

**Economics 265-01**

**Economic History**

**Rhodes College**

**Art Carden**

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**Office: 901-843-3829**

**Class Meetings: Monday 6-8:30 PM, Buckman 325**

**Office Hours: MW 2-4 and by appointment**

**Introduction**

Welcome to economic history. This is an elective course in which we will discuss the historical foundations of the modern economy. This syllabus will provide you with a brief synopsis of the assignments and the material we will cover.

The motivating question in the study of economics, and of economic history more specifically, is “why are some people very rich while other people are very poor?” More fundamentally, we might ask “why have people been so very poor for almost the entirety of human history?” There are no simple answers: the world in which we live is the product of thousands of years of complex interaction between individuals. On one hand, we ask questions like “what was income per capita in the United Kingdom in 1870, measured in 1970 US dollars” and come up with estimates like “\$904.”<sup>1</sup> On the other, we use economic reasoning to explain why people moved from hunting and gathering to settled agriculture.

**Course Description**

This course uses the tools of economic analysis to explore the long-run determinants of economic growth and the implications for policymaking today. We will focus first on long-run economic change and second on the development of the American economy. Specific topics include the history and development of economic institutions, the American colonial experience, early American industrialization, slavery, the Progressive Era, the Great Depression, and the Southern economy. The course will include a trip to the Cotton Museum downtown.

**Prerequisites and Co-requisites**

Prerequisites are economics 101 and 102, though you may take the course without 102 assuming you are taking it now. You may find some of our discussions useful if you are also taking development, international trade, and other economics courses concurrently.

**Evaluation and Grading**

You will be evaluated on four short assignments/papers (175 points), presentations (75 points), individual meetings and class participation (50 points), and a longer research project (200 points). Details of each assignment will be distributed as they are given. Grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

92%: A	73%: C
88%: A-	70%: C-
85%: B+	67%: D+
82%: B	64%: D
79%: B-	60%: D-
76%: C+	<60%: F

<sup>1</sup> MacKinnon, Mary. 1994. “Living Standards, 1870-1914,” in Roderick Floud and Deirdre McCloskey, eds. *The Economic History of Great Britain Since 1700 Volume 2: 1860-1939*, second edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 271, reporting estimates by NFR Crafts, 1984. “Economic Growth in France and Britain, 1830-1914: a review of the evidence.” *Journal of Economic History* 13, p. 54.

## **Readings**

*Structure and Change in Economic History*, by North (Required). North shared the 1993 Nobel Prize with Robert Fogel for his work on institutions and economic development. We will discuss North during our first two class meetings.

*American Economic History*, by Hughes and Cain (Required). Hughes and Cain will guide the remainder of our class discussions.

*Issues in American Economic History*, by Miller (Recommended). Miller provides succinct summaries of important topics in American economic history. This will provide a brief, valuable guide to some of the issues we will discuss this semester.

*The Craft of Research* by Booth et al. (Required). *The Craft of Research* is assigned as a guide to writing your research papers. Consult it often, and we will discuss some of the issues they address in class.

*Without Consent or Contract*, by Fogel (Recommended). Fogel shared the 1993 Nobel Prize with North, and his work on slavery was one of the main reasons for it. This is recommended for those of you who want a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding American slavery.

*Old South, New South*, by Wright (Recommended). Wright is one of the leading scholars on the economic history of the South. OSNS covers the Southern economy since 1865, and it is recommended for those of you with an interest in Southern economic history *per se*.

## **Assignments and Resources**

### ***Short Papers***

In addition to the first assignment (in the public folder), you will write three short papers: one on the first and second economic revolutions, one on slavery, and one on the Great Depression. These will be 4-5 pages long and will draw from the assigned course readings.

### ***Presentations***

We will cover approximately four chapters every week. You are responsible for reading all of the assigned material. Each week, different people will lead class discussions on each chapter.

### ***Research Paper***

You will identify and test a hypothesis about some historical phenomenon. This will require research using outside sources. This paper will be about ten pages long, and it may overlap with work you are doing for another class (if this is the case, please discuss it with me first). We will discuss the research paper in greater detail as the semester progresses.

### ***Individual Meetings***

We will meet individually at two points in the semester. Each meeting will take about ten or fifteen minutes. In these meetings we will discuss the course assignments, presentation skills, and the research paper.

### **Resources for the Study of Economic History**

There are a lot of resources that you will find useful. In particular, check the online encyclopedia at [www.eh.net](http://www.eh.net), the *Historical Statistics of the United States* (the Millennium Edition of the Historical Statistics was just released), and the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Economic History*. Consult these sources early and often.

## **Additional Resources**

**Writing Center:** The Writing Center is located in 212 Barret Library. For your papers, I encourage you to use the Writing Center early and often.

<http://www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter>, [writingcenter@rhodes.edu](mailto:writingcenter@rhodes.edu), x3393.

**Disability Services:** If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact Melissa Butler McCowen at the Office of Student Disability Services immediately (x3994, [mccowenm@rhodes.edu](mailto:mccowenm@rhodes.edu)). If the College has granted you special accommodations, please present the relevant paperwork to me no later than **February 2**.

**The Technology Helpdesk:** you can reach them at x4357 or [helpdesk@rhodes.edu](mailto:helpdesk@rhodes.edu).

## **Economics Goes to the Movies**

Professor Hammock and I will show several movies with economics-related themes. We will talk about each of these in greater detail as the semester progresses. A tentative schedule, subject to change:

January 25: *Wall Street*

February 13: *Singin' in the Rain*

March 8: TBA, either *Tucker* or *The Main in the White Suit*

March 27: *Trading Places*

April 19: *The High Cost of a Low Price*

## **Honor Code**

You are expected to abide by the honor code in all that you do for this course. I expect that everything you submit for a grade will be your own work.

## Schedule

You should read thoroughly the chapters you are required to present. Skim the chapters that you are not presenting. Come to class armed with questions. We will not meet on January 15 because of the Martin Luther King Day holiday. Feel free to come by my office with questions sometime that week, and be prepared to discuss chapters 1-6 and 15 of North on January 22.

Before we actually get started: William Easterly is speaking on Thursday, January 11 at 7:00 in the BCLC. I highly recommend it because he will discuss a lot of the topics we will address this semester.

Week 1 (1/22): North, chapters 1-6, 15 (“Theory”)

**Assignment #1 due.**

Week 2 (1/29): North, chapters 7-14 (“History”)

**Individual Meeting #1: Selecting a Research Topic. To prepare for the meeting: consult the online Encyclopedia of Economic History at [www.eh.net](http://www.eh.net) as well as the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Economic History*, available in the library. Find a few topics that interest you and email them to me a day in advance.**

Week 3 (2/5): The US in the Colonial Period, HC 1-4

1. HC Chapter 1: Overseas Empire
2. HC Chapter 2: Colonial Development
3. HC Chapter 3: America on the Eve of Revolution
4. HC Chapter 4: Gaining Independence

Week 4 (2/12): The Early National Period: Expansion and Transport, HC 5-8

**Assignment #2 (Economic Revolutions) due.**

1. HC Chapter 5: Westward Expansion
2. HC Chapter 6: Population and Labor Force
3. HC Chapter 7: Law and the Rise of Classical American Capitalism
4. HC Chapter 8: Transportation, Internal Improvements, and Urbanization

Week 5 (2/19): Leading up to War: HC 9-12

1. HC Chapter 9: Agricultural Expansion: the Conflict of Two Systems on the Land
2. HC Chapter 10: The Debate Over Slavery
3. HC Chapter 11: The Early Industrial Sector
4. HC Chapter 12: The Financial System and the International Economy

Week 6 (2/26): Civil War, Slavery, and Reconstruction: HC 13-15

1. HC chapter 13: Economic Effects of the Civil War
2. HC chapter 14: Railroads and Economic Development
3. HC chapter 15: Post-Civil War Agriculture

*Mark your calendars: we will take our trip to the Cotton Museum this week.*

Week 7 (3/5): Population, Urbanization, and the Growth of Financial Markets: HC 16-19

**Assignment #3 (Slavery) due.**

1. HC Chapter 16: Population Growth and the Atlantic Migration
2. HC Chapter 17: Industrialization and Urban Growth
3. HC Chapter 18: Big Business and Government Intervention
4. HC Chapter 19: Financial Developments, 1863-1914

**Individual Meeting #2: Research, Refinement, Writing.**

**3/12: Spring Break. No Class.**

Week 8 (3/19): Trade, Regulation, and Labor: HC 20-21

1. HC Chapter 20: The Giant Economy and Its International Relations
2. HC Chapter 21: Labor and the Law

Week 9 (3/26): The Wars. HC 22-23.

1. HC Chapter 22: The Command Economy Emerges: World War I
2. HC Chapter 23: “Normalcy”: 1919-1929

Week 10 (4/2): The Depression and the New Deal: HC 24-25

1. HC Chapter 24: The Great Depression
2. HC Chapter 25: The New Deal

Week 11 (4/9): World War II. HC 26-27

*I will be out of town, so this class will be re-scheduled for sometime later in the week.*

1. HC Chapter 26: The “Prosperity” of Wartime
2. HC Chapter 27: From World War II to the New Frontier

Week 12 (4/16): Moving Forward. HC 28-31.

1. HC Chapter 28: Labor and the Tertiary Sector
2. HC Chapter 29: Postwar Industry and Agriculture
3. HC Chapter 30: From the New Frontier to the New Millennium
4. HC Chapter 31: Does our Past Have a Future

Week 13 (4/23): Topics in Economic History/Buffer  
**Assignment #4 (the Great Depression and War) Due.**

**Monday, April 30: Research Paper Due.**