

**BOSTON COLLEGE**  
**Department of Economics**

EC 232: American Economic History  
Professor Anderson  
Fall, 2001  
TTh 3-4:15pm  
Fulton 453

Office: McGuinn 523, X23691  
Office Hours: T,Th 4:30-5:30  
or by appointment  
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Objective

The objective of the course is to understand and explain the economic development of the US from colonial times to the present. The main emphasis will be on economic models as tools for understanding, but historical methods and perspectives will also be used.

Prerequisite: Ec131-132; Ec151 is desirable.

Course Requirements and Rules

Course requirements: (1) Midterm exam, October 18, (30% of grade)  
(2) Term paper, due last day of class, December 6 (30%)  
(3) Final exam Dec. 13, 12:30PM (30%)  
(4) Class participation (10%)  
(5) Attendance: required (maximum of 3 unexcused absences)

Exams missed without prior consent of instructor (granted only for very good reasons) will be graded F. **I never give makeup exams.** The date of the midterm exam, if changed, will change with 2 weeks notice.

**Term Paper Instructions**

- Term papers must be on a topic approved by the instructor. I will not accept a paper on an unapproved topic. The topic should be approved by Oct. 11. Schedule a meeting to discuss a topic soon. This meeting is required.
- Schedule a second meeting to discuss progress, after you have done basic research but before you write it up. This meeting is required by Nov. 20. Required meetings mean that I won't accept a term paper which does not meet the requirements.
- the paper is due on Dec. 6. Late papers will be penalized 1/3 letter grade (B to B-) per day.
- The paper must use at least one *primary data* source and some basic economic reasoning, possibly some basic statistical reasoning. Its subject can be anything US economic historians might find interesting. By consulting with the instructor you will help narrow down what is likely to be a large amorphous initial topic. Also, references will likely be suggested to you. One acceptable topic type is *replication*, checking to see that the primary data do indeed support the author's assertions. (This is both more valuable and more difficult than it sounds.)
- I will email the class as a pdf attachment the admirable description of a similar research paper requirement from Claudia Goldin's economic history course at Harvard.
- Something on the order of 15 pages of double-spaced typescript is desired. But the objective is to dig well in to some topic and write analytically and incisively about it; 15 pages of fluff will get the grade it deserves. The value of rewriting again and again cannot be over-emphasized.
- I assume you know what plagiarism is, but I encourage you to look up the definition in a standard dictionary. Plagiarism will not be tolerated here or in any other university. See the BC Catalog, 2001-02 edition, p39.



## EC 232 SYLLABUS

### TEXTS:

- 1) J.R.T. Hughes and Louis V. Cain, American Economic History, Scott-Foresman, 5th ed. 1998 -- the best general American economic history text.
- 2) Douglas C. North, The Economic Growth of the United States: 1790-1860, a pioneering attempt to build a micro theory of growth and confront it with data. Norton paperback.

### OTHER MAIN REFERENCES:

Many interesting references and links may be found at the Economic History.net Web-site <http://cs.muohio.edu/>.

- 1) D.C. North, Terry Anderson, and Peter Hill, Growth and Welfare in the American Past, 3rd ed., an analytical sketch of problems the econometric historians have successfully tackled. Prentice-Hall paperback, 3rd edition, 1983.
- 2) Gary M. Walton and James Shepherd, The Economic Rise of Early America, Cambridge 1979. Best single source for colonial economic history.
- 3) Jeremy Atack and Peter Passell, A New Economic View of American History, Norton PB, 1994. A fairly high level text, supplementing other sources for a summary of recent research.
- 4) Ralph Andreano, New Views on American Economic Development, excellent collection of econometric history work. Schenkman paperback.
- 5) Ralph Andreano, The Economic Impact of the Civil War, very useful collection of essays on the subject.
- 6) Stanley Coben and Forest Hill, American Economic History, a collection of essays arranged by problem areas, mostly by historians.
- 7) R. Fogel and S. Engerman, The Reinterpretation of American Economic History, a collection of some of the best econometric history articles.
- 8) L. Davis, et al., American Economic Growth, a classic of economists' effort at a complete quantitative economic history.
- 9) L. Davis and D. North Institutional Change and American Economic Growth, Cambridge. Pioneering work emphasizing the importance of institutions in growth.
- 10) R. Fogel and S. Engerman, Time on the Cross, Vol. 1. Classic study of the economics of slavery.
- 11) Temin, P., The Jacksonian Economy, monograph on the 2nd Bank of the United States.
- 12) Polanyi, K., The Great Transformation, classic study of evolution (and demise? as he wrote in 1944) of a market system.

- 13) Gavin Wright, The Political Economy of the Cotton South.
- 14) Rosenberg, Nathan, Technology and American Economic Growth, M.E. Sharpe, 1972. Lovely book on modeling technological change.
- 15) J.G. Williamson and P. Lindert, American Inequality: A Macroeconomic History, New York: Academic Press, 1980.
- 16) Baumol, W., S. Blackman, and E. Wolff, Productivity and American Leadership, MIT, 1989. A comparative study of growth across nations, with focus on recent relative decline.
- 17) J. Williamson and K. O'Rourke, Globalization and History, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000.

## Course Outline

### Procedures

Readings marked with an asterisk (\*) are not required. Lectures will proceed approximately at the rate of one per capital lettered section on the syllabus below. Reading the material before the lectures is helpful, but is not essential. There is a lot of reading, not all nicely digested. Part of excellent work in the course is getting something more out of the reading than what I digest for you.

### I. INITIAL CONDITIONS: Continents in Collision

Readings: Jared Diamond, Guns, Germs and Steel, (Norton PB, 1999) ch. 18.

### II. COLONIAL DEVELOPMENT: 1607-1790

#### A. Immigration, Patterns of Production, and Trade

Readings:

- \*Coben and Hill, Ch. 1.
- Walton and Shepherd, Chs. 2-4.
- Hughes and Cain, chs. 1-2

#### B. Mercantilism and Colonial Development

Readings:

- Coben and Hill, Ch. 7 (Nettels essay).
- Walton and Shepherd, Ch. 5.
- Hughes and Cain, chs. 3-4.

#### C. Colonial Money and Finance

Readings: Andreano, New Views, Lester essay, pp. 73-118.  
 Smith, Bruce, "Some Colonial Evidence on Two Theories of Money," J. Pol. Econ., Dec. 1985, 1178-1200.  
 Hughes and Cain, ch. 3.

#### D. Colonial Economic Growth and Development

Readings: Walton and Shepherd, Chs. 5-7.  
 Hughes and Cain, ch. 3.

#### E. Economic Causes and Results of the Revolution

Readings: North, Growth and Welfare, Ch. 4, pp. 51-56, Ch. 5.  
 Walton and Shepherd, Chs. 8-9.  
 Hughes and Cain, chs. 3,4.

\*Hamilton, Alexander, The Report on Manufacturers, The Report on the Public Credit, The Report on a National Bank.

### III. NATIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH AND INTEGRATION: 1790-1860

#### A. Growth Accounting and Distribution

Readings: Davis, et al., Chs. 1, 2, 8.

Hughes and Cain, Ch. 6.

Lindert and Williamson, Chs. 1, 3, 4, 5(\*)

Steckel, Richard, "Stature and the Standard of Living", Journal of Economic Literature (1995), pp 1991-1931 (full article is 1903-1940).

\*R. Fogel, "Nutrition and the Decline in Mortality since 1700" in Stanley Engerman and R. Gallman eds, Long Term Factors in American Economic Growth, 439-556.

#### B. Law and the Rise of American Capitalism, Readings: Hughes and Cain, Ch. 7,

Hernando de Soto, The Mystery of Capital (Basic Books, 2000), Ch. 5

#### C. Technological Change

Readings: Rosenberg, Chs. 1, 3, 4.

Hughes and Cain, ch. 8.

#### D. An Export Demand Model of U.S. Economic Growth: 1790-1865

Readings: North, Economic Growth, Chs. 1-5.

#### E. Export-led Growth: 1815-1860

Readings: North, Economic Growth, Chs. 6-9, 13-15.

#### F. A More Sophisticated Model

Readings: Fogel and Engerman, The Reinterpretation, pp. 98-115.

#### G. Transportation

Readings: Fogel and Engerman, The Reinterpretation, Ch. 14.

Hughes and Cain, ch. 8

#### H. Money and Finance

Readings: Davis, et al., Chs. 9, 10.

P. Temin, The Jacksonian Economy, Chs. 1, 6.

Hughes and Cain, ch. 12.

\*Fogel and Engerman, The Reinterpretation, Ch. 33.

\*Rolnick and Weber, "New Evidence on the Free Banking Era," American Economic Review, Dec. 1983, pp. 1080-91.

#### I. The Economics of Slavery

Readings: Fogel and Engerman, Vol. 1, Time on the Cross.

Gavin Wright, The Political Economy of the Cotton South,

Chs. 1, 5.

Hughes and Cain, ch. 10.

\*Herbert Gutman, Slavery and the Numbers Game.

\*Paul David, Reckoning with Slavery.

\*Fogel and Engerman, June 1977, American Economic Review.

\*H. Gutman, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom.

J. Dualistic Regional Development Patterns and the Economic Roots of the Civil War

Readings: Hughes and Cain, ch. 9

Coben and Hill, Ch. 18.

Wright, Ch. 5.

\*R. Gallman essay, April 1979, Southern Economic Journal.

K. Economic Impact of the Civil War

Readings: Andreano, Economic Impact of the Civil War, Part IV.

Hughes and Cain, Ch. 13 .

IV. THE INDUSTRIAL NATION EMERGES: 1865-1914

A. Industrialization

Readings: Hughes and Cain, Chs. 16-17.

B. The Rise of Large Scale Enterprise

Readings: Andreano, New Views, pp. 277-307.

A. Chandler, The Visible Hand, Chs. 1, 3, 7, 9, and the conclusion (after Ch. 14).

C. Federal Government Subsidies in Transportation

Readings: Fogel, R. The Union-Pacific Railroad: A Case Study in Premature Enterprise

Craft, E. "The Value of Weather Information...", American Economic Review, , 88, 1059-1076 (Dec. 1998).

D. Agrarian and Urban Discontent

Readings: North et al, Growth and Welfare, Chs. 10, 11.

Hughes and Cain, Ch. 15, Ch. 21

E. Money and Finance

Readings: Davis, et al., Ch. 10.

Hughes and Cain, Chs. 19-20

Cantillo Simon, M. "The Rise and Fall of Bank Control in the US: 1890-1939" American Economic Review, 88, 1077-1093 (Dec. 1998) .

F. Government Regulation of Monopoly

Readings: Dewey, Monopoly in Economics and Law, Chs. 1, 11.

Hughes and Cain, Ch. 18

G. Regional Development: The Impoverished South

Readings: Gavin Wright, "The Economic Revolution in the American South", Journal of Economic Perspectives Summer, 1987, 161-178.

R. Ransom and R. Sutch, One Kind of Freedom, Chs. 1,9.

L.J. Alston and J. Ferrie, "Paternalism in Agricultural Contracts in the U.S. South: Implications for the Growth of the Welfare State", American Economic Review, Sept. 1993, 83, 852-876.

V. THE WELFARE STATE: 1914-

A. The Growth of Government

Readings: R. Higgs, Crisis and Leviathan, Oxford U.P. 1987, chs. 1-4  
Hughes and Cain, chs. 22-23.

B. The Great Depression

Readings: Higgs, ch. 8  
Hughes and Cain, chs. 24-25

C. The Productivity Slowdown

Reading: J. Williamson, review of Baumol, Blackman and Wolff Productivity and American Leadership, in March 1991 Journal of Economic Literature

\*Baumol, Blackman and Wolff Productivity and American Leadership, MIT Press 1990

R. Barro and X. Sala-i-Martin, "Convergence", Journal of Political Economy, 100, 223-251. (April, 1992).