

# ECONOMIC HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

## ECONOMICS 4524

### COURSE SYLLABUS

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Room: Econ 208A

Fall 2006

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Office Hours: TR 11.00-noon and 1.00-2.00pm  
And by appointment

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#### INTRODUCTION

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 detailed perspective on the development of American economy from the Colonial period and Revolution. 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. Often we study issues which have been raised by non-economists and studying these questions deepens our appreciation of how we can use the tools of the economists to answer a very broad range of questions.

#### 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 on the Economics Department home page under courses. All examinations must be double spaced and typed.

Midterm 1 - posted October 12 -- Due October 17 in class

Final Exam - posted December 12 – Due no later than Dec 18 at 4.00pm

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 people. The project will be due in class Thursday November 16.

### 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.

### Required Reading

Jeremy Atack and Peter Passell, *A New Economic View of American History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.

These books 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 and Measuring Long-Run Economic Growth

Atack and Passell (A & P), ch. 1

Mel Watkins, "A Staple Theory of Economic Growth," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 1963, 29, pp141-158.

### 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 Ohsefeldt, "An Economic Model of Voting Behavior over Specific Issues at the Constitutional Convention of 1787," *Journal of Economic History*, Vol 46, No. 1 (March 1986)

### 3. The Other Side of the Frontier:

(A) Native American Issues and the Early Republic  
Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, ch. 8, ch. 9 and ch. 10

Linda Barrington, ed, *Other Side of the Frontier*, Editor's Introduction  
Ann Carlos and Frank Lewis, "Indians, the Beaver, and the Bay: The Economics of Depletion in the Lands of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1700-1763," *Journal of Economic History*, 53, September 1993, pp. 465-494.  
David Wishart, "Evidence of Surplus Production in the Cherokee Nation Prior to Removal", *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 55, no. 1, March 1995, pp. 120-38.  
Frank Tough, "Indian Economic Behaviour, Exchange and Profits in Northern Manitoba During the Decline of Monopoly, 1870-1930," *Journal of Historical Geography*, 16, 1990, pp. 385-401.

#### 4. **Revolution to the Civil War:**

A) Financing the Government - Tariff Policy  
A & P, ch. 5

B) The Transportation Revolution  
A & P, ch. 6

C) Industrialization and Northern Agriculture  
A & P, ch. 5 and ch. 10  
Richard Pomfret, "The Mechanization of Reaping in Nineteenth-Century Ontario: A Case Study in the Pace and Causes of Diffusion of Embodied Technical Change" *Journal of Economic History*, June 1976.

D) 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*

#### 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  
Carolyn M. Moehling, "Family Structure, School Attendance, and Child Labor in

the American South in 1900 and 1910", *Explorations in Economic History*, January 2004.

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**

William J. Collins, "The Political Economy of State-Level Fair Employment Laws 1940-1964, *Explorations in Economic History*, January 2003.

Lee Alston and Joseph Ferrie, "Paternalism in Agricultural Labor Contracts in the U.S. South: Implications for the Growth of the Welfare State," *American Economic Review*, Vol 83, September 1993.