The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the sub-discipline of Economic History, with a (rather strong) emphasis on US topics. We will examine some classic debates in the field as well as emerging areas of research. It is hoped that you will gain insight into both the topics under study and the methods that economic historians use to study them.

Course Objectives:
By the end of the semester, a student who is successful in this class
(1) Will have become familiar with a range of approaches to the study of Economic History,
(2) Will have gained detailed understanding of many of the most active areas of inquiry in US Economic History, and
(3) Will have developed skills and experience in writing professional-quality critical essays and original research in Economic History

There is no textbook for the class. The articles and chapters we read will be made available through Canvas. If you have not studied US economic history before, and in particular if you have limited knowledge of US history, you may want to pick up a textbook to use as reference. Some useful ones include


You should be able to find used copies, especially of older editions, through Amazon, Powells, and other sources.

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services (CDS), 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

Mechanics of the Course:
For each topic, I will provide some background and discuss the primary readings. For most topics, some “supplemental readings” are also listed. These readings will be available through Canvas. Each student will write four short (approximately five page) critical essays during the semester, with each essay covering one of these supplemental readings. I will pass around a sign up sheet early in the semester to ensure that we get coverage of a broad set of readings. Students will
also lead our discussion of the readings that they choose to write about. Your critical essays should include a summary of the article, a critique of the assumptions of the model/the econometric approach/the quality of the data (whatever is most relevant), and some ideas for improvement or extension of the article. These essays should be designed to generate class discussion of the given article and related topics. You must also prepare a one-page handout for the class to promote discussion of the article. You may also prepare a Powerpoint (or other type of) presentation. Your essays, handouts, and slides (if any) should be e-mailed to me by 5 pm on Tuesday for a Thursday presentation or by 5 pm Sunday for a Tuesday presentation. I will then make all of these files available to the class to help promote discussion. Each critical essay/presentation counts for 10 percent of your grade.

Of course, all students are responsible for doing all of the reading and being prepared to discuss the material in class. Participation in these discussions will constitute 5 percent of your final grade.

We will have a final, take-home exam during exam week. This will be an essay exam designed to help you review and integrate the material from the semester, and to give you an idea of what a field exam in economic history might look like. The exam will be worth 20 percent of your grade. The exam will be “handed out” (or e-mailed out) on Wednesday, 12/12, at 9 a.m. It will be due on Friday, 12/14, at 5 p.m.

The remaining 35 percent of your grade will be accounted for by a research project (described below).

Research Projects:

Each student will choose some narrow topic in economic history for intense study and will write a research paper of 15 to 20 pages on that topic. Your paper does not have to focus on US topics, but it must fall within the domain of “economic history” in some meaningful sense (it must focus on a topic that is at least 30 years old, or it must examine the evolution of some economic phenomenon over a very long period, 30 years or more). The resulting paper should (1) pose an interesting question and motivate the importance of that question, (2) review and evaluate the relevant literature and identify how answering the question at hand will contribute to the literature, (3) develop some testable hypotheses which will allow us to answer the question, (4) identify and make some preliminary evaluation of evidence for testing these hypotheses. There are several steps in the completion of the research project:

- On Thursday, 10/2, each student should turn in a page identifying their general area of interest, proposing some potential narrow topics, and listing some of the relevant literature (at least four potential sources other than items listed on the syllabus). We will discuss these general topics on the 9th. This part of the assignment is worth 5 percent of your semester grade.
- On Tuesday, 10/28, each student should turn in a paragraph-long description of a narrow topic, along with an outline for the rest of the paper and a list of references. This part of the assignment is worth 5 percent of your semester grade.
- On Tuesday, 11/20, each student will turn in a rough draft of their paper. We will use this class session to discuss the projects. This part of the assignment is worth 5 percent of your semester grade.
- The final papers will be due on the last day of class (Thursday, 12/11) during class, and we will discuss them on that day. The final paper is worth 20 percent of your semester grade. More details concerning sources and format will be given during the first couple of weeks of the semester.

Other Important Dates:
Tuesday, 10/14 and Thursday, 10/16: No Class (Fall Break)
Tuesday, 11/11 and Thursday, 11/13 – NO CLASS (I WILL BE OUT OF TOWN). I WOULD LIKE US TO FIND A COUPLE OF TIME SLOTS TO RESCHEDULE THESE CLASSES.

Wednesday, 12/12, 9 a.m.: Take Home Final Handed/Mailed Out
Friday, 12/14, 5 p.m.: Take Home Final Due

A Note on Doing the Field in Economic History:

Economic History is a “one semester” field, so this is the only course that is required. You may fulfill the field by writing a paper or by taking a field exam. If you do a paper, the expectations will be higher than for the “research paper” you write for the class. You are welcome (and encouraged) to extend and elaborate your class research paper for your field paper. The due date for the paper will be the same date as the field exam (in early August). We will talk more about the details of doing the field during the term. I will want to get a firm headcount on who is doing the field and on how they’re doing it (by paper or by exam) at the end of the semester.

Schedule of Topics and Readings:

Note that topics and readings may change (with advance notice) to suit the pace of the course and the interests of the students.

Topic 1: Introduction to Methods and Materials of Economic History

Primary Readings:


Topic 2: Overview of European and New World Growth

Primary Readings:

Topic 3: Markets in the Colonial and Early Antebellum Periods

Primary Readings:

A. Colonial Population and Labor Markets:

B. Markets in Rural New England:

Supplemental Readings:

Topic 4: Manufacturing in the Antebellum US

Primary Readings:

Supplemental Readings:

Topic 5: Technological Change and Productivity in the 19th Century

Primary Readings:

Supplemental Readings:

**Topic 6: Health and the Standard of Living in the US**  
**Primary Readings:**

- Lee, Chulhee, “Socioeconomic Background, Disease, and Mortality among Union Army Recruits: Implications for Economic and Demographic History,” Explorations in Economic History 34:1 (January 1997).

**Supplemental Readings:**


**Topic 7: Immigration**  
**Primary Readings:**


**Supplemental Readings:**


**Topic 8: Slavery, the South, and the Civil War**  
**Primary Readings:**


**Supplemental Readings:**

• Lee, Chulhee, “Wealth Accumulation and the Health of Union Army Veterans, 1860-
1870,” Journal of Economic History 65:2 (June 2005).
• Brinkley, Garland, “The Decline in Southern Agricultural Output, 1860-1880,” Journal of 
Economic History 57:1 (March 1997).

**Topic 9: 19th Century Capital Markets/Change in Industrial Structure**

**Primary Readings:**

**A. Capital Markets**

- Davis and Gallman, “Capital Formation in the United States during the Nineteenth 
  Century,” in Mathias and Postan, eds., The Cambridge Economic History of Europe,
  Volume III: The Industrial Economics – Capital, Labour, and Enterprise, Part 2: The United 
- Sokoloff, Kenneth, “Investment in Fixed and Working Capital During Industrialization:

**B. Industrial Structure**

  CambridgeUniversity Press, ch. 3, 4.

**Supplemental Readings:**

- McCurdy, Charles, “American Law and the Marketing Structure of the Large Corporation, 
  1875-1890,” Journal of Economic History 38:3 (September 1978).

**Topic 10: Labor Markets, Unemployment, Mobility, and Poverty in the 19th and 20th Centuries**

**Primary Readings**

- Keyssar, Alexander, Out of Work: The First Century of Unemployment in Massachusetts.
- Hannon, JoanUnderhill, “Poverty in the Antebellum Northeast: The View from New 
  1007-32.

**Supplemental Readings:**

- Rosenbloom, Joshua, “One Market or Many? Labor Market Integration in the Late 
  85-107.
  08-7, 2009.

**Topic 11: Women and Work in the 19th and 20th Centuries**

**Primary Readings**

  Plough,” IZA Discussion Papers No. 5735 (May 2011).
- Goldin, Claudia, and Lawrence F. Katz, “The Power of the Pill: Oral Contraceptives and 
  740-70.

**Supplemental Readings**


Topic 12: African American Labor and Racial Inequality
Primary Readings

Supplemental Readings:

Topic 13: The Great Depression, The New Deal, and the Growth of the Public Sector
Primary Readings:

Supplemental Readings:

Topic 14: Post-World War II US Economic Performance, and Rising Inequality
Primary Readings:


Supplemental Readings:
