



ECON 20 - Economic History of the U.S.

Catalog Description

Transfer Status: CSU/UC

Unit(s): 3.00

Lecture: 51.00 Contact hours/102.00 Out of class hours/153.00 Total hours/3.00 Unit(s)

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Course Description: This course provides a comprehensive exploration of U.S. economic history from colonial times to the present, focusing on key events, policies, and transformations that shaped the nation's economic landscape. Students will examine the development of capitalism, the role of slavery in early economic growth, and the impact of the Industrial Revolution on labor, technology, and productivity. The course covers major economic crises, including the Great Depression and the 2008 financial crash, analyzing their causes, consequences, and responses to them. It will also explore the rise of the United States as a global economic power through periods of war, industrialization, and the creation of financial institutions such as the Federal Reserve. Special attention is given to the evolution of labor markets, income inequality, and the role of government intervention in the economy. Key themes include the effects of westward expansion, the New Deal, post-World War II prosperity, and the emergence of modern consumerism. Students will engage with primary sources, economic data, and historical debates to connect historical events to contemporary economic challenges. The course includes lectures, discussions, and research projects that encourage critical analysis of how U.S. economic history informs current policy decisions.

Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, the student should be able to:

- 1. Describe and evaluate the development of land, labor, capital and entrepreneurship from colonial time to the present.
2. Analyze how each of the factors of production contributed to the growth and prosperity of the American economy.
3. Analyze the role that slavery played in American society from an economic perspective.
4. Explain the contributions of key innovators and their contribution to technology and growth.
5. Explain how various institutions; e.g., the Federal Reserve Bank, labor unions, the banking sector and the federal government influenced the development of the American economy.
6. Identify and analyze the factors that contributed to the Great Depression.

Course Content

Topic Titles / Suggested Time Topic

Lecture

Table with 2 columns: Topics, Lec Hrs. Rows include: The merging of economics and history; the meaning of economic history (6.00), The Colonial Era, 1607-1776 (6.00), The Revolutionary, Early National, Agricultural and Antebellum Eras, 1776-1860 (11.00), The Reunification Era, 1860-1920 (12.00), Prosperity, Depression, and World Wars, 1914-1945 (9.00), The Postwar Era, 1945 to present (7.00). Total Hours: 51.00

Methods of Instruction

- A. Collaborative Group Work
B. Discussion
C. Homework: Students are required to complete two hours of outside-of-class homework for each hour of lecture
D. Multimedia Presentations
E. Problem-Solving Sessions
F. Internet applications and simulations, research presentations, in-class debates, guest lectures and presentations

Methods of Evaluation

- A. Exams/Tests
B. Portfolios
C. Oral Presentation
D. Written Assignments
E. Essays and research papers
F. Debates/discussions

## Examples of Assignments

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### Reading Assignments

1. Read the chapter reviewing the colonial period from 1607-1783 and take online quiz.
2. Read book excerpt titled, "Sixteen-Page Economic History of the World," from "A Farewell to Alms: A Brief Economic History of the World," by Gregory Clark. Take notes while reading and bring to class for in-class quiz.

### Writing Assignments

1. Write a 1,000-word minimum paper in MLA format discussing a feature film of your choosing. Your paper should consider whether events in the film demonstrate Bernstein's "Formula for Economic Progress" are being realized and what impact, positive or negative, that is having upon the economy shown in the film.
2. Using copy of U.S. Constitution, identify and explain two examples in Articles I and II that correspond to William Bernstein's "Formula for Economic Progress." Your response should be a minimum of two pages.

### Out-of-Class Assignments

1. In 1–2 pages, explain the meaning of the "Great Divergence", taking time to explore its repercussions in the modern world. Identify what allowed some countries to grow faster than others.
2. Read the chapter covering the post-WWII economy and take online quiz.

### Recommended Materials of Instruction

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John Steele Gordon. (2004). *An Empire of Wealth: The Epic History of American Economic Power*. Harper Collins, 1st. 978-0060505127.

### Minimum Qualifications

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Economics (Masters Required)

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**Created/Revised by:** Radler, Andrew

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