- Present the articles of a given seminar. The seminar must NOT be the same on which the student has written the essay and the referee reports. Presentations are in groups of two/three and should not take longer than one hour (about 15 minutes per paper). The presentations should be straightforward, describing the papers': research question, methodology, and main results.
- Write two 1,000-words (max) referee reports on two seminar articles. The articles must NOT be in the same seminars in which students have delivered the presentation and written the essay. The reports should synthesize the article, highlighting its strengths, challenges, and weaknesses. If possible, the student should propose changes that could have improved the articles. The report is individual and must be handed in before the seminar.

Summing up, students are required to work ahead of four seminars. However, they are strongly encouraged to read all the seminar reading list. Students are free to choose the seminars in which they will work, but the class should coordinate these activities so there will always be a group presenting and at least one student writing an essay in every seminar.

CAREFUL!!! TURITIN WILL DETECT PLAGIARISM ON TEAMS. Do not copy and paste parts of the articles into essays and referee reports. Small citations, between "", are allowed, but they will not count in the assessment. Students may parsimoniously use images from the articles in their presentations, but never in their written work.

PROGRAM

1. Development and Economic history
2. Institutions, culture, and geography
3. Human Capital and inequality
4. Polity and the rise of the fiscal state
5. The First Financial Globalization
6. Sovereign debt and financial crises
7. Pandemics, epidemics, and other plagues

GRADING

Essay	30%
Referee reports	30%
Presentation	20%
Participation	20%

SCHEDULE

Date	Section	Topic	Bibliography
09/10	L1 (LW TP)	Development, diversion, and economic history	Abramovitz (1986), Boldizzioni and Hudson (2016), Cioni et al. (2020), Hilt (2017), MacCloskey (1978), Margo (2018), Nunn (2020)
14/10	L2 (LW)	Institutions, geography, and persistence	Acemoglu et al. (2001, 2005), Acemoglu and Robinson (2002, 2001), Bruhn and Gallego (2012), North (1990, especially chaps. 1, 5, 6, 14), Nunn (2008), Arroyo and Maurer (2021), Albouy (2012)
16/10	L3 (TP)	Religion	Becker, S. O., Rubin, J., and Woessmann, L. (2024); Anderson, R. W., Johnson, N. D., and Koyama, M. (2017); Becker, S. O., Pfaff, S., Hsiao, Y., & Rubin, J. (2023); Becker, S. O., and Pascali, L. (2019).
21/10	S1 (TP)	Culture	Giuliano and Nunn (2021), Kersting et al. (2020), Bau (2021), Cantoni et al. (2018)
23/10	L3 (TP)	Industrial Revolution	Humphries & Weisdorf (2019), Kelly et al. (2014), Fernihough & Hjortshøj O'Rourke (2021), Allen (2009)
28/10	S2 (LW)	Human capital	Franck and Galor (2022), Baten and Keywood (2021), Montalbo (2022), Gómez-i-Aznar (2023)

30/10	L4 (LW)	Latin America	Engerman and Sokoloff (2002), Abad et al. (2012), Luna and Klein (2010), Naritomi et al. (2012), Dell (2010), Carpio and Guerrero (2021), Herranz-Loncán and Peres-Cajías (2016), Bucciferro (2020), Palma et al. (2021)
04/11	L5 (TP)	Slavery	David, P. A., and Temin, P. (1974); Engerman, S. L. (1986); Althoff, L., and Reichardt, H. (2024); Derenoncourt, E. (2025).
06/11	L6 (LW)	Income inequality, global and Latin America	Alfani (2021), Piketty (2014, 2020), Scheldel (2018), Sant’Anna & Weller (2020), Ferreira de Souza (2018), Frankema (2010), Prados de la Escosura (2007), Abad e Astorga (2017), Astorga (2021), O’Rourke, K. H. & Williamson, J. G. (2005), Alfani & Montero (2022), Alfani et al. (2022), Bavel (2022).
11/11	S3 (LW)	Income inequality	Nikolić et al. (2024), Cummins (2021), Zwart (2022), Ramon-Muñoz & Ramon-Muñoz (2023)
13/11	L7 (LW)	Polity, war, and the fiscal state	North and Weingast (1989), Stasavage (2007), Besley and Persson (2009), Cardoso and Lains (2010), Dincecco (2017), Yun-Casalilla and O’Brien (2012), Epstein (2000), Summerhill et al. (2000), Summerhill (2015), Dincecco and Prado (2012), Gennaioli and Voth (2015), Karan and Pamuk (2013), Rota (2016), O’Brien and Palma (2023).
18/11	S4 (LW)	Polity	Aidt and Franck (2019), Cox (2017), Galofré-Vilá et al. (2021), Koenig (2023)
25/11	L8 (TP)	Populism and dictatorship	Guriev, S., and Papaioannou, E. (2022), de Bromhead, A., and O’Rourke, K. H. (2024),
27/11	S5 (TP)	Populism and authoritarianism	Fryer, R. G., and Levitt, S. D. (2012), Wang, T. (2021), Galofré-Vilá, G., Meissner, C. M., McKee, M., and Stulcker, D. (2021)

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Seminars

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Lectures (complementary)

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