

York University
Faculty of Graduate Studies
Department of Economics
Winter 2024

Course # and Title

AP/ECON 4659 A: Topics in North American Economic History

Course Webpage

<https://www.yorku.ca/eclass/>

Course Instructor/Contact

Name: Laura Salisbury
Office: 1092 Vari Hall
Office Hours: R 10:00-11:00, 3:00-4:00
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Lecture Time and Location

Time: R 11:30-2:30pm
Location: ACW 303

Prerequisites

AP/ECON 2300 3.00, AP/ECON 2400 3.00, AP/ECON 3210 3.00 or 3480 3.00

Required Readings

There is a required reading list, which consists of published academic papers in economic history. The readings are listed on the schedule at below, and are linked from the course website.

Course Description

This is an upper level course aimed to familiarize students with select important topics in economic history, with a focus on the United States and Canada, and to acquaint them with empirical methods of research in economic history. The course will focus on micro themes (i.e. research analyzing individuals, localities or firms) that are important across North America, with some focus on topics unique to the United States. These topics include an overview of the importance of history and institutions to economic

development; slavery in the United States and its long-term economic impacts; industrialization and manufacturing; migration and economic mobility; natural resources and agriculture in Canadian and American development; urbanization and suburbanization in the U.S.; health and mortality; and marriage and fertility. In addition to familiarizing students with important topics and methods in economic history, this course will develop writing and presentation skills.

Course Evaluation

- 1) **Paper (45%).** You will write an essay (roughly 1500-2000 words) on one of the topics covered in class. Your essay will take the form of a literature review, centered on a single, important paper in this literature (which I will give you).
- 2) **Class participation (20%).** This grade consists of two parts: (i) attendance and participation in class discussions; (ii) brief presentation on one week's reading, to be prepared in groups ahead of time. The presentation is the most important part of this grade component.
- 3) **Midterm Exam (15%).** The midterm exam will be in short answer format and will cover all class discussion and required readings covered before the midterm.
- 4) **Final exam (20%).** The final exam will be in short answer format and will cover all class discussion and required readings covered subsequent to the midterm.

Missed Exams and Late Assignments

A deferral for either the midterm or the final exam will be granted only for medical reasons. In such cases students should submit a deferred exam application together with the supporting documents (attending physician's statement) to the economics department to my attention. The date and time of the deferred exam will be set at a later date. Students who may require further extensions or accommodation will have to submit a formal petition to the Faculty. Papers are due on **March 25th**, and will lose points for lateness according to the following formula: a paper that is D business days late will lose $5 \times (\ln D + 1)$ points. **I must receive your paper by the end of the semester (April 8th), or it will receive a grade of zero.**

Grading

The grading scheme for the course conforms to the 9-point grading system used in undergraduate programs at York (e.g., A+ = 9, A = 8, B+ = 7, C+ = 5, etc.). Tests will bear either a letter grade designation or a corresponding number grade (e.g. A+ = 90 to 100, A = 80 to 90, B+ = 75 to 79, etc.)

Important Course Information for Students

All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information, available on the Senate Committee on Curriculum & Academic Standards webpage; <http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/index-policies.html/>

- York's Academic Honesty Policy and Procedures/Academic Integrity Website

- Ethics Review Process for research involving human participants
- Course requirement accommodation for students with disabilities, including physical, medical, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities
- Student Conduct Standards
- Religious Observance Accommodation

Approximate Schedule and Reading List

Date	Topic	Reading
Jan 11 th	Introduction	
Jan 18 th	Institutions and Development	Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson (2001). "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Developments: An Empirical Investigation." <i>American Economic Review</i> . 91: 1369-1401.
Jan 25 th	Slavery in the United States	Trevon D. Logan. "African Enslavement and the Recovery of Black Economic History." <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i> 36:2 (2022),81-98.
Feb 1 st	The Aftermath of American Slavery	Suresh Naidu. "Recruitment Restrictions and Labor Markets: Evidence from the Postbellum U.S. South." <i>Journal of Labor Economics</i> 28-2 (2010): 413-445.
Feb 8 th	Innovation, Industrialization and Skill	Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz. "The Origins of Technology-Skill Complementarity." <i>Quarterly Journal of Economics</i> . 113 (1998): 693-732.
Feb 15 th	Midterm Exam	
Feb 22 nd	NO CLASS	
Feb 29 th	Intergenerational Mobility	Jason Long and Joseph Ferrie. "Intergenerational Occupational Mobility in Britain and the United States since 1850." <i>American Economic Review</i> . 103 (2013): 1109-1137.
Mar 7 th	Migration	Ran Abramitzky, Leah P. Boustan, and Katherine Eriksson. "Europe's Tired, Poor, Huddled Masses: Self Selection and Economic Outcomes in the Age of Mass Migration." <i>American Economic Review</i> . 102 (2012): 1182-1856.
Mar 14 th	Land and natural resources	Donn. L. Feir, Rob Gillezeau, and Maggie E.C. Jones. "The Slaughter of the Bison and Reversal of Fortunes on the Great Plains." <i>Review of Economic Studies</i> , Forthcoming.
Mar 21 st	Urbanization and Suburbanization [Paper Due March 25th]	Leah Boustan (2010). "Was Postwar Suburbanization White Flight? Evidence from the Black Migration." <i>Quarterly Journal of Economics</i> . 125 (1): 417-443.
Mar 28 th	Health and Mortality	Ann Carlos and Frank Lewis (2012). "Small Pox and Native American Mortality: the 1780s Epidemic in the Hudson Bay Region." <i>Explorations in Economic History</i> . 49: 277-380.
Apr 4 th	Marriage and Fertility	Martha J. Bailey (2006). "More Power to the Pill: The Impact of Contraceptive Freedom on Women's Lifecycle Labor Supply." <i>Quarterly Journal of Economics</i> . 121: 289-320.