Advanced Economic History  
Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München  
Winter term 2012/2013

Instructor

Davide Cantoni; email: cantoni@lmu.de.
Office hours: Friday, 11:00. Other good chances to talk: after classes and by appointment.

Meeting times and locations

Lectures: Thursdays, 8:30–11:45 (s.t., with a break). Room: Ludwigstr. 33, Room 442 (Library of the Seminar für Wirtschaftsgeschichte). There will be no class on Nov 1 (holiday) and on Nov 22.

Discussion classes: Fridays, 16:00–18:00 (s.t.). Room: Ludwigstr. 33, Room 442.
Attendance of discussion classes is compulsory.

Course Overview

This course aims to explain the very long run trends in economic history. The two main questions that underlie the classes will be: (1) why are our societies so much more productive/rich than our ancestors’ ones? and (2) why are there such large differences in income levels across societies today? To investigate these questions, we will look for the explanatory power of various factors, such as geography, technology, institutions, and culture, trying to isolate fundamental determinants from proximate ones. As put by North and Thomas in 1973: “The factors we have listed (innovation, economies of scale, education, capital accumulation etc.) are not causes of growth; they are growth”—instead, causes of growth will be the focus of this class.

As such, this class is highly complementary to any courses or readings you might do in economic growth, economic development, or political economy. Moreover, the focus of this class will be on reading and discussing research papers with a strongly empirical focus; it will thus be complementary to the (micro)econometrics classes in the program and should be viewed as good preparation to one’s own writing of applied research papers.

Course Requirements

The prerequisites for the course are some basic macroeconomics and econometrics, which I trust you to have from the other courses in the Master’s program/the MGSE. If you feel uncomfortable with your knowledge in growth theory, I would suggest that you have a read of the
textbooks by Chad Jones (*Introduction to Economic Growth*), Philippe Aghion and Peter Howitt (*The Economics of Growth*), or Daron Acemoglu (*Introduction to Modern Economic Growth*). If you feel uncomfortable with your econometric knowledge, you should consult Joshua Angrist’s and Jörn-Steffen Pischke’s *Mostly Harmless Econometrics*.

As for the final grade, it will be composed of two parts:

- Research paper or final exam (50%): M.Sc. students will have to take the final exam. The final exam will cover all topics discussed in class, including the discussion classes. In particular, you should be well-acquainted with the starred (*) items on the reading list. Ph.D. students will have the choice to take either a final exam or to write a short research paper. The paper should, at a minimum, delineate a research topic by providing a concise overview of the literature in that field and work out an idea which would contribute to that field. Some independent data work is strongly encouraged. Alternatively, theoretical contributions are also welcome. A major element will be finding a suitable topic, which needs to be discussed beforehand with the instructor—you should definitely be in touch with me about your ideas during the course of the term.

- Paper presentation (50%). The grade for this part is given by your contribution to the discussion classes on Fridays. The discussion classes will be structured as follows: every week, one student is responsible for preparing one paper as “discussion leader” (list of papers attached). These papers will be recent working papers, mostly unpublished, that relate to the topics presented in the lectures. Everyone is supposed have thoroughly read these papers before the discussion class, and to contribute to the discussion. The week’s “discussion leader” is supposed to introduce the paper with a 15 minutes’ presentation (which will determine the grade), and thereafter lead the discussion and make sure that a lively debate ensues.

**(Tentative) Syllabus**

**Week 1 (Oct 18): Introduction**


**Week 2 (Oct 25): The Very Long Run (Geographic determinants); The Neolithic Revolution**


**Weeks 3–4 (Nov 8, Nov 15): Malthusianism**


**Weeks 4-5 (Nov 15, Nov 29): Exit from Malthusianism, (Unified) Growth Theories**


**Week 6 (Dec 6): Natural Selection and Economic Growth; Review of Malthusianism and Unified Growth Theory**


**Week 7 (Dec 13): The Industrial Revolution**


Weeks 8–9 (Dec 20, Jan 10): Institutions (I)


Weeks 10–11 (Jan 17, Jan 24): European and Colonial Institutions (II)


**Week 12 (Jan 31): Religion**


**Weeks 12–13 (Jan 31, Feb 7): Culture**


Papers for discussion classes


