

## **Technology and the Global Economy, 1000-2000**

Contextualizing people, resources, technology, and economic growth.

21H.982 (meets with 21H.383)

Spring 2019 – Tuesday 1-4pm – E51-285

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Office Hours: by appointment

This course is a graduate/advanced undergraduate reading seminar in the global history of the last millennium, with a particular focus on technological change, commodity exchange, systems of production, and economic growth. This course will be of interest to students wanting to engage with core problems in economic and global history, particularly the medieval and early modern origins of modern systems of production, consumption and global exchange. Topics covered will include the long pre-history of modern economic development; medieval ‘world systems;’ the ‘age of discovery’ both east and west; the global crisis of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; demographic systems and global population movements; the industrial revolution and its discontents (both of its participants and its historians); the rise of the modern consumer; colonialism and empire building; patterns of inequality, within and across states; the ‘curse’ of natural resources and the fate of Africa; and the threat of climate change to modern economic systems. Participants will have the opportunity to explore in depth a major controversy in global economic history or the history of technology, but will also become familiar with the range of debate that informs current research and teaching across a variety of sub-fields in medieval, early modern and modern history more broadly. Participants will also review the range of methodologies available to explore these questions as they prepare for their own research projects.

Participants are expected to engage actively in the weekly seminar, to write short responses to the readings for each session, to prepare at least once for leadership of the seminar discussion, and to produce a substantial work of original scholarship as a culminating exercise. The final project could take the form of an extended review essay of a major debate in the field, or a research project centered on an archival body of evidence that would further inform a topic covered by the course.

### **Topic Organization and Readings**

All students should read the articles (or in a few cases designated selections from longer books) assigned for each week. All articles and book selections are available as pdfs at the course Stellar site. The assigned readings are listed first after the Reading heading for each week. Graduate students should further supplement that reading with an additional

book selected from the second list below each Reading heading. Any undergraduate who wishes to read one of the suggested books is of course welcome to do so. Moreover, book review subjects should be drawn primarily from the readings listed on this syllabus as noted in the assignment explanation at the end of this syllabus.

### **Week 1 – February 5**

#### **Deep History and Big Data: Understanding Long-term Global Processes**

*Readings:*

Richard Steckel, “Big Social Science History,” Presidential Address to the SSHA, published Spring 2007 in *Social Science History*

Andrew Feenberg, “Looking Forward, Looking Backward: the Changing Image of Technology,” in *Between Reason and Experience: Essays in Technology and Modernity*. 2010:47-61.

Adam Davidson, “The Economy’s Missing Metrics,” *NYT Magazine* JULY 1, 2015

Oded Galor and Omer Moav, “Natural Selection and the Origin of Economic Growth,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 117, No. 4 (Nov., 2002)

For discussion: Eric Weinstein, Thiel Capital, “Is Technology Killing Capitalism?”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYsy6qbKp3Y>

Deirdre McCloskey, “Explaining Modern Economic Growth”

<http://serious-science.org/explaining-modern-economic-growth-5979>

Hans Rosling, TED Talk, “Global Population Growth, Box by Box,” 2010

[https://www.ted.com/talks/hans\\_rosling\\_on\\_global\\_population\\_growth](https://www.ted.com/talks/hans_rosling_on_global_population_growth)

### **Week 2 – February 11**

#### **Climate vs. Ideas (let alone the Household or Geography): What Accounts for Economic Growth?**

*Readings:*

Kyle Harper, “Review of Climate Change and the Course of Global History,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Spring 2015.

Deirdre McCloskey, “Ideas and Ideology and Not Interests and Institutions,” *Journal of Evolutionary Economics*, 2015.

Marshall Burke, Solomon M. Hsiang & Edward Miguel, “Global non-linear effect of temperature on economic production,” *Nature*, 2015.

Nancy Folbre, “Cleaning House: New Perspectives on Households and Economic Development,” *Journal of Development Economics*, 22:1986.

Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson and James A. Robinson, “Reversal of Fortune: Geography and Institutions in the Making of the Modern World Income Distribution,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 117, No. 4 (Nov., 2002)

*Book suggestions:*

Ian Morris, *Why the West Rules - For Now* and *The Measure of Civilization*

Amartya Sen, *The Standard of Living*  
Robert Allen, *Global Economic History: a Very Short Introduction*  
Nancy Folbre, *Greed, Lust and Gender: A History of Economic Ideas*  
Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: the Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*

**Week 3 -- February 19 NO CLASS** –Monday schedule of classes

**Week 4 – February 26**  
**The Tech Boom of the Middle Ages**

*Readings:*

Maarten Prak, “Mega-structures of the Middle Ages,” *Journal of Global History* (2011) 6, pp. 381–406.

Alex Roland, “Once More into the Stirrups,” *Technology and Culture*, Volume 44, Number 3, July 2003, pp. 574-585.

*Book suggestions:*

Thomas Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles*

Lynn White, *Medieval Technology and Social Change*

Maarten Prak, *Technology, Skills and the Pre-Modern Economy in the East and the West*

Joel Mokyr, *The Lever of Riches*

**Week 5 – March 5**  
**Was Malthus Right? -- Plague and the Post-Plague Economy**

*Readings:*

Ronald Lee, “Population Homeostasis and English Demographic History,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 15, No. 4, Population and Economy: From the Traditional to the Modern World (Spring, 1985), pp. 635-660.

Paul Erdkamp, “Economic growth in the Roman Mediterranean world: An early goodbye to Malthus?” *Explorations in Economic History*, 2016, Vol. 60:1-20.

John Hatcher, “Understanding the Population History of England,” *Past and Present*, Vol. 180, August 2003

George Grantham, “Explaining the Industrial Transition” *European Review of Economic History*, 12, 155–165. (There are also other articles in the same volume reviewing Greg Clark, *A Farewell to Alms*.)

*Book suggestions:*

Bruce Campbell, *The Great Transition: Climate, Disease and Society in the Late-Medieval World*

Wrigley and Schofield, *The Population History of England*

Fabian Drixler, *Infanticide and Fertility in Eastern Japan: Discourse and Demography, 1660-1880*.

Bengtsson, Campbell and Lee, *Life under Pressure: Mortality and Living Standards in Europe and Asia, 1700-1900*.

## **Week 6 – March 12**

### **The Global Crisis of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century**

#### *Readings:*

Jack Goldstone, “East and West in the Seventeenth Century: Political Crises in Stuart England, Ottoman Turkey, and Ming China,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Jan., 1988), pp. 103-142.

Eric Hobsbawm, “The General Crisis of the European Economy in the 17th Century,” *Past & Present*, No. 5 (May, 1954), pp. 33-53.

Anne McCants, “Historical Demography and the Crisis of the 17<sup>th</sup> C.” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, xl:2 (Autumn, 2009), 195–214.

#### *Book suggestions:*

Jack Goldstone, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World*

Geoffrey Parker, *War, Climate Change, and Catastrophe in the 17<sup>th</sup> c.*

## **Week 7 – March 19**

### **Consumers Everywhere**

#### *Readings:*

Beverly Lemire and Giorgio Riello, “East and West: Textiles and Fashion in Early Modern Europe,” *Journal of Social History*, Volume 41, Number 4, Summer 2008, pp. 887-916.

Jan de Vries, “The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution,” *Journal of Economic History*, June 1994.

Anne McCants, “Poor Consumers as Global Consumers,” *Economic History Review*, 61, S1 (2008), pp. 172–200.

Anne McCants, “Exotic Goods, Popular Consumption and the Standard of Living,” *Journal of World History*, Vol 18, number 4, 2009.

#### *Book suggestions:*

Timothy Brook, *Vermeer's Hat: The 17th Century and the Dawn of the Global World*

Jan deVries, *The Industrious Revolution*

## **Spring Break – March 26**

## **Week 8 – April 2**

### **The Industrial Revolution**

#### *Readings:*

Deirdre McCloskey, “Presidential Address on the Bourgeois Virtues,” *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (Jun., 1998), pp. 297-317.

Jan de Vries, “Economic Growth before and after the Industrial Revolution: a Modest Proposal,” in Prak, *Early Modern Capitalism*.

Joel Mokyr, “The Intellectual Origins of Modern Economic Growth,” *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 65, No. 2 (Jun., 2005), pp. 285-351

Nicolas Crafts, “Productivity Growth in the Industrial Revolution: A New Growth Accounting,” *The Journal of Economic History*, V 64:2, 2004: 521-535.

Joel Mokyr, “Demand versus Supply in the Industrial Revolution,” *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Dec., 1977), pp. 981-1008

#### *Book suggestions:*

Deirdre McCloskey, *The Bourgeois Virtues*

<http://www.deirdremccloskey.com/articles/revolution.php>

Joel Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy*

Robert Allen, *The British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective*

E.A. Wrigley, *The Path to Sustained Growth: England's Transition from an Organic Economy to an Industrial Revolution*

## **Week 9 – April 9**

### **Empire Building: East and West**

#### *Readings:*

Phil Hoffman, “Why was it Europeans Who Conquered the World?” *The Journal of Economic History*, V 72:3, 2012.

Peter Perdue, “Empire and Nation in Comparative Perspective,” *Journal of Early Modern History*, 2001, issue 4.

Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson and James A. Robinson, “The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation,” *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 91, No. 5 (Dec., 2001).

Julian Go, “Capital, Containment, and Competition: The Dynamics of British Imperialism, 1730–1939,” *Social Science History*, V. 38: 1, 2014.

#### *Book suggestions:*

Peter Perdue, *China Marches West*

Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire*

Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital* or *The Age of Empire*

Ian Morris, *Why the West Rules, for Now*

## **Week 10 – April 16 NO CLASS – Patriot’s Day Holiday**

## **Week 11 – April 23**

### **Divergence: When and Why?**

#### *Readings:*

PHH Vries, “Are Coal and Colonies Really Crucial?” *Journal of World History*, 12:2, 2001.

Jean Laurent Rosenthal and Bin Wong, *Before and Beyond Divergence*, Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2.

Eltjo Buringh and Jan Luiten van Zanden, “Charting the ‘Rise of the West’: Manuscripts and Printed Books in Europe, A Long-Term Perspective from the Sixth through Eighteenth Centuries,” *Journal of Economic History*, 2009.

Sascha O. Becker, Steven Pfaff, and Jared Rubin, “Causes and Consequences of the Protestant Reformation,” *Explorations in Economic History*, 2017.

Robert C. Allen, “The Great Divergence in European Wages and Prices from the Middle Ages to World War I,” *Explorations in Economic History*, 2001.

Robert C. Allen, Jean - Pascal Bassino, Debin Ma, Christine Moll - Murata, and Jan Luiten van Zanden, “Wages, prices, and living standards in China, 1738–1925: in comparison with Europe, Japan, and India,” *Economic History Review*, 2011

#### *Book suggestions:*

Ken Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence*

Jean Laurent Rosenthal and Bin Wong, *Before and Beyond Divergence*

Prasannan Parthasarathi *Why Europe Grew Rich and Asia Did Not*

Timur Kuran, *The Long Divergence: How Islamic Law Held Back the Middle East*

## **Week 12 – April 30**

### **Slavery, the ‘Resource Curse’ and the Question of Africa?**

#### *Readings:*

A. G. Hopkins, “The New Economic History of Africa,” *The Journal of African History*, Volume 50, Issue 2, July 2009, pp 155 – 177

Nathan Nunn, “The Long Term Effects of Africa’s Slave Trades,” *QJE*, Vol. 123, No. 1 (Feb., 2008), pp. 139-176

Jonathan Di John, “Is There Really a Resource Curse? A Critical Survey of Theory and Evidence.” *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*: April-June 2011, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp. 167-184.

#### *Book suggestions:*

David van Reybrouck, *Congo: The Epic History of a People*

Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the 21<sup>st</sup> c.*

William D. Nordhaus, *The Climate Casino: Risk, Uncertainty, and Economics for a Warming World*

E. A. Wrigley, *Engery and the English Industrial Revolution*

David Armitage and Jo Guldi, *The History Manifesto*

**Week 13 – May 7**

**No class – Individual meetings to work on projects**

**Week 14 – May 14**

**Class Presentations of Final Projects**

## **Course Assignments**

### **Weekly Responses**

Each week students will post to the Stellar site a very brief (at most 2 paragraphs but could be just bullet points) response to the readings. These might offer comparisons between readings, a summary of the main arguments as you understand them, a series of questions the reading left you with, or if warranted the occasional rant about a particular reading.

### **Book Review Assignments**

The first two writing assignments for this course are to select two of the books we are reading in class and complete a 3-4 page review of them. If there is another book you wish to review, this is fine as long as you consult with me in advance. Such a review should accomplish three things: 1) it should summarize the author's main argument; 2) it should place the work in question in its broader historiographical context; and 3) it should provide a critical assessment of the suitability of the employed methodology to advance the author's argument. One excellent way to learn how to write a strong review is to read a variety of book reviews in the relevant historical journals. This is also a good way to develop a broad sense of a literature at the same time that you become more familiar with the genre.

### **Historiographical Essay Assignment**

For the historiographical essay, you may select your own topic (and within that a framing question) from among those considered in the course. Undergraduate students should write an 8-10 page paper (graduate students should aim for 15-20). All students should also develop a useful bibliography on the topic. The expectation is that you will encompass a major literature while demonstrating the ability to think critically about the theories and methods engaged by other historians to answer the question you have posed. You should organize the paper around this question, giving careful consideration to why different historians sometimes answer important questions in such different ways.

### **Timeline for assignments**

March 5 — First Book Review due

March 19 – Topic selected for historiographical essay

April 9 — Second Book Review due

April 23 — Annotated bibliography for final essay due and update for class

May 14 – Class presentations of individual essay projects

May 17 -- Final papers due

**Grading**

Weekly Responses	25%
Book Reviews	30%
Class Discussion	15%
Final Paper	30%

An excellent guide for writing an annotated bibliography is available from the Williams College Library: [Williams College Libraries](#).