This course explores the economic history of the United States from colonial times to the present. Its purpose is to expose you to economic history as a method of economic analysis and to provide insights into some of the main features of America’s economic growth and development. In a very real sense, this course is a sampler. We cannot cover everything in one semester. Depending on the class interests, missing topics can be added.

For those of you who have not had a course in American economic history, two very useful textbooks are Jeremy Atack and Peter Passell, *A New Economic View of American History*, 2nd edition, 1994 and Linda Barrington, ed. *Other Side of the Frontier*, 1999. Both are available online and in the UMC bookstore.

**Course Requirements**

1. Class attendance and participation. Students are expected to summarize papers and offer comments. Paper summaries and overall class participation - 20% of the course grade.

2. A final exam - 40% of the course grade.

3. A 20 page research paper that is motivated by this class - 40% of the course grade. The paper must be more than a literature review. It needs to have all the elements of a paper: Introduction placing your question in the context of the existing literature; why this question is important; how you propose to answer the question—you could do this, for example, by providing a sketch of the theoretical framework behind your hypothesis; identifying the data sources that provides the necessary evidence, your empirical strategy and methodology, results and conclusion. The paper must be ‘historical’ in the sense that it deals with a specific time and place (which includes the more recent past) or with change over time. Ingenuity and feasibility are two aspects of your proposal that will be valued and rewarded. All students will be asked to give a short presentation of their proposal near the conclusion of the semester, possibly on a Saturday morning to give sufficient time for presentation and discussion. The term paper may be co-authored with another member of the class.

For the university policies on disabilities, religious observance, honor code, visit: http://www.colorado.edu/Economics/courses/index.html
Suggestions for summarizing and critiquing articles (for referee reports)
Source: Leah Boustan, Course Syllabus, Econ 242, [www.eh.net/syllabi](http://www.eh.net/syllabi)

**Summary:**
Don’t feel that you need to be comprehensive or cover all aspects of the analysis. Just hit the high points. Here are some basic questions to think about as you prepare your summary:
- What is the big issue at stake in this paper?
- What is the model (explicit or implicit) that underpins the paper?
- What evidence/data does the author offer in support of his/her arguments? What techniques does s/he use to analyze the data?
- What are the main results?
- What conclusions does the author draw from the results?

**Critique:**
The trick to a successful critique is to first evaluate the author on his/her own terms and then to take a step back and assess the author’s approach afresh. The best critiques do not ask the author to do the impossible or the impractical, but instead generate ideas about how our understanding of a problem might usefully be advanced.
Here are some basic questions to think about as you prepare your critique:
- Taking the author on his/her own terms:
  - Does the author deliver on his/her promises and accomplish what s/he sets out to do?
  - Is the paper internally coherent? That is, does its logic “work” within its own framework and set of assumptions?
- Assessing the author’s approach:
  - If the author narrows the question in order to make it analytically tractable, does his/her re-formulation of the problem affect the conclusions we can draw from the study?
  - Is the model (explicit or implicit) appropriate? Are there better ways to model the problem?
  - Is the author ignoring data or other evidence relevant to the question?
  - Are there better ways to analyze the data the author uses?
  - Can the author’s results be explained in other ways? That is, are the findings consistent with alternative hypotheses?
  - Can you think of additional ways to explore the question or test the various alternative hypotheses that the author may have ignored?
1. Introduction
Atack and Passell, ch. 1.

2. Initial Conditions and Development Paths:

3. Colonies and Constitution
Atack and Passell, ch. 2.
Constitution of the United States, and Bill of Rights

4. Other Side of the Frontier


5. Transportation and American Economic Growth
Atack and Passell, chs. 6 and 16

Cambridge Economic History of the United States, vol 2, ch. 13


9. Agriculture and Environmental Economic History
Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman, To Their Own Soil: Agriculture in the Antebellum North. Iowa State University Press, 1987

7. Industrialization and Technical Choice
Atack and Passell, chs. 5 and 7

8. American Industrial Leadership
Atack and Passell, ch 17
Cambridge Economic History of the United States, vol 2, ch. 9
September 1990: 651-668.


9. Business History


10. Mass Migration


11. Racial convergence, Inequality and Mobility


1. **Women’s labor Force Participation**


13. **Health and Mortality**


Other topics as time permits