
⌘ Harvard University • Economics 1357 ⌘
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON AMERICAN ECONOMIC ASCENDANCY
Spring 2003 • Monday, Wednesday 1:00pm to 2:30pm • Sever 102
Professor Claudia Goldin • TFs: Ms. Carola Frydman and Ms. Abigail Waggoner
The Research Paper Handout

The paper for Economics 1357 is intended to be a thought-provoking research project. It will count for about one-third of your grade. You must begin working on the paper *early* in the semester. The hardest part of writing a paper is finding a suitable topic. Ms. Abigail Waggoner (the TF in charge of the Research Paper project) and Prof. Goldin have set up a schedule (see below) to ensure that you write a rewarding paper. A list of subject areas selected by past students in Economics 1357 can be found at the end of this Handout.

1. *Deadlines*

On or before 5pm, March 19 at Littauer 217 (or in class by March 17th) you must submit a prospectus to Ms. Abigail Waggoner that includes: your topic, the question you intend to investigate, and the primary source(s) you will be using. (A helpful handout regarding this assignment will be distributed in class on March 5.) Short conferences will be set up to help you with your proposal. On or before the April 21st class you must give Ms. Waggoner a rough draft of your paper. (A helpful handout regarding this assignment will be distributed in class on April 9.) The draft can be a few pages of text or an outline. You will receive a grade of “acceptable” or “unacceptable” on this assignment.

The final research paper is to be approximately *15 pages* (generally including tables, figures, graphs, maps, footnotes, appendices, and references, typed double-spaced using one-inch margins). The paper must be given to Ms. Waggoner in Littauer 217 no later than 5pm on **Friday, May 9**. Late papers will receive harsh penalties of a third of a letter grade (i.e., B+ becomes B) for each two days late, prorated by each day. Do not plan to hand in a late paper; back-up all files on your computer. Late papers must be submitted directly to Ms. Waggoner, or to a member of the TEAM office (1st floor Littauer) and signed in.

Summary of Deadlines:

March 19: Research Paper prospectus due at Littauer 217 or in class by March 17.

April 21: Research Paper draft/Outline due in class

May 9: Research Paper Due by 5pm in Littauer 217

Also:

[March 5: you receive helpful handout on the prospectus assignment]

[April 9: you receive helpful handout on the draft/outline assignment]

2. *Primary Sources*

At least *one primary source* must be an important and integral part of your research and your paper (generally more than one source will be used). This part of the project creates the most confusion and it is imperative that you understand what a primary source is and is not.

The paper is *not* to be a literature review, but must contain an original and creative addition of your own. There are a wide variety of primary sources. The most obvious are those containing

data (e.g., census material), but your primary sources do not have to be statistical. Many primary sources (e.g., newspapers, diaries, Congressional hearings) can be used for qualitative, narrative, and factual evidence. Although it is not possible to construct an exhaustive list of primary sources, it is easy to describe what is *not* a primary source. Textbooks and most secondary references, even if they contain data from a primary source, are *not* primary sources. A primary source (according to the Harvard University guide to writing) is one that has “not been interpreted.” Using a primary source will give you the experience of constructing history from the remnants of the past. You must *note the primary source(s) in the bibliography* to your paper.

Primary sources include: the federal censuses of the United States (e.g., population, manufactures, agriculture, social statistics), reports and bulletins of the Department of Labor and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, reports of the state bureaus of labor statistics, Montgomery Ward and Sears catalogues (e.g., for price data), newspapers, and firm records, among many others. The best way to become acquainted with historical statistics and with thousands of primary sources is to consult the 2 volumes of U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States from Colonial Times to 1970* (1975). These volumes contain statistical data on virtually every subject covered in the course including population, prices, national income, employment, wages, hours, union membership, fertility, and mortality. **Note, however, that *Historical Statistics and the Statistical Abstract* cannot be your sole primary sources.** They will lead you to primary sources. Primary sources also include a wide variety of documents that bear on domestic and foreign policy, household and consumer behavior, firm behavior, and the like. There are, for example, the voting records of the House and Senate (from the *Congressional Record*), novels, diaries, letters of influential people, cookbooks, plantation records, among many others. Primary sources of many types can be found in Widener, Littauer, Lamont-Government Documents, Baker, Gutman, Schlesinger, and the Law School libraries. The Government Documents section of Widener (housed in the basement of Lamont) contains all of the federal population censuses, the *Congressional Record*, and countless other primary sources. The basement of Littauer contains the Bulletins of the Department of Labor, many of the state bureau of labor statistics volumes, and so on. If you have questions about what constitutes a primary source, please ask one of us.

3. Some Guidelines

Your first task is to select a topic. Next, read the secondary literature on the topic. Only then will you know what your question is and which primary sources will help you answer it. The biggest mistake that students make is not to consult secondary sources to narrow their topic. Secondary sources, in addition, will guide you to the most relevant primary sources. Another error is not writing a history paper. NAFTA is not history; but placing NAFTA in the context of long-term change in tariff policy could be history. If you have a question about what constitutes a history paper, please ask one of us.

Whatever topic you choose and whatever your methodology, the paper must be written well and must use a research-paper style and format. You should consult one of the many style handbooks (the University of Chicago’s famous *Manual of Style* is an obvious choice). Remember that you must write and rewrite, and then rewrite again. You will not get a good grade on a paper that has just emerged from your word processor. If you are uncertain concerning what constitutes plagiarism, please consult the Harvard University guide to writing or ask one of the course staff members. Plagiarism is often unintentional. Footnote and reference your sources properly.

The following procedure will guarantee a doable project:

- *pick a general subject* of interest to you and of relevance to Ec1357 or to U.S. economic history in general (e.g., educational history of the U.S.);
- *read the most relevant of the secondary literature (and compile a bibliography)* by searching HOLLIS and EconLit (or other search engines) using keywords;
- *narrow the topic* so that it is manageable (e.g., the politics of high school expansion in New York City from 1900 to 1930: the roles of geography and curriculum);
- *frame the topic as a question* (e.g., how did interest groups in New York City alter the geographic placement of high schools and their curriculum during the period of high school expansion?)
- *find relevant primary source(s)* (e.g., Commissioner of Education reports; New York State reports of the superintendent of education — all at Gutman Education Library)

You *must* include the following in your paper (failure to do so will result in a lower grade):

- bibliography of cited sources;
- the primary source(s) you use identified in your bibliography by noting underneath the citation(s) “Primary Source.” Note: Your sole primary source *cannot* be *Historical Statistics* or the *Statistical Abstract* although you can use these volumes to locate a primary source;
- all tables, graphs, figures, maps, and so on must be properly documented and capable of being replicated. The sources and notes must be written on the same page as the table or graph and must enable the reader to locate the necessary information to replicate it, if need be.

4. *Some questions posed and subjects explored by previous students in Economics 1357, arranged by general subject matter. Note that the authors considerably narrowed the scope of the inquiry.*

Education:

- Community colleges since the 1920s: did they democratize or divert students from four-year colleges?
- Detroit elementary schools in the 1910s and 1920s: how did they respond to growing demand for industrial workers?
- The Harvard Extension School: how did the increased demand for high school teachers lead to its creation?
- Public versus private institutions of higher education: Why do some states give greater financial support to students in public universities than do others?

Labor economics:

- The blue-collar occupations and earnings of women in male-dominated manufacturing industries c.1900: What were they?
- Propaganda during World War II: What was its role in the increase of women and teenagers in the labor force?
- Rosie the Riveter: Was Rosie a revolutionary role model or a home-front housewife?
- How did African-American iron and steel workers in Birmingham in the early 20th century learn their craft?

Migration, immigration, and ethnic studies:

- Migration from the dustbowl in the 1930s: What was its impact on the California economy?
- How different were the skills of first generation Irish relative to second generation Irish c. 1900?
- What factors led to the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882? An analysis of

Congressional votes

- Why did the Great Migration of African-Americans to the North occur when it did?
- How did ethnic enclaves grow and what evidence is there for “chain migration”?
- Did the native-born in the United States respond to immigration by moving to areas of lower immigrant intensity in the 1910s?

Demography:

- How did black and white southern fertility rates change after Emancipation?
- How did the age at first marriage change as women’s market work opportunities were enhanced from 1920 to 1980?

Regional growth and urban economics:

- The California economy before Silicon Valley: why did California grow rapidly in the 1950s?
- What was the role of the minimum wage in the economic convergence of the South and the North from 1940 to 1960?
- What was the impact of urbanization on the spread of tuberculosis in the late 19th century?
- What caused the switch from private to public ownership of Boston’s subways and elevated trains?
- Arsenals of Growth. How did military installations affect employment in California, 1939 to 1947?
- Ghost towns. Why did some California towns grow and others disappear after the Gold Rush?

Business history and industry studies:

- How did United Fruit Inc. maintain its monopoly in the early 20th century?
- The American Ice Trust: How could the production and sale of “ice” be monopolized and how was the monopoly broken?
- The rise of General Motors versus Ford and the creation of oligopoly in automobiles: What was GM’s new advantage?
- How did Swift & Co. become a giant in meat-packing — the role of vertical integration
- The steel industry in the United States: What accounts for its decline and when did it decline?
- Vertical integration of U.S. Steel and iron ore mines: Was integration for efficiency or monopoly reasons?
- Deregulation of the airlines: How did the most important airline regulations evolve and what were their efficiency effects?

Technological change:

- Electricity and manufacturing: a cross-sectional analysis of the impact of electricity on manufacturing productivity.
- The First Technological Revolution in the Office—computing before computers. How did early calculators change the market for office personnel and the office?

Political economy:

- Why were agricultural price supports adopted in 1933 and why did they last for decades—insights from a comparison of the United States and France.
- How did the adoption of withholding and pay-as-you-go income tax affect the federal government’s ability to collect revenue and raise taxes since the 1940s?
- What was the role of enforcement on the repeal of Prohibition?