

Economics 450
Seminar in Quantitative Economic History

Fall 2019
Mr. Easton

This course is a seminar course in economic history. Students will prepare a paper based on a set of topics and a bibliography that will be available in class, or will choose their own topic in consultation with the instructor. Papers will be presented in class and will be discussed by fellow students. The exact dates will be decided depending upon the number of students giving papers. Normally there is no final exam. Attendance, however, is required. Students are assumed to have had Economics 201 or 301, 305 and hopefully 333.

No textbook is assigned

Normal grading includes 30% for in class presentations and critiques, and 70% for the final paper. Should you miss any part of anyone's presentation, you will take the final. It would be worth 25% of the final mark.

In week 3 students will meet individually with the instructor to finalize their topics. Students should be prepared to present a report to the class of their progress on a regular basis.

To stimulate your imagination here are some broad areas in which topics have been developed in the past:

Tariff history (of a particular country or of a group of countries)

Economic Growth among nations

The Gold Standard: should we follow the yellow brick road?

Immigration

Emigration

Schooling

Women in the workforce

Crime and Punishment

Alcohol Prohibition

Gambling

Expansion and Contraction of the Roman Empire

Brazilian Urban Expansion

Slavery in the US

The Slave Trade

Brazilian Slavery

Chinese Growth and Development

Japanese Growth and Development

Commodities:

Bananas

Oil
Coffee
Correlates of War
Swedish Growth
British Coastal Shipping
Banking and Economic Growth
The role of remittances in economic growth

More specific questions have included:

Was Malthus right? Do we tend to live at a subsistence wage?
In the UK did the "good harvest" inspire industrial development?
Did the Poor Law affect British wages?
Did British emigration reduce income at home?
Are business cycles systematically related in the 19th century?
What caused the Great Depression?
Did Britain gain or lose from the revaluation of gold in 1925?
Has international debt been dangerous to creditors or debtors?
What is the impact of major illnesses on population growth?

Tariffs:

Explain the historical pattern of Canadian tariffs. Why did Canadian tariff levels vary the way they did between 1870 and today?
Why did Britain move to free trade in the 1850s when it was the world's most developed country and arguably would have been most likely to have had some monopoly power in trade?

Economic Growth:

What factors account for Canadian economic growth?
What role does export-led growth play in explaining Canada's growth path?
What role has the United States played in Canadian growth?
What accounts for the growth of country x?
Chinese Growth and Development: why not 5000 years ago?
Japanese Growth and Development: technology or women in the workforce?
Why did British growth slow at the end of the 19th century?
Was Britain technologically inept at the end of the 19th century?
Did British investment abroad in the 19th century reduce growth at home?
What were the consequences of women entering and leaving the workforce after WWII?
(Or WWI for that matter)

The Gold Standard

Was capital mobility more perfect (!) in the 19th century (through 1914) than during the 20th century?

Purchasing power parity plays an important role in international economics theories.
Was the 19th century a better place to find PPP than the present day?
Was the transfer fully effected; a) France's indemnity after the Franco-Prussian War, or
b) Germany's reparations after World War I.?

Immigration/Emigration

What is the cost-benefit calculation of immigration in Canada or elsewhere?
Where do people come from? Is Canada a stopover point to the US or an immigration
destination in its own right?
People often leave Canada for other countries. What explains the rate of emigration?

Schooling

What factors influence the growth in elementary, secondary, post-secondary or university
schooling in Canada?
What role does schooling play in the historical growth of nations?
Explain the time pattern of Canadian post secondary school attendance.

Crime and Punishment

Explain the time pattern of the Canadian crime rate. What factors account for the pattern
of crime in Canada from 1870 to the present?
Does Canada have a history of punishment that is different from that in the US?
Explain the growth of legal aid in Canada.

Prohibition

Was prohibition an important source of crime in Canada or the US in the early 20th
century?
What was the impact of alcoholism on health?
Does the Canadian prohibition have a lesson for marijuana legalization today?
Let me reemphasize: these are not topics that you need to consider for your paper. They
are topics that others have done and are to help you understand the scope of what it is that
you can do for a project.