

Econ 214 Topics in European Economic History

Fall 2000

TTh 2:40–3:55

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In this class we will learn both economics and history. The tools of economics will help us to understand history, and the events of history will help us to understand economic processes, and may lead us to revise economic theories. Economic history allows us to find out what happens when we can no longer hang on to those simplifying assumptions that economists hold so dear. Economic history is about paying attention to institutions. History can help us understand our world if we ask it the right questions.

This class is not organized chronologically. I could never hope to teach a complete economic history of Europe in a semester, and I'd rather teach you a few things in more depth than many things superficially. Don't expect to cover everything. I specifically stayed away from textbooks because they are too boring for me to read. Instead, I have focused on four topics: the extent of the market, the Industrial Revolution, demography, and the gold standard.

Most people think of history as the learning of facts. But facts by themselves are just trivia. Facts become interesting when we use them to evaluate some claim that is interesting to us.

Facts are statements that, for the purpose of this class, are not disputable. Example: "The spinning mule was invented in 1779." While every statement is in principle disputable, you do not have the tools to challenge the facts.

Claims, however, are conclusions based on argument and fact. Example: "There was no agricultural revolution during the Industrial Revolution." Claims are disputable, and one of the things you will learn is how to make arguments that support or refute such claims.

I have tried to focus this class on claims. You will encounter claims made by others, and you will have to evaluate those claims in class discussion, in tests, and in papers. You will formulate claims of your own. This doesn't mean that fact are irrelevant; facts are essential because they provide evidence that will support or refute the claims we analyze.

Evaluation

You are expected to come to class having read and thought about the assigned text. Be ready to participate in discussion. The quality of the class depends on your contributions.

Your grade for this course will be divided among the following items:

Midterm	20%
Final	25%
Essay	15%
Research paper	25%
Homework and participation	15%

Writing Assignments

Essay

Write a 4–6 page essay on the following question: "Was Polanyi right or wrong?"

Research paper

Write a 10–12 page paper. Choose one of the following types of papers:

1. A literature review on any topic related to European Economic History. What have economists and historians written about this topic? Are there disagreements? Give your evaluation of the literature. I expect most people to choose this option.
2. A report on original work with primary sources. This option is for students who want to do some real historical research. If you choose this option, be prepared to spend a good deal of time with your source. Since primary sources from European history are not readily available at Wabash, you will have to work with one of the sources that is available. The list below gives the sources available and some possible topics.

Possible primary sources for research paper:

A. Parish registers from Shipton Moyne, Glou. or Long Newton, Wilts.

Information available:

- Baptism, marriage, burial records
- Occupations and literacy (signature ability) also available

Possible topics:

- Demography: Family structure/fertility
- Literacy rates

B. Farm accounts from Britain (Derbyshire farm, 1772–5 and 1831–48, or Gloucestershire farm, 1800–1850)

Information available:

- Wage accounts: payments to each worker, days worked and wage rate, some information on occupation/task
- Sales of farm output
- Household accounts

Possible topics:

- Employment by gender, season of the year
- Wages by gender, season of the year
- Prices or composition of farm output
- Consumption patterns of the household

C. London Times (1785–97, 1810–16, 1859–1946)

Information available:

- General news
- Advertisements (some include salaries, mainly for servants)
- Prices for gold, grains, coal, some stocks
- Bankruptcy reports

Possible topics:

- Any topic that would show up in the news would work. You might

try:

Labor unrest (Luddites, strikes)

Public policy issues such as poor laws and international trade

- Track prices for different goods over time
- Track wages over time; compare wages of different occupations

D. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 1830–1891 (on microcard – hard to read)

Information available:

Transcript of debates in parliament

Possible topics:

Report on the debate on an economic policy such as

- Corn Laws
- Ten Hours Bill
- Poor Laws

Readings

The following books are available at the bookstore:

Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1957.

Joel Mokyr, *The Lever of Riches: Technological Creativity and Economic Progress*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, New York: Vintage Books, 1966.

Massimo Livi-Bacci, *A Concise History of World Population*, trans. Carl Ipsen, Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992.

Barry Eichengreen, *Globalizing Capital: A History of the International Monetary System*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996

There is also a readings packet which will be available in the bookstore soon. The rest of the readings for this class are either included in the readings packet or available on JSTOR.

Outline

I. What Was the Role of Markets in History?

Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1957, Ch. 1–6, 12–13

D. N. McCloskey, "Polanyi was Right, and Wrong," *Eastern Economic Journal*, Fall 1997, 23(4):483–487

E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present*, Feb. 1971, 50: 76–136

Donald Woodward, "The Determination of Wage Rates in the Early Modern North of England," *Economic History Review*, Feb. 1994, XLVII(1): 22–43

II. Industrial Revolution

A. Why are some countries so rich and some so poor? Determinants of Technological Change

Joel Mokyr, *The Lever of Riches: Technological Creativity and Economic Progress*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Ben Rogge, *The Industrial Revolution* (video), Part I and II

Douglass North and Barry Weingast, "Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England," *Journal of Economic History*, Dec. 1989, XLIX:803–832. [JStor]

N.F.R. Crafts, "Industrial Revolution in England and France: Some Thoughts on the Question 'Why Was England First?'" *Economic History Review*, Aug. 1977, 30:421–41

Rondo Cameron, "La Revolution Industrielle Manquee," *Social Science History*, Winter 1990, 14:559–565.

B. What effect did the Industrial Revolution have on the standard of living?

First Report of the Central Board of His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Employment of Children in Factories, 1833 (vol. XX), pp. 1–32.

E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, New York: Vintage Books, 1966, Ch. 8 and 14, sec. iv–vi (pp. 234–68, 521–602).

Jane Humphries, "Enclosures, Common Rights, and Women: The Proleterianization of Families in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of Economic History*, March 1990, 50:17–42. [JStor]

Frederick Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1926, pp. 23–61, 95–114

E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, New York: Vintage Books, 1966, pp. 207–212.

Ben Rogge, *The Industrial Revolution* (video), Part III

Charles Feinstein, "Pessimism Perpetuated: Real Wages and the Standard of Living in Britain during and after the Industrial Revolution," *Journal of Economic History*, Sept. 1998, 58(3):625–658

III. Demography and Social Policy: Should we worry about population growth?

- Massimo Livi-Bacci, *A Concise History of World Population*, trans. Carl Ipsen, Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992, Ch. 1–4
- Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. New York: Macmillan, 1895, pp. 1–8, 24–38.
- Peter Solar, "Poor Relief and English Economic Development: Development before the Industrial Revolution," *Economic History Review*, Feb. 1995, 48:1–22
- Steve King, "Poor Relief and English Economic Development Reappraised," *Economic History Review*, May 1997, L(2): 360–368
- Peter Solar, "Poor Relief and English Economic Development: A Renewed Plea for Comparative History," *Economic History Review*, May 1997, L: 369–374

IV. Was the gold standard a good institution?

- Barry Eichengreen, *Globalizing Capital: A History of the International Monetary System*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996

Date	Assignments	Topic	Reading
Aug. 24		Introduction	
29		Discuss Polanyi	Polanyi, Ch. 1–6, 12–13
31		More Polanyi; Medieval Institutions	McCloskey
Sept. 5		Protest	Thompson, "Moral Economy"
7		Wages	Woodward
12		Free trade in the 19th century	
14		Industrial Revolution: intro	Mokyr, Ch. 1–4
19		Technology; Demonstration by Wendy Feller	Mokyr, Ch. 5–6
21	Essay	Geography; video	
26		Discuss Mokyr	Mokyr, Ch. 7–12
28		Why England?; video	Crafts
Oct. 3	Topic for paper	Why England?	North and Weingast
5		Was it really a revolution?	Cameroon
10	Midterm		
12	Break		
17		Labor	Report on Employment of Children in Factories
19		Luddites	Thompson, pp. 234–68, 521–602
24		Agricultural workers	Humphries, Thompson Ch. 7
26		Standard of Living; video	Engels, Thompson pp. 207–212
31		Standard of Living	Feinstein
Nov. 2	Bibliography	Demography	
7		Demography	Livi-Bacci, Ch. 1–2
9		Demographic Transition	Livi-Bacci, Ch. 3–4
14		Discuss Malthus , etc.	Malthus
16		Poor Laws	Solar, response, and reply
21–23	Thanksgiving		
28	First Draft	Gold Standard	Eichengreen Ch. 2
30		Inflation	
Dec. 5		Great Depression	Eichengreen Ch. 3
7		Bretton Woods	Eichengreen Ch. 4
8	Paper Due		
14	Final Exam		