

Syllabus for Econ 323-2: American Economic History 1865 to Present

Katherine Hauck*

Spring 2024

1 Class Summary

1.1 Contact Information

Instructor: Katherine Hauck

Email: katherine.hauck@northwestern.edu

Office hours on zoom or in-person: on request, please email me to set up a convenient time

Teaching assistant: Nicole Saito

Email: nicolesaito2028@u.northwestern.edu

Office hours on zoom or in-person: by appointment + F from 3:00 to 3:50 pm on the following dates

- April 12
- April 19
- May 10
- May 24

Meeting location and time: T/Th from 2:00 to 3:20 pm; Harris Hall L07

1.2 Course Overview

The course examines the economic development of the United States from the Civil War to the present. It focuses both on long-term economic trends (like technological advances and industrialization) and the economic causes and consequences of particular events (like the Great Depression). A specific focus will be on how economic historians use econometrics to answer causal questions relevant to economists, historians, economic historians, and the broader public.

*Adapted from Sebastian Ottinger

1.3 Course Structure

There will be 2 lectures per week. In these lectures, I will provide a brief overview on each topic, and then as a class we will discuss a related (and mostly recent) academic paper. These papers are mandatory readings, and you must submit 2 comments or questions related to each paper 24 hours before the lecture (see below).

1.4 Goals of the Course

The course has three distinct goals. First, it will enable a deep understanding of US economic history since 1865. A better understanding of the past can help in understanding the economy and society we live in today. Second, this class will allow you to apply the economic tools you learned in prior economics classes to what arguably is one of the best laboratories of economics: history. Lastly, the class will train your ability to read structured but complicated texts (here: academic papers in economic history), identify their core contribution, and write brief essays about these.

1.5 Prerequisites

Students must have taken ECON 310-1 or MMSS 211-1 and ECON 281 or ECON 381-1 or MATH 386-1 or IEMS 304 or STAT 350 to successfully enroll in this course.

1.6 Readings

Each week, I will assign readings related to the lectures. These will be available on the course webpage. Readings will typically be recent academic papers. There is a reading guide, available on Canvas, which can be a useful resource for helping you structure your reading.

We are going to be reading some academic papers which can be complex and may include theoretical or econometric tools with which you are unfamiliar. Your goal in the readings should be to gain an understanding of what question the paper is trying to answer, why that question is important, the approach used by the author(s), some intuitive understanding of why that approach makes sense, some limitations of the approach, and the conclusions that we can ultimately draw from the results. You are not required to understand the more technical aspects of the theories or econometrics in the papers. As we go through the first few readings, exactly what level of insight you should gain from the readings should become clearer.

1.7 Evaluation

Grading will be based on class participation (15%), 1 in-class quiz (5%), 2 written assignments (15% each), a midterm (25%), and a final (25%).

Class participation: You will submit 2 comments or questions related to each of the class readings 24 hours before lecture. There will be 15 readings in this course. I will count 12 of those to calculate your grade. These 3 “freebies” are meant to allow you to skip readings for

reasons such as illness, a busy schedule in a particular week, etc. You do not need to provide excuses for these 3 missed readings, but please use them carefully so that you don't run out. Additionally, remember that all readings may be covered on the exam, so you should plan to still read these papers even if you do not turn in the questions or comments. Submission of the questions or comments will be through quizzes on Canvas.

The class participation grade will be based on 1) submitting the questions every week and 2) your class through discussion based on these questions and comments. Naturally, you need to be in class on the day when we discuss the reading to get points for this part of your discussion.

Quiz: There will be 1 in-class quiz (see below for date). This quiz is designed to help you learn the basics of identification that we discuss in class. A general intuition of how identification works will make it easier to understand the papers we read. A practice quiz is posted on Canvas to help you prepare.

Written assignments: There will be 2 written assignments due during the term (see below for dates). These assignments will be based on questions I provide related to the material covered in the lectures and the course readings. You will typically have a choice between 2 or 3 topics. The assignments will be no more than 2 pages with an additional 2 pages allowed for tables and figures and references. You will be free to use any course materials or to look up additional resources. Written assignments will use 1.5 spacing, with 11pt font, and page margins of 1 inch. A solved example written assignment is posted on Canvas.

It is very important that you reference any sources used, and that any direct quotes are presented as such. If you make a factual claim, there should be either a reference to support that claim, or table or figure backing up the claim.

The written assignments will be somewhat like longer versions of the types of short answer questions you will encounter on the tests. Therefore, one purpose of these assignments is to provide practice that will help you prepare for the exams. For this reason, I have scheduled the assignments before the tests.

Exams: The tests will consist of a mix of knowledge questions based on information from the lectures and readings, and a short-answer question similar to the written assignments. Therefore, the written assignments are good practice for the exams. The tests will be in-person and take place during the lecture. An example exam is posted on Canvas.

It is not feasible for me to offer make-up exams if you have to miss an exam due to a documented health condition. If you have to miss the first test due to a documented illness, then you will be excused from that exam and the first test grade weight will be redistributed to the second test. If you have to miss the second test, you will get an incomplete in the course. You can then make up the missing exam by providing a research paper of 15 pages (following the formatting guidelines for the written assignments, with 5 additional pages allowed for references, tables, and figures) on a prompt that I will provide due no later than the start of the reading week in the following term.

1.8 Key Dates

- March 28: first day of class

- April 9: in-class quiz
- April 16: first assignment due
- April 25: in-class midterm
- May 3: last day to drop
- May 16: second assignment due
- June 3: in-class final

2 Class Policies

2.1 Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is very important in this class. On both tests, you are not allowed to discuss the assignment with other students or to seek help from any other individuals, nor are you allowed to consult your notes, the lecture slides, or any other resources.

Students in this course are required to comply with the policies found in the booklet, “Academic Integrity at North- western University: A Basic Guide”, available for download here: <https://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html>

2.2 Accommodations

Northwestern University, and this professor, are committed to providing the most accessible learning environment as possible for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact AccessibleNU to move forward with the university’s established accommodation process (accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; phone: 847-467-5530).

If you already have established accommodations with AccessibleNU, please let me know as soon as possible, preferably within the first two weeks of the term, so we can work together to implement your disability accommodations. Disability information, including academic accommodations, is confidential under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

2.3 Northwestern COVID-19 Classroom Expectations and Policies

Students, faculty, and staff must comply with University expectations regarding appropriate classroom behavior, including those outlined below and in the COVID-19 Code of Conduct. With respect to classroom procedures, this includes:

- Policies regarding masking and social distancing evolve as the public health situation changes. Students are responsible for understanding and complying with current masking, testing, Symptom Tracking, and social distancing requirements.

- In some classes, masking and/or social distancing may be required as a result of an Americans with Disabilities Act accommodation for the instructor or a student in the class even when not generally required on campus. In such cases, the instructor will notify the class.
- No food is allowed inside classrooms. Drinks are permitted, but please keep your face covering on and use a straw.
- Faculty may assign seats in some classes to help facilitate contact tracing in the event that a student tests positive for COVID-19. Students must sit in their assigned seats.

If a student fails to comply with the COVID-19 Code of Conduct or other University expectations related to COVID-19, the instructor may ask the student to leave the class. The instructor is asked to report the incident to the Office of Community Standards for additional follow-up.

2.4 Northwestern COVID-19 Testing Compliance Policies

To protect the health of our community, Northwestern University requires unvaccinated students who are in on-campus programs to be tested for COVID-19 twice per week. Students who fail to comply with current or future COVID-19 testing protocols will be referred to the Office of Community standards to face disciplinary action, including escalation up to restriction from campus and suspension.

2.5 Exceptions to Class Modality

Class sessions for this course will occur in person. Individual students will not be granted permission to attend remotely except as the result of an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodation as determined by AccessibleNU. Maintaining the health of the community remains our priority. If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID do not attend class and update your Symptom Tracker application right away to connect with Northwestern's Case Management Team for guidance on next steps. Also contact the instructor as soon as possible to arrange to complete coursework. Students who experience a personal emergency should contact the instructor as soon as possible to arrange to complete coursework. Should public health recommendations prevent in person class from being held on a given day, the instructor or the university will notify students.

2.6 Class Recordings

Portions of this class will be recorded by the instructor for educational purpose and available to the class during the quarter *on request*. Portions of the course that contain images, questions or commentary/discussion by students will be edited out of any recordings that are saved beyond the current term.

2.7 Northwestern Policy Regarding Recording of Class Sessions

Unauthorized student recording of classroom or other academic activities (including advising sessions or office hours) is prohibited. Unauthorized recording is unethical and may also be a violation of University policy and state law. Students requesting the use of assistive technology as an accommodation should contact AccessibleNU. Unauthorized use of classroom recordings - including distributing or posting them - is also prohibited. Under the University's Copyright Policy, faculty own the copyright to instructional materials - including those resources created specifically for the purposes of instruction, such as syllabi, lectures, lecture notes, and presentations. Students cannot copy, reproduce, display, or distribute these materials. Students who engage in unauthorized recording, unauthorized use of a recording, or unauthorized distribution of instructional materials will be referred to the appropriate University office for follow-up.

2.8 Mobile Phone Policy

Mobile phones should have the ringer turned off and be placed in pockets or backpacks. Students may not make or receive phone calls, surf the web, or send or receive text messages during class.

2.9 Laptop Computer Policy

Except in the case of proven medical necessity, students may not use a laptop computer or computer tablet during the lectures. Such devices must remain in your bag and may not be placed on your desk.

2.10 Academic and Other Support

NUHelp: Students can find useful resources for safety and security, academic support, and mental and physical health and well-being at the NUhelp website and app:

<https://www.northwestern.edu/nuhelp/>

Northwestern University is committed to supporting the wellness of our students. Student Affairs has multiple resources to support student wellness and mental health. If you are feeling distressed or overwhelmed, please reach out for help. Students can access confidential resources through the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Religious and Spiritual Life (RSL) and the Center for Awareness, Response and Education (CARE). Additional information on all of the resources mentioned above can be found here:

- <https://www.northwestern.edu/counseling/>
- <https://www.northwestern.edu/religious-life/>
- <https://www.northwestern.edu/care/>

2.11 Absences

Students who are absent due to sickness or a positive Covid-19 test should do their best to continue to follow the course through the available course recordings and posted lecture slides. Absences due to illness should be documented. Students will be excused from in-class participation but should do their best to still send in comments about the readings. If you are unable to complete an assignment on time because of an illness, you should discuss with the instructor whether it is possible to get a short extension or whether you can be excused from the assignment with the grade weight distributed to other class elements.

3 Class Schedule

Subject to adjustment.

- **March 28:** Introduction
 - What is economic history?
 - Basic identification
- **April 2:** Reconstruction
 - Logan, T.D., 2020. “Do Black Politicians Matter? Evidence from Reconstruction.” *The Journal of Economic History*, 80(1), pp. 1-37.
- **April 4:** Railroads
 - Donaldson, D. and Hornbeck, R., 2016. “Railroads and American Economic Growth: A “Market Access” Approach.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 13(2), pp. 799-858.
- **April 9:** Agriculture + **Quiz in class**
 - Smith, C., 2020. “Land Concentration and Long-Run Development in the Frontier United States.”
- **April 11:** Native Population
 - Feir, D., Gillezeau, R., and Jones, M., 2024. “The Slaughter of the Bison and Reversal of Fortunes on the Great Plains.” *Review of Economic Studies*, forthcoming.
- **April 16:** Mass Migration + **Assignment 1 due at 11:59PM**
 - Abramizky, R. et al., 2012. “Europe’s Tired, Poor, Huddled Masses: Self-selection and Economic Outcomes in the Age of Mass Migration.” *American Economic Review*, 102(5), pp. 1832-56.
- **April 18:** WWI

- Ferrera, A. and Fishback, P., 2022. “Discrimination, migration, and economic outcomes: evidence from World War I.” *Review of Economics and Statistics*, pp. 1-44.
- **April 23: Unions**
 - Farber, S. et al., 2021. “Unions and Inequality over the Twentieth Century: New Evidence from Survey Data.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 136(3), pp. 1325–1385.
- **April 25: Exam 1 in class**
- **April 30: Great Depression / New Deal**
 - Fishback, P., 2017. “How Successful Was the New Deal? The Microeconomic Impact of New Deal Spending and Lending Policies in the 1930s.” *Journal of Economic Literature*, 55 (4), pp. 1435-85.
- **May 2: Dust Bowl**
 - Hansen, Z. and Libecap, G., 2004. “Small farms, externalities, and the Dust Bowl of the 1930s.” *Journal of Political Economy*, 112(3), 1-30.
- **May 7: Great Migration**
 - Black, D. et al., 2015. “The Impact of the Great Migration on Mortality of African Americans: Evidence from the Deep South.” *American Economic Review*, 105(2), pp. 477–503.
- **May 9: WWII**
 - Gross, D. and Sampat, B., 2023. “America, Jump-Started: World War II R&D and the Takeoff of the US Innovation System.” *American Economic Review*, 113(12), pp. 3323–3356.
- **May 14: Civil Rights**
 - Cascio, E., and Washington, E., 2014. “Valuing the Vote: The Redistribution of Voting Rights and State Funds following the Voting Rights Act of 1965.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 129(1), pp. 379–433.
- **May 16: Great Society + Assignment 2 due at 11:59PM**
 - Goodman-Bacon, A., 2018. “Public Insurance and Mortality: Evidence from Medicaid Implementation.” *Journal of Political Economy*, 126(1), pp. 1-47.
- **May 21: Women’s Rights**
 - Bailey, M., 2010. ““Momma’s Got the Pill”: How Anthony Comstock and *Griswold v. Connecticut* Shaped US Childbearing.” *American Economic Review*, 100(1), pp. 98-129.

- **May 23:** Intergenerational Mobility

- Chetty, R. et al., 2014. “Is the United States Still a Land of Opportunity? Recent Trends in Intergenerational Mobility.” *American Economic Review*, 104(5), pp. 1-36.

- **June 3:** Final exam at university scheduled time/location