
Chinese Economic History in Comparative Perspective

Economics 4534

MWF Econ 117

11:00-11:50 a.m.

The 21st century will be one dominated by the transformation and growth of China's economy. How can we understand the rise of China as a major power? This course surveys the economic history of China between 1550 and 1949 in a comparative perspective, focusing on the major ideas and debates about Chinese development in the field of world economic history. As modern growth first occurred with the British Industrial Revolution, we will study whether and how models based on the European experience of growth can be usefully used to explain development patterns in China. We will also seek to understand the dimensions in which China has developed along different historical paths from the Western model. Topics of focus include comparisons of household systems, kinship and lineage organization, commerce and trade in pre-modern China, and the opening of China to foreign trade after the Opium Wars.

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Textbooks

The following books have been ordered at CU Bookstore:

- Robert C. Allen, *Global Economic History, A Very Short Introduction*. (Oxford UP, 2012)
- Lloyd Eastman, *Family, Field, and Ancestors: Constancy and Change in China's Social and Economic History, 1550-1949*. (Oxford University Press, 1998)
- Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*, 2nd edition. (Cambridge University Press, 2010)

The main text is Eastman's *Family, Field, and Ancestors*, and is required. This text provides an outline of many of the topics we will cover, but it is not a substitute for lectures. The texts by Allen and Ebrey provide chronological and historical background. They are recommended but optional for purchase. Additional required readings will be available from electronic journals online at CU library's website or from D2L.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Classes will be a combination of lecture and discussion. The following will be used in determining a course grade.

Midterm	25 %
Student presentation	20 %
Data analysis report	20 %
Final	30 %

Exams: The midterm and final are take-home exams. The midterm will be posted on D2L March 1 and due on March 8. You will have one week to complete the exams and must type your responses. The final exam will be posted on May 2 on D2L and due on or before May 9 at 12 noon in my office.

Student presentation: Students will take turns presenting, in groups, articles on the reading list. Each presentation should be about 20 minutes long. Groups are also expected to prepare a 1 page summary of the article. Please make sufficient copies to distribute to the class as a handout on the day of the presentation. Slides for the presentation should be emailed to me at least one hour before the start of class. Those not presenting must ask questions and participate in the discussion of the article.

Data analysis report: We will spend a significant amount of class time discussing how authors have used data in their work. For this requirement, you will be given access to historical data on China, drawn from various sources, which will be downloadable. The aim of your analysis is to examine variables and patterns or trends in the data, present your findings in a coherent fashion, and discuss what your results imply about China's economy during the relevant period. The report should be 10 typed pages (double spaced) including references and Tables and Figures. Students should organize in groups of 3 and hand in a 1 paragraph statement of your topic by Feb 15. A preliminary draft is due on March 15. I will be scheduling meetings with groups during the week of March 18 to discuss the preliminary draft. The report is due in class on April 26.

Attendance: There will be attendance taken at random that will count for 5% of the final course grade.

Prerequisites: Econ 3070 or 3080, Intermediate Micro or Intermediate Macro.

Policies: For class policies on student disabilities, see: <http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices>. Policies on religious observance are at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html. Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. See policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and for further information. Policies regarding discrimination are at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>. All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. See <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> for information on the Honor Code.

Topic Outline and Reading List

Please note: Readings are subject to change, depending on the speed at which we will progress through the semester. The reading list is intentionally long. It is as much a topic outline as a springboard for interested students to continue further learning on China even after the semester is over. To do well on the exams, target your readings to each topic, reading to achieve depth of understanding in a number of topics.

Readings with a * will be placed on D2L. All other readings are either from the required text *Family, Field, and Ancestors*, or can be downloaded by accessing CU's electronic journals.

Part I: Overview

1— Global Trends in Economic History

What is economic growth? How should we think about pre-modern growth? What can China teach us about "Why are some nations so rich and others so poor"? What is the Great Divergence? When did Western Europe forge ahead of other countries of the world? What does human development indices reveal about China's level of development in the recent past?

- *Robert C. Allen, *Global Economic History, A Very Short Introduction*, pp. 1-26.
- *Gregory Clark, Part II in *A Farewell to Alms* (Princeton UP, 2007).

2—Introduction to China

When and where did settled agriculture begin in China? What are some of the intellectual traditions of China? What are some of the important geographical features of China? What questions have economic historians been asking about China's comparative long-run development?

- *Angus Maddison, *Chinese Economic Performance in the Long-run*, 1998, pp. 13-30.
- *Kenneth Pomeranz, "Political Economy and Ecology on the Eve of Industrialization: Europe, China, and the Global Conjunction," *American Historical Review*, April 2002.

Part II: Comparisons

3—Population and Demography

What is the Malthusian model? What does it say about population dynamics in premodern times? Was Malthus right? Did unrestrained fertility regimes in China result in low incomes per capita? What were the actual quantitative trends in subsistence, fertility, mortality, and marriage in China? What accounts for observed differences between Asian and European demographic patterns?

- *Family, Field, and Ancestors*, Ch. 1, "Population: Growth and Migration".
- *James Z. Lee and Wang Feng. Part II in *One Quarter of Humanity: Malthusian Mythology and Chinese Realities, 1700-2000* (Harvard UP, 1999).
- **Student presentation A:** James Z. Lee. "Food Supply and Population Growth in Southwest China, 1250-1850," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 41(4), Aug. 1982.

4--Household Systems Compared

What implications does the Chinese demographic system have for the economy and society? How were labor markets affected under these different regimes? What implications might household structure have for institutional developments?

- *Family, Field, and Ancestors*, Ch. 2 . "The Family and Individual in Chinese Society".
- John Hajnal, "Two kinds of pre-industrial household formation system," *Population Development*

Review, Sept 1982.

- Avner Greif and Guido Tabellini, "Cultural and Institutional Bifurcation, China and Europe Compared," *American Economic Review*, 100(2), May 2010.
- **Student presentation B:** James Kai-sing Kung and Daniel Yiu-fai Lee, "Women's Contributions to the Household Economy in Pre-1949 China: Evidence from the Lower Yangzi Region," *Modern China*, 36(3), 2010.
- **Student presentation C:** Zhongwei Zhao, "Demographic Conditions and Multi-generation Households in Chinese History, Results from Genealogical Research and Microsimulation," *Population Studies*, 48(3), Nov. 1994.

5— Agricultural Productivity

Was agricultural labor productivity in the advanced areas of Asia comparable to productivity in England? What were the sources of technological change in agriculture in China? What are the implications for the trends observed over time from the 17th to the 19th century in agriculture?

- *Family, Field, and Ancestors*, Ch. 4 "Agriculture: An Overview" and Ch. 5 "The Agricultural Sector in the Early Twentieth Century: The Problem of Peasant Immiseration."
- **Student presentation D:** Bozhong Li and Jan Luiten van Zanden, "Before the Great Divergence? Comparing the Yangzi Delta and the Netherlands at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Economic History*, 72(4), Dec. 2012.
- **Student presentation E:** Robert Allen, "Agricultural productivity and rural incomes in England and the Yangtze Delta, c.1620–c.1820", *The Economic History Review* 62 (3), 2009.

6—Comparisons of Living Standards

How can we arrive at a comparison of living standards in China versus in Europe? What would such comparisons indicate about economic development, education, and health? What institutions favored human capital accumulation in China?

- Gregory Clark, *Farewell to Alms*, Ch. 3, "Living Standards".
- Jorge Baten et al. "Evolution of living standards and human capital in China in the 18-20th centuries: Evidences from real wages, age-heaping, and anthropometrics" *Explorations in Economic History*, 47(3), 2010.
- **Student presentation F:** Stephen L. Morgan, "Stature and Economic Development in South China, 1810-1880," *Explorations in Economic History*, 46(1), 2009.
- **Student presentation G:** Robert Allen et al. "Wages, prices, and living standards in China, 1738-1925: in comparison with Europe, Japan, and India." *Economic history review*, 64 (s1), 2011.

7—Sources of Economic Growth in Western Economies

Why were living standards different? What caused the Great Divergence? Why did modern growth occur first in Western Europe and why in Britain? What are some of the major ideas on economic growth of the West? Does China fit into these interpretations? What did Weber conclude in his analysis of China? How can we examine some of the hypothesis advanced with historical evidence and data?

- Robert C. Allen, *Global Economic History, A Short Introduction*, pp. 27-52.
- North and Thomas, "An Economic Theory of the Growth of the Western World" *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 23(1), April 1970.
- Ann Osborne, "Property, Taxes, and State Protection of Rights," in Zelin, Ocko, Gardella (eds). *Contract and Property in Early Modern China* (Stanford UP, 2004).
- **Student presentation H:** Peter Evans and James E. Rauch, "Bureaucracy and Growth: A Cross

Sectional Analysis of the Effects of 'Weberian' State Structures on Economic Growth," *American Sociological Review*, 64, 1999.

8—Commerce and Market Efficiency

What is the significance of commerce? How can we understand efficiency from a theoretical and empirical point of view? What would a comparison here indicate? What types of Chinese institutions were responsible for supporting trade?

- *Family, Field, and Ancestors*, Ch. 6, "Commerce in the Late Imperial Period".
- Thomas A. Metzger, "The State and Commerce in Imperial China." *Asian and African Studies* 6 (1970): 23-46.
- **Student presentation I:** Ping-ti Ho, "The Salt Merchants of Yang-chou: A Study of Commercial Capitalism in Eighteenth-Century China." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 17 (1954): 130-68.
- Carol H. Shiue and Wolfgang Keller, "Markets in China and Europe on the Eve of the Industrial Revolution," *The American Economic Review*, September 2007, 97(4). pp. 1189-1216.

9—Manufacturing and Technological Change

What happened to the early worldwide lead that China had in technology during the Song Dynasty? What accounts for the relative decline in science and invention in China?

- *Family, Field, and Ancestors*, Ch. 7, "Manufacturing in the late imperial Period, A Failed Industrial Revolution?"
- *Benjamin Elman, "China and the World History of Science".
- *Benjamin Elman, "From Pre-modern Chinese Natural Studies to Modern Science in China".
- Justin Yi-fu Lin, "The Needham Puzzle, the Weber Question, and China's Miracle: Long-Term Performance since the Sung Dynasty" *China Economic Journal* 1.1 (2008).
- **Student presentation J:** Debin Ma, "Why Japan, not China, was the First to Develop in East Asia: Lessons from Sericulture, 1850-1937," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, pp. 369-94.

Part III: China Since the 19th Century

10— Foreign Imperialism and the Foreign Presence in the 19th Century

What was the economic impact of the opening of China to Western trade by the British at the end of the Opium Wars? What was the Treaty Port System and how long did this system last? Did the foreign presence have long term impacts that can still be felt?

- Wolfgang Keller, Ben Li and Carol H. Shiue, "China's Foreign Trade, Perspectives from the Last 150 Years", *The World Economy*, June 2011, 34(6), pp. 853-892.
- *John Fairbank, "The Creation of the Treaty System," *Cambridge History of China*, volume 10, pp.213-63.
- **Student presentation K:** David Faure, "The Plight of the Farmers: A Study of the Rural Economy of Jiangnan and the Pearl River Delta, 1870-1937," *Modern China*, Vol. 11, No. 1. (Jan., 1985), pp. 3-37.

11—Growth in Republican China

Might there have been evidence of growth in the post-1911 Republican Era? Where would this have taken place, and what could have some of the causal factors that generated this growth?

- *Thomas Rawski, *Economic Growth in Prewar China*, chapters 1 and 6.
- **Student presentation L:** Shannon Brown, "The Ewo Filature: A Study in the Transfer of Technology to China in the 19th Century," *Technology and Culture*, 20(3), July 1979.

12—Legacies of the pre-1949 Economy

How might China's growth today be linked to historical factors we have surveyed in this course? What are the broader implications of Chinese or Asian paths of development our understanding of economic growth in general?

- Barry Naughton, *The Chinese Economy, Transitions and Growth*, Ch. 2.
- *Thomas Rawski, "Social Capabilities and Chinese Economic Growth," Ch. 6 in *Social Transformation in Contemporary China*, ed. Wenfang Tang and Burkart Holzner. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- James Rauch, "Ethnic Chinese Networks in International Trade," *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 2002.
- Kenneth Pomeranz, "Is there an East Asian Development Path? Long-term Comparisons, Constraints, and Continuities," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 44(3), 2001.

Prologue: China's growth and performance in recent decades and beyond

- Dwight Perkins, "Completing China's Move to the Market," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 8(2), Spring 1994.
- John McMillan and Christopher Woodruff, "The Central Role of Entrepreneurs in Transition Economies," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 16(3), Summer 2002.
- Gordon H. Hanson, "The Rise of Middle Kingdoms: Emerging Economies in Global Trade," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 26(2), Spring 2012.
- *Dwight Perkins and Thomas Rawski, "Forecasting China's Economic Growth to 2025," in Brandt and Rawski (eds.) *China's Great Economic Transformation*, (Cambridge UP, 2008).