ECONOMIC HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

ECONOMICS 4524 - Fall 2009

COURSE SYLLABUS

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Office Hours: TW 10:30-11:30am
and by appointment

Room: Econ 208A
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INTRODUCTION

There cannot be a better time to take this course. Much of the media discussion of the current recession/depression harkens back to the Great Depression and to America’s economic past. This course examines North America’s past from the perspective of economics. In designing the course, I had two objectives in mind. First, topics have been chosen to provide a perspective on the development of American economy from the Colonial period to the present. Second, this is a course in applied economics. To that end, topics have been chosen to illustrate how evidence and theory are combined to further our understanding of particular historical events. The economist, by his or her training, tends to become expert in the construction and manipulation of theory or of hypothesis. The historian tends to become expert on sources, evidence, and their reliability. A satisfactory social science should combine both of these aspects. Economic history presents a nearly unique opportunity to observe the use of economics as a mode of explanation across a wide range of questions and issues and to see how the use of economics deepens and enriches our understanding of our past.

Evaluation

Your grade will have the following components: one midterm exam (35% each); a final exam (40%); a group project (20%); and class attendance taken randomly (5%).

Both the midterm and the final examinations will be take home examinations and will be posted on the class site at <http://www.colorado.edu/Economics/courses/fall09-course-index.html>

All examinations must be double spaced, typed and meet the guidelines laid out.

Midterm - posted September 29 -- Due October 6 in class
Final Exam - posted December 4 -- Due no later than Dec 16 by 10.00am

There will be NO make-up examinations and NO late papers will be accepted.

Information on the group project will be provided in class. You will be working in groups of 3-4
The project will be due in class Tuesday November 24, 2009.

**Cheating/Plagiarism**

Cheating and plagiarism are academic offenses and any student caught cheating or plagiarizing will be sanctioned. If you are unsure or uncertain about what constitutes either cheating or plagiarism, please consult me, the University of Colorado catalog, or the honor code.

Please read the material on the Department courses website for information on all policies relating to disabilities, pre-requisites and religious holidays.

**Required Reading**


Linda Barrington, ed. *The Other Side of the Frontier: Economic Explorations into Native American History*.

These books are available in the bookstore. They will be supplemented by journal articles and other readings which are available either through E-journals or on reserve in the Norlin.

**TOPICS**

1. **Introduction: Thinking about Long-Run Economic Growth**
   
   Atack and Passell (A & P), ch. 1

2. **Colonial Economy and the Revolution:**
   
   A. **Indentured Servitude: The Market for Moving People to America**
   A & P, pp 40-51
   David Galenson, *Markets in History*, ch. 2

   B. **The Constitution as an Economic Document**
   A & P, pp 75-79
   The Constitution of the United States
   Robert McQuire and Robert Obsfeldt, “An Economic Model of Voting Behavior over Specific

3. The Other Side of the Frontier: Native American Issues
Jared Diamond, Guns, Germs and Steel, ch. 8, ch. 9 and ch. 10
Linda Barrington, ed, Other Side of the Frontier, Editor’s Introduction

4. Revolution to the Civil War:
A. The Transportation Revolution
A & P, ch. 6, and ch. 16

B. Industrialization and Northern Agriculture
A & P, ch. 5 and ch. 10

C. Southern Agriculture and Slavery
A & P, ch. 11 and ch. 12

5. The Civil War to the First World War
A. Southern Reconstruction
A & P, ch. 14
Gavin Wright, Old South, New South, ch. 2 and ch. 3
B. The Rise of Big Business
A & P, ch.17
Mark Aldrich, *Safety First; Technology, Labor, and Business in the Building of American Safety*, 1870-1930 ch. 1 and ch. 5
Video: *Mr Sear’s Catalogue*

C. Banking and Finance
A & P, ch. 18

6. Interwar Period and Great Depression

A. The Market for Labor
A & P, ch. 8 and ch. 19
Claudia Goldin, *Understanding the Gender Gap*, ch. 2 and ch. 3

B. The Roaring Twenties
A & P, ch. 20

C. The Great Depression
A & P, ch. 21 and ch. 22
Video: *Job at Ford’s No. 1*

7. New Frontier and the Great Society