Economic History and Economic Culture of the Early Modern Atlantic World, 1500-1800

History 280U, Spring 2012
Professor Jan de Vries and Professor Mark Peterson
Tuesdays, 10-12, 205 Wheeler Hall

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Course Description
This course explores the development of European economies and the creation of new Atlantic economic systems during the era of European contact with and expansion into the “new worlds” of sub-Saharan Africa and the Americas. In doing so, it also attends to distinctive features of economic life emerging in this era – new theories of political economy, experiments in monetary systems and credit networks, radical new forms of slavery and labor commodification, the rise of cultures of consumption – that helped to create the modern world. It is intended for graduate students in history and related disciplines, working in any relevant geographical areas, whose interests pertain to this subject.

Readings
The Calendar of Meetings and Assignments, below, lists the assigned reading for each week. Each set of readings is to be completed in advance of the assigned date on which we will discuss it in class. The following list includes the books that may be worth purchasing, as we will be reading them in their entirety, or nearly so. These books have been ordered at the bookstore and placed on reserve. Additional readings listed within the assignments for each week will be scanned and made available on the course’s bSpace website. All students enrolled in
the course should automatically have access to the website, but let us know if you encounter any problems with it.

Albert Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before its Triumph*

Malyn Newitt, *A History of Portuguese Overseas Expansion, 1400-1688*

Stanley J. Stein and Barbara H. Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War: Spain and America in the Making of Early Modern Europe*

David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*

Judith Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas*

Elvira Vilches, *New World Gold: Cultural Anxiety and Monetary Disorder in Early Modern Spain*

David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community*

Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present*

Nuala Zahedieh, *The Capital and the Colonies: London and the Atlantic Economy, 1660-1700*

Regina Grafe, *Distant Tyranny: Markets, Power, and Backwardness in Spain, 1650-1800*

Thomas Truxes, *Defying Empire: Trading with the Enemy in Colonial New York*

Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade, and the British Economy*

**Written Assignments**

There are two options for completing the written work for this course.

For students more interested in surveying the field, perhaps in preparation for a qualifying exam, then your best option may be to write three papers, of 7-10 pages each, one for each of the three main sections of the course listed below on the calendar of assignments. These papers will aim to be something like surveys of the literature, focusing on prominent themes or questions that arise from the readings in each section.
For students with a stronger interest in pursuing a particular line of inquiry, perhaps in preparation for a research seminar or a dissertation project, then your best option may be to write the first of three short papers described above, but then for a second (and final) paper of 15-20 pages, focus more narrowly on the topic or question that interests you and explore that subject in greater depth.

Due dates for papers in both options are listed below.

**Calendar of Meetings and Assignments**

Note: The readings for our first meeting on January 17 should be completed in advance of the meeting, so that we can begin substantive discussions immediately.

**Week 1, January 17. Introduction**


**Part I – The Big Picture: Assembling Atlantic Economies**

**Week 2, January 24. Portugal Takes the Lead . . .**


Chapters:


**Week 3, January 31. . . and Spain Follows**


**Week 4, February 7. Northern Variations on the Iberian Models**


Week 5, February 14. Slavery, the Plantation Complex, and the Atlantic Economies


Paper #1 for both options is due on Friday, February 17, at 5:00 PM

Part II, Means of Production, Exchange, and Consumption

Week 6, February 21. Production in Colonial Contexts


Chapters:


Week 7, February 28. Migration, Labor, and Mobility


Week 8, March 6. Money

Elvira Vilches, *New World Gold: Cultural Anxiety and Monetary Disorder in Early Modern Spain* (Chicago, 2010), 1-209.


Week 9, March 13. The Organization and Disorganization of Long-Distance Commerce

David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community* (Cambridge, 1997), 1-278.


**Paper #2 for Option 1 is due on Friday, March 23, at 5:00 PM**

Spring Recess, March 26-30

Part III. Political Economy

Week 11, April 3. Commercial Power and the Rise of Britain


**Week 12, April 10. Commercial Power and Spain’s Decline**


Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, “Revisiting 1640; or, how the party of commercial expansion lost to the party of political conservation in Spain’s Atlantic Empire, 1620-1650,” in Coclanis, ed., *The Atlantic Economy*, pp. 152-185.

Wim Klooster, *Illicit Riches*, Ch. 8, Spain’s Fight Against Contraband,” 141-172.

**Week 13, April 17. The Meaning and Practice of Commerce in a World at War**


**Week 14, April 24. Slavery and Europe’s Economic Ascendancy**


*Paper #3 for Option 1, or Paper #2 for Option 2, is due on Friday, May 4, at 5:00 PM*