

Winter 2015

Chicago Economics 22110

Room: Rosenwald 015

Thursday 3:00 – 5:50

Professor: Richard Hornbeck, hornbeck@fas.harvard.edu
Office hours: TBD

Teaching Fellow: Oliver Browne, obrowne@uchicago.edu
Office hours: Tuesdays, Fridays 2-3 pm Harper Cafe

This course surveys research topics in economic history, with an emphasis on questions related to economic development. Class will be organized around a discussion of assigned readings on institutions, technology, industrialization, and the development of the American economy. The course focuses on exposing students to research, and encouraging the creation of new research ideas. The course emphasizes quantitative empirical methods and students should be familiar with basic tools for economic analysis, though the course will provide background in relevant empirical methods.

Course requirements are:

1. Class participation. The assigned readings are to be completed by the date indicated on the reading list, and it is essential that readings be completed to facilitate class discussion. Readings will be posted on the course website, or otherwise made available.
2. Reading discussion questions. Prior to each class, students will submit responses to short discussion questions (approximately one double-spaced page for each paper). These will be graded as check-plus/check/check-minus. "Check" responses demonstrate familiarity with the papers. "Check-plus" responses contain new insight on the papers: critiques, potential improvements, or connecting the paper to other readings. These responses should be prepared individually by students.
3. Research proposal(s). Two short research proposals (approximately 3 double-spaced pages) should detail the economic question, setting/data, and proposed methodology for the analysis. The first research proposal is due February 9th (at 5pm). The second research proposal is due March 2nd (at 5pm). Some proposals will be chosen for student in-class presentations. These research proposals should be prepared individually by students.
4. Final exam. A final exam during exam week will have essay questions that build on class discussions and the reading discussion questions. (Time TBD)

Grading:

Class participation and reading discussion questions will combine for 30% of the grade. The research proposals will count for 40% of the grade. The course final will count for the remaining 30% of the grade.

Part 1: Introduction

Class 1 (January 8)

Part 2: Institutions

Class 2 (January 15)

Hornbeck, Richard. 2010. "Barbed Wire: Property Rights and Agricultural Development." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, May.

Class 3 (January 22)

Libecap, Gary and Dean Lueck. 2011. "The Demarcation of Land and the Role of Property Coordinating Institutions," *Journal of Political Economy*, June.

Hornbeck, Richard and Dan Keniston. 2014. "Creative Destruction: Barriers to Urban Growth and the Great Boston Fire of 1872." NBER Working Paper #20467.

Class 4 (January 29)

Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson and James A. Robinson. 2001. "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation," *American Economic Review*, December.

Nunn, Nathan. 2008. "The Long-run Effects of Africa's Slave Trades," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, February.

Nunn and Wantchekon. 2011. "The Slave Trade and the Origins of Mistrust in Africa," *American Economic Review*, December.

Part 3: Technology and Industrialization

Class 5 (February 5)

Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective*, Chapter 1.

Murphy, Kevin, Andrei Sheilfer and Robert Vishny. 1989. "Industrialization and the Big Push," *Journal of Political Economy*, October.

Fogel, Robert. 1964. Railroads and American Economic Growth. Chapter 1.

Class 6 (February 12)

Donaldson, Dave and Richard Hornbeck. 2013. "Railroads and American Economic Growth: A Market Access Approach." NBER Working Paper #19213.

Student presentations

Class 7 (February 19)

Bleakley, Hoyt and Jeffrey Lin. 2012. "Portage and Path Dependence." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, May.

Davis, Donald R. and David E. Weinstein. 2002. "Bones, Bombs, and Break Points: The Geography of Economic Activity." *American Economic Review*, December.

Class 8 (February 26)

Bleakley, Hoyt. 2007. "Disease and Development: Evidence from Hookworm Eradication in the American South." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, February.

Hornbeck, Richard and Suresh Naidu. 2014. "When the Levee Breaks: Black Migration and Economic Development in the American South." *American Economic Review*, March.

Class 9 (March 5)

Hornbeck, Richard. 2012. "The Enduring Impact of the American Dust Bowl: Short and Long-run Adjustments to Environmental Catastrophe," *American Economic Review*, June.

Student presentations