Course Description: This course examines selected topics in the economic development of the U.S. economy. The goals are to review some major themes in U.S. economic history, to examine professional research papers in detail to learn about methods and data, and to encourage students to undertake original and independent research projects. Major themes include: the performance of the economy in long-run and international perspective; migration flows to and within the US; slavery and African-American economic progress since emancipation; transportation and industrialization; the Great Depression; and long-run changes in education, income, and urbanization. Because this is an upper-level economics course, I assume students are familiar with intermediate microeconomic theory (Econ 231), intermediate macroeconomic theory (Econ 232), and with basic principles of regression analysis and statistics.

Course Requirements: Students must complete: two problem sets, a term paper proposal, a term paper that consists of original research, and two exams (midterm and final). The problem sets and term paper proposal each count for 5 percent of the course grade. The midterm and the term paper each count for 25 percent of the course grade. The exam count is as follows: midterm 35 percent, final 35 percent. (The final counts for more than the midterm because it covers more material.) There is no extra credit.

Problem Sets: Two problem sets that are assigned early in the semester will give students experience analyzing micro-level census datasets using Stata (software), which is available on the computers in the Garland Computer Lab. Basic instructions for using Stata are provided.

Term Paper: Each student must write a research paper (approximately 15 pages). The paper is intended to give students experience doing original research in economic history. The paper should not be a review or synthesis of existing literature; the assignment requires independent and original research, analysis, and writing. The term paper is on a topic of the student's choice, subject to the professor's approval. The topic must be historical, must involve economics, and must use primary sources. Specific guidelines will be distributed and discussed in class. Students must submit research paper ideas on September 29 (approx. two pages). The final paper is due on December 8 in class or before. This deadline is firm; extensions are not granted; plan accordingly.

Exams: A midterm exam is scheduled for October 6. The final exam is scheduled for December 13 at 3 p.m. There is no alternate exam date. Everyone must take the exams at the scheduled time. If you must be absent from an exam for medical reasons, please email Professor Collins ahead of time if possible.

Readings: Readings on the syllabus are broken into two main categories: “Background” and “Research.”

- Some of the “Background” readings are “assigned” and marked with an asterisk (*). Students are expected to do the assigned background readings. The background reading list also includes some useful but non-mandatory readings. A New Economic View of American History by Atack and Passell is the primary textbook. It is a useful reference but is definitely not a substitute for attending lectures.
- “Research” readings include papers that we are likely to discuss in detail in class. These are typically professional research papers and therefore take considerably more effort to read than the textbook. Students are expected to read carefully at least one professional research paper on each topic.
- Many of the readings are available on the OAK webpage. Check under “Assignments.” Tell the TA if you have any difficulty getting the readings.

Office Hours: Professor Collins holds regular office hours on Monday afternoon from 1 to 3 (Calhoun 410) and by appointment. Greg Niemesh is primarily TAing a different class, but he will provide some assistance on the research paper assignment.

Honor Code: Students must adhere to Vanderbilt’s Honor Code. Be vigilant in the use and citation of others’ work when writing the term paper.
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Course Outline and Reading Assignments

Students are expected to read all “background” readings that are marked with an asterisk (*) and at least one of the research papers under each topic. “A & P” is for Attack and Passell. I might make some minor changes to the list as the semester unfolds. For required readings (aside A&P) and research papers check the OAK website.

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We’ll discuss regressions, causal inference, decompositions, production functions, and other tools of empirical analysis that are commonly used in economic history.

**Background Reading**

- Collins, “Notes on Empirical Tools for Economic History” and “Using Stata for Economics 266.” To be distributed in class.

**Research Papers**


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**Topic 2 (September 6—10): Long-Run, International Perspectives on the US Economic Growth**

**Background Reading**


**Research Papers**


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**Topic 3 (September 13—17): Slavery, the South, and Civil War**

**Background Reading**

- *A & P: Chapter 14: The South after the Civil War, pp. 376-401.

**Research Papers**

Topic 4 (September 20—September 29): Immigration and Internal Migration

Background Reading

Research Papers

Topic 5 (October 4—8): Demographic Change

Note: Midterm is on October 6.

Background Reading

Research Paper

Topic 6 (October 11—13): Transportation

Note: Fall break is on October 15, and we will not meet on October 18.

Background Reading

Research Papers

**Topic 7 (October 20—October 22): Industrialization**

**Background Reading**


**Research Paper**

**Topic 8 (October 25—October 29): The Great Depression**

**Background Reading**

**Research Papers**

**Topic 9 (November 1—November 5): World War II and Housing**

**Background Reading**

**Research Papers**
Collins and Margo, “Home Ownership in Historical Perspective.” Working paper 2010. [Will be made available before class.]
Topic 10 (November 8—12): Education

Background Reading

Research Papers

Topic 11 (November 15—November 19): Wage and Income Inequality

Background Reading

Research Papers

Topic 12 (November 29—December 3): Race and Gender in the Labor Market

Background Reading

Research Papers

Topic 13 (December 6—December 8): Cities in the Post-WWII Era

Background Reading

Research Papers