

# AMERICAN ECONOMIC HISTORY BEFORE 1900

ECO 326

FALL 2012

T TH 12:45–2:05 IN MAHAR 102

LAST REVISED ON 27 AUGUST 2012

In this course you will gain a fuller understanding of America today by exploring its economic and social development from pre-colonial times to the turn of the twentieth century. In the span of just over a century, between the American Revolution and the year 1900, the USA became the world's leading economic power; our foremost task will be to try to explain how. We will study the people and institutions behind American economic development, as well as economic aspects and interpretations of historical phenomena such as the American Revolution, slavery, the Civil War, and nationalism. We will gain insight into these issues by studying them in depth from the dual perspectives of economics and history. Since this is an upper-level expository writing class, you will have ample opportunity to improve your writing.

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The ANGEL site for this course contains links to nearly all of the outside readings, my lecture outlines, course announcements, and more. You will want to check it at least a few times a week.

There is a separate course website that includes additional links, which may be useful for assignments. <http://www.oswego.edu/~dighe/aeh1.htm>  
(It also has a link to the ANGEL login.)

*The business of America is business.*

– President Calvin Coolidge

*For every complex problem there is an answer that is clear, simple, and wrong.*

— H. L. Mencken

*Good questions outrank easy answers.*

— Paul Samuelson

*When the truth is different from the legend, print the legend.*

– from “The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance”

(John Ford movie, 1962; paraphrase)

## Required texts

- Roger LeRoy Miller & Robert L. Sexton. *Issues in American Economic History*. Mason, OH: Thomson South-Western, 2005.
- James W. Loewen. *Lies My Teacher Told Me*. New York: Touchstone, 2007. (Other editions are fine, too.)
- Diana Hacker & Nancy Sommers. *Rules for Writers*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Bedford / St. Martin's, 2012. (Hopefully you already have this. Earlier or later editions are fine, too.)
- (The other required readings will be available through the course page on ANGEL.)

## Optional text that I cannot recommend strongly enough

William Strunk, Jr., & E.B. White. *The Elements of Style*. Any edition. This slim, inexpensive paperback is packed with valuable insight about writing, from basic to advanced. It's the best-known book about writing, and for good reason: it's quick and painless to read, and it will almost surely improve your writing.

**Prerequisites:** ECO 101 (introductory microeconomics) and ECO 200 (introductory macroeconomics); also, ENG 102 (Composition II) or ENG 204 (Writing About Literature) or passage of exemption examination.

Students who have a disability that might interfere with their ability to complete this course successfully are encouraged to speak, confidentially, to me and to contact the Office of Disability Services.

**Learning objectives:** Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- apply concepts such as scarcity, tradeoffs, and economic rents to historical phenomena;
- sketch the early evolution of the U.S. economy and relate it to political, social, and cultural developments;
- identify changes in the economic status of women, African-Americans, and blue-collar workers over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and give likely reasons for those changes;
- provide plausible explanations of America=s emergence as one of the world=s top industrial powers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century;
- provide plausible explanations of America=s changing relations with other nations, including Mexico, Canada, the American Indian nations, and the major powers of Europe;
- compare and contrast the methodologies of economic historians and traditional historians.

### Assessment

Since this course is an expository writing class, (short) papers and exam essay questions will constitute an important part of your grade, and the clarity of your writing will have some bearing on how they are graded. Your course score will be a weighted average of the following:

Short research paper			30%
	Preliminaries: Topic paper (3%), Data appendix (2%), Sample pages and outline (5%)	10%	
	First draft (6-7 pages, 11-point font)	10%	
	Final draft (6-7 pages, 11-point font)	10%	
Discussion and preparation			60%
	Weekly discussion-preparation papers (two or three solid paragraphs each, to be submitted via ANGEL, beginning Sept. 4)	30%	
	Weekly one-sentence summaries (to be submitted in class, beginning Sept. 4)	20%	
	Class participation, including trailing comments and questions on the ANGEL bulletin board	10%	
Midterm exam			10%
<i>Final exam (optional)</i>			<i>10%</i>

The grading scale is basically the standard one:

92.5-100% A;	90-92.4% A-;	87.5%-89.9% B+;	82.5-87.4% B;	80-82.4% B-;
77.5-79.9% C+;	72.5-77.4% C;	70-72.4 C-;	67-69.9% D+;	63-66.9% D;
60-62.9% D-;	0-59.5% E.			

**Short research paper:** See handout, “Guidelines for Short Research Papers”

**Discussion and preparation:**

- **Prep papers:** Each week you will write a discussion “prep” paper, containing questions and comments regarding all of the assigned readings for the current week. Each week’s prep paper is due before the start of class on Tuesday and will be submitted online via ANGEL. These should be written as coherent short papers with two or three paragraphs and an interesting title. About 300 words ought to do it. Keeping in mind that the purpose of these papers is to spark discussion, try to write about things you find interesting or which spark your curiosity. The prep paper should *not* contain much summary.
- **One-sentence summaries:** Each week you will write one-sentence summaries, covering *all* of the readings for the current week. (Ex.: If there are three readings, you should write three sentences, one for each reading.) Each set of summaries is due at the start of class on Tuesday, typed and printed. These are separate from the prep papers. They are designed to sharpen your reading-comprehension and writing skills and further prepare you for class discussion. Be sure to include the authors’ name and the reading’s title with each summary, so that it’s clear which reading is being summarized.
- **Class participation:** Since this class thrives on discussion, class participation will be 10% of your final grade. Bringing your prep paper to class will help you remember what you had to say. (I will, however, weight participation a bit more heavily for people whose participation is better than their prep papers.) On a typical day we will devote about the first 30-40 minutes to discussion. I will be counting on you to initiate at least *some* of the discussion.

**Extra credit:** I don’t offer emergency extra credit, but there are some extra-credit opportunities. In Week 1 and Week 13, in which prep papers and one-sentence summaries are not required, you can do them for extra credit. Week 1’s extra credit work is due on Thurs., Aug. 30, by the start of class; Week 13’s is due by Tues., Nov. 20. I may also offer extra credit for attending certain talks or events on campus.

**Exams:** The exams will most likely be part essay, part short answer, and part multiple choice.

- The final exam is optional. If you take it, your overall course score will be a weighted average on an 110-point scale instead of a 100-point scale. (In other words, the final is not extra credit.) The scoring on the exams will be asymmetrically cumulative in that if you take both exams and do better on the final than on the midterm, your final exam score will replace your midterm score. If you do worse on the final than on the midterm, it will not be held against you.
- Make-up exams will be an option only for students who have a valid, documented excuse for missing an exam.

**The College Writing Center**

... can offer valuable help in writing and revising your papers. It is now located in Penfield Library, rooms 302 and 303. For more information, visit <http://www.oswego.edu/academics/support/OLS/wc.html> or call x2571.

**Can’t we have a little chuckle once in a while?  
Yes, but classroom etiquette is still important.**

Classroom etiquette includes arriving on time, not getting up in the middle of class, and not leaving early; keeping one’s cell phone off and not checking it; not blowing bubbles; and not having private conversations. Breaches of any of these things are distracting, disruptive, and disrespectful to me and your fellow classmates.

**Crime does not pay!**

Per College policy, students who are caught cheating on either of the exams or the research paper will have their offense reported to the college authorities. Except in rare cases that seem to require a disciplinary penalty such as suspension,

students who are caught cheating will typically receive an academic penalty. Students who are caught cheating on either exam, or on either draft of the research paper, will automatically fail the course. Students who are caught cheating on a prep paper or another item will receive a zero for the item in question, as well as zeroes for two other, equivalently weighted items (e.g., two other prep papers; think of it as a “treble damages” policy).

For a full statement of the College’s policy on Intellectual Integrity, see the College catalog, or go to [http://www.oswego.edu/administration/registrar/policy\\_text.html#cp11](http://www.oswego.edu/administration/registrar/policy_text.html#cp11)

### Course outline and schedule

Week	Dates	Coverage
1	Aug. 28, 30	<p><i>What Is American Economic History? What Is Good Economic Writing?</i></p> <p>What to read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Course syllabus (every word!)</li> <li>· Miller &amp; Sexton, chapter 1 (“Introduction”; 7 pp.)</li> <li>· Loewen, “Introduction: Something Has Gone Very Wrong” (7 pp.)</li> <li>· Kyle Wiens, “I Won’t Hire People Who Use Poor Grammar. Here’s Why,” HBR Blog Network, July 20, 2012. Internet: <a href="http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2012/07/i_wont_hire_people_who_use_poo.html">http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2012/07/i_wont_hire_people_who_use_poo.html</a></li> <li>· Hacker, “How to Use this Book and Its Web Site” (pp. xv-xxii) and sections 9, 10, 15, 16, 19, 20 (“Parallel ideas,” “Needed words,” “Variety,” “Wordy sentences,” “Sentence fragments,” “Run-on sentences”)</li> </ul> <p>OPTIONAL READING FOR THIS WEEK: Robert Whaples, “Where Is There Consensus Among American Economic Historians? The Results of a Survey on Forty Propositions,” <i>Journal of Economic History</i> 55 (1995): 139-154</p> <p>Some of this week will be devoted to a diagnostic writing test and a group writing exercise. Please bring your Hacker book to class on Thursday.</p> <p>There is no prep paper or one-sentence-summaries paper due this week, but you can earn extra credit by doing either or both. The readings to cover are those by Miller &amp; Sexton, Loewen, and Wiens. The due date is Thursday (this week only; normally the due date is Tuesday).</p>

2	Sept. 4, 6	<p><i>Early Colonization, Imperialism, and Nationalism</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Miller &amp; Sexton, pp. 51-58 of chapter 4 (“The Age of Exploration and Spanish Colonization”)</li> <li>· Miller &amp; Sexton, pp. 63-75, 78-82 of chapter 5 (“Opening Up North America”)</li> <li>· Daniel Honan, “The First Thanksgiving: Reclaiming Jamestown From the Dustbin of History,” <i>Big Think</i>, November 23, 2011. Internet: <a href="http://bigthink.com/think-tank/the-first-thanksgiving-reclaiming-jamestown-from-the-dustbin-of-history?page=all">http://bigthink.com/think-tank/the-first-thanksgiving-reclaiming-jamestown-from-the-dustbin-of-history?page=all</a></li> <li>· George Orwell, pp. 155-168 of “Notes on Nationalism” (1945 essay), from <i>Decline of the English Murder and Other Essays</i>, New York: Penguin Books, 1988</li> </ul> <p>Your first prep paper and one-sentence-summaries paper are due by the start of class on Tuesday. We will devote some of Tuesday’s class to reviewing the summaries together.</p> <p>Thurs, Sept. 6: Last day to add a class</p>
3	Sept. 11, 13	<p><i>The Colonial Economy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Edwin J. Perkins, “The Entrepreneurial Spirit in Colonial America,” originally in <i>Business History Review</i>, Spring 1989. Excerpted in <i>Major Problems in American Business History</i>, edited by Regina Lee Blaszczyk &amp; Philip B. Scranton, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006 (9 pp.)</li> <li>· Loewen, chapter 3 (“The Truth About the First Thanksgiving”; 23 pp.)</li> </ul> <p>THURS., SEPT. 13: TOPIC PAPER DUE IN CLASS</p>
4	Sept. 20	<p><i>Revolution 1</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Edwin J. Perkins, “Taxes and Politics,” chapter VII of <i>The Economy of Colonial America</i> (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980; 20 pp.)</li> <li>· Gordon S. Wood, “Origins” (chapter I of <i>The American Revolution: A History</i>, New York: The Modern Library, 2003; 22 pp.)</li> </ul> <p>Tues., Sept. 18: College on Monday class schedule → no class for us. Also the last day to drop a class.</p>
5	Sept. 25, 27	<p><i>Revolution 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Miller &amp; Sexton, pp. 76-77, 83-87 of chapter 5 (“Issue: Was England Exploiting the Colonists?”)</li> <li>· Niall Ferguson, “Civil War,” pp. 88-102 of <i>Empire</i>, New York: Allen Lane / Penguin, 2002</li> <li>· Gordon S. Wood, “American Resistance” (chapter II of <i>The American Revolution: A History</i>, 2003; 18 pp.)</li> </ul> <p>THURS., SEPT. 27: DATA APPENDIX DUE IN CLASS</p>

6	Oct. 2, 4	<p><i>Economic Life in the New Republic (I)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Miller &amp; Sexton, chapter 6 (“From Unification to Secession: Nonagricultural Development”; 18 pp.)</li> <li>· Simon Johnson &amp; James Kwak, “Immortal Credit,” chapter 1 of <i>White House Burning: The Founding Fathers, Our National Debt, and Why It Matters to You</i>. New York: Pantheon Books, 2012.</li> </ul>
7	Oct. 9, 11	<p><i>Economic Life in the New Republic (II)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Walter Licht, “Paths,” chapter 2 of <i>Industrializing America: The Nineteenth Century</i> (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995; 25 pp.)</li> <li>· John Steele Gordon, “Chaining the Lightning of Heaven,” chapter 9 of <i>An Empire of Wealth</i>, New York, HarperCollins, 2004 (14 pp.)</li> </ul> <p>THURS., OCT. 11: SAMPLE PAGES AND OUTLINE DUE IN CLASS</p>
8	Oct. 16, 18	<p><i>The Political Economy of Slavery</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Miller &amp; Sexton, chapter 7 (“Agriculture, Cotton, and National Growth”; 15 pp.)</li> <li>· Loewen, chapter 5 (“Gone With the Wind: The Invisibility of Racism in American History Textbooks”; 34 pp.)</li> </ul> <p>THURS., OCT. 18: MIDTERM</p>
9	Oct. 23, 25	<p><i>The Political Economy of the Civil War</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Miller &amp; Sexton, chapter 8 (“Secession, War, and Economic Change”; 14 pp.)</li> <li>· Loewen, chapter 6 (“John Brown and Abraham Lincoln: The Invisibility of Antiracism in American History Textbooks”; 29 pp.)</li> </ul> <p>Fri., Oct. 26: Last day of undocumented course withdrawal period</p>
10	Oct. 30, Nov. 1	<p><i>The Transportation Revolution and Westward Expansion</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Peter L. Bernstein, “The Prodigious Artery,” ch. 19 of <i>Wedding of the Waters: The Erie Canal and the Making of a Great Nation</i>, New York: W.W. Norton, 2005 (21 pp.)</li> <li>· Miller &amp; Sexton, pp. 151-162 of chapter 9 (“Peace and Renewed Progress”)</li> <li>· Walter Nugent, “Populating the Empire,” chapter 8 of <i>Habits of Empire: A History of American Expansion</i>, New York: Vintage Books, 2009 (16 pp.)</li> </ul>

11	Nov. 6, 8	<p><i>Capital and Labor</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Walter Licht, “An Industrial Heartland,” chapter 5 of <i>Industrializing America: The Nineteenth Century</i> (31 pp.)</li> <li>· David M. Kennedy, “Can We Still Afford to Be a Nation of Immigrants?” David M. Kennedy, <i>The Atlantic</i>, November 1996, Internet: <a href="http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/issues/96nov/immigrat/kennedy.htm">http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/issues/96nov/immigrat/kennedy.htm</a> (17 pp.)</li> </ul> <p>THURS., NOV. 8: RESEARCH PAPER DUE IN CLASS</p>
12	Nov. 13, 15	<p><i>The Rise of Big Business</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Miller &amp; Sexton, chapter 10 (“Increasing the Tempo of Economic Life”; 9 pp.)</li> <li>· Walter Licht, “The Rise of Big Business,” chapter 6 of <i>Industrializing America: The Nineteenth Century</i> (33 pp.)</li> </ul>
13	Nov. 20	<p><i>Labor Pains</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Walter Licht, pp. 166-186 of chapter 7 (“Explosions”) of <i>Industrializing America: The Nineteenth Century</i></li> <li>· Charles R. Morris, “Freakoutonomics,” <i>The New York Times</i>, June 2, 2006 (2 pp.)</li> </ul> <p>Wed.-Fri.: Thanksgiving break – no classes or office hours</p>
14	Nov. 27, 29	<p><i>Populism and Protest</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Miller &amp; Sexton, “Issue: Unrest on the Farm,” pp. 162-166 of chapter 9 (“Peace and Renewed Progress”)</li> <li>· Ranjit S. Dighe, “Introduction: The Colors of Money,” chapter 1 of <i>The Historian’s Wizard of Oz</i>, edited by Ranjit S. Dighe, Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002; 9 pp.)</li> <li>· Ranjit S. Dighe, photo essay from <i>The Historian’s Wizard of Oz</i> (13 pp.)</li> <li>· L. Frank Baum, <i>The Wonderful Wizard of Oz</i>, chapters I-VI, with annotations by Ranjit S. Dighe, from <i>The Historian’s Wizard of Oz</i> (25 pp.)</li> </ul>
15	Dec. 4, 6	<p><i>America on Top; Debates in American Economic History</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Charles R. Morris, “America Rules,” chapter 9 of <i>The Tycoons</i>, New York: Owl Books, 2006 (21 pp.)</li> <li>· Robert Whaples, “Where Is There Consensus Among American Economic Historians? The Results of a Survey on Forty Propositions,” <i>Journal of Economic History</i> 55 (1995): 139-154.</li> </ul> <p>THURS., DEC. 6: REVISED RESEARCH PAPER DUE IN CLASS</p>

**THURS., DEC. 13, 10:30 – 12:30 P.M.: FINAL EXAM** (optional but comprehensive)