Availability and prerequisites

This module is available to level-3 students taking BSc Economics (including joint programmes), BSc Business Economics, or BA Politics, Philosophy and Economics.

Prerequisites are ECO1001 (Principles of Economics) or ECO1007 (Economics of Organisations).

While not a prerequisite, students will benefit from having taken ECO2008 (Introductory Econometrics) or ECO2023 (Quantitative Business Methods). However, this module remains accessible to students without a strong quantitative background, as long as they are willing to learn how to read statistics.

Teaching schedule

Lectures:
Mondays 15:00–17:00 6CP/0G/026

Feedback drop-in:
Tuesdays 13:00–14:00 QMS/01/024

Tutorials (from week 3):
Wednesdays 10:00–11:00 6CP/01/034 (Group 1)
Wednesdays 12:00–13:00 6CP/0G/007 (Group 2)

Teaching staff

Module Coordinator: Dr Chris Colvin
Email: chris.colvin@qub.ac.uk

Lecturer: Dr Matthias Blum
Email: matthias.blum@qub.ac.uk

Teaching Assistant: Mr Nikita Lychakov
Email: nlychakov01@qub.ac.uk

Module aims

1. To acquaint students at an advanced undergraduate level with the field of economic history and historical economics, including its major sub-fields business history and financial history.
2. To get students to appreciate the usefulness of historical enquiry within economics and the broader social sciences.
3. To provide students with an awareness of the long-run economic history of the world economy across the last 500 years.
4. To further develop students’ understanding of important themes within economics, such as demographic transition, industrialisation, competing economic systems, and economic crises.
5. To develop students’ ability to critically read academic articles, interpret data, weigh evidence and draw conclusions from a range of sources, both quantitative and qualitative.

Module description

Economic history is the study of economies or economic phenomena in the past. Historical economics is about testing the generality of economic theory using history. This 12-week 3rd-year module – intended for students taking BSc Economics, BSc Business Economics or BA Politics, Philosophy and Economics – is an introduction to these fields. It is important for students to note that this module is not designed as a history of the economy; rather than simply teaching students about history for its own sake, this module intends to teach students about how to use their economic theory and empirical methods in historical enquiry.

The topics chosen are taught in a roughly chronological order, starting with the demographic transition and ending with the collapse of Communism. While they are all important topics that will teach students about the origins of the modern economy, the choice is not intended to be a comprehensive one; there are many other topics that could have been included, but were not due to time constraints and my personal preferences.

This module is first and foremost a reading course and is therefore not designed around a textbook. Rather, it is based around a selection of academic papers published in economics and history journals. Students are expected to read these papers as part of the course. While this might seem daunting at first, one aim of this module is to teach students how to read academic texts in a critical and efficient manner. With my colleagues Matthias Blum and Nikita Lychakov, I will be guiding students through their reading in lectures and tutorials. Remember also that you are not taking this module alone; you may consider forming reading groups with your peers.

The papers chosen are either considered classics of the genre (e.g. those by Nobel Prize winners Bob Fogel or Doug North), offer contrasting or controversial perspectives (e.g. those by Greg Clark or Leslie Hannah), review important works to a particular literature (e.g. by Tim Leunig or Nick Crafts), or are brand-new contributions to the field (e.g. by Jared Rubin or Graham Brownlow). A number of recommended texts are listed at the start of the syllabus. These function as background reading; at the very least they provide some necessary historical context. Additional references are given in lecture slides.

Learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding

This module covers various topics in the economic history of the world across the last 500 years. It is intended to complement other final year modules; accordingly it emphasises the application of microeconomic and macroeconomic theory. On completion, students should be able to consider how economic reasoning can be used to explain both major historical events and long-run historical processes. Applied economics which uses economic history is also covered. Tutorials concentrate on the in-depth discussion of landmark papers, especially in the New Economic History tradition, and on country-specific material, especially on Britain and Ireland.
Intellectual skills
Students should understand the relationship between historical evidence and economic/quantitative reasoning. They should be able to use objective arguments, to weigh evidence and draw up conclusions based on narrative and empirical analysis.

Practical skills
Students will develop their oral and written communication skills, as well as getting an awareness of how economics can be applied to better understand the wealth and poverty of nations. The skillset acquired by students in this module is particularly useful for those intending to pursue postgraduate study in economics or related disciplines, or for those wishing to work as a professional economist in government.

Teaching

Lectures
This module is taught in 24 hours of lectures: 2 hours per week for 12 weeks. These lectures will cover the topics as outlined in the syllabus at the end of this module outline, and guide students through their independent reading. Chris will give all 12 lectures.

Tutorials
There will also be 10 hours of tutorials: 1 hour per week for 10 weeks, starting in week 3 of the semester. During these tutorials we will present, discuss and debate assigned academic papers and coursework. This module is assessed with a large element of coursework, and some material is only covered in tutorials. Students are therefore expected to attend. Some tutorials will be led by Chris, some by Matthias, others by Nikita.

Help and feedback
Help or feedback on your performance can be sought in tutorials, by visiting me during my office hours, or by email. I will also make myself available for questions after lectures. We strive to provide students with formative comments within three weeks of submission of written material.

Assessment

Class presentation (10%)
Students will present a critical assessment of an article from the reading list to their colleagues in a tutorial. This presentation, which will count for 10% of their overall module grade, will assess the paper’s arguments in light of the relevant literature. Students must not merely summarise their chosen paper; they must contrast its findings with those of other economic historians, and must form their own judgement on its methodology and findings. Depending on student numbers taking this module, these presentations may be given by groups of 2 students. They should be approx. 10-15 minutes to allow sufficient time for discussion. A 1-page summary of the presentation should be submitted to the tutorial teacher on the day of the presentation in order to aid with assessment. A separate document outlining the assessment criteria will be made available on Queen’s Online.
**Review (15%)**

Students will write 1 review of an unpublished working paper in economic history that have been distributed in the past year. This review, which will count for 15% of their overall module grade, will contextualise the working paper’s arguments by contrasting its findings with those of more established, published, articles. It must be succinct (approx. 750 words) and written in an accessible way for a general audience. A separate document containing the assessment criteria and a shortlist of papers to review will be made available on Queen’s Online. The review functions as preparation for the final examination; accordingly, formative feedback will be provided in Week 9 for those students that submit by the deadline set.

**Essay (25%)**

Students will be given an assessed essay to complete over the Easter Vacation, which will count for 25% of their overall module grade. Students will be able to collect their essay question in Week 6 through Queen’s Online. Students must complete a fully-referenced 1,500-word essay which answers the question set. Students must critically assess the relevant literature listed in the module outline, and elsewhere, as part of their answers. This essay functions as preparation for the final examination; accordingly, formative feedback will be provided in Week 12 for those students that submit by the deadline set.

**Final examination (50%)**

Students will sit a 2-hour exam at the end of this module, which will count for 50% of their overall module grade. Students will be able to collect a list of exam questions in Week 12 the exam through Queen’s Online. Students will have to choose two of these questions, one each from Section A and Section B, and use the time available before the exam to prepare their answers. The final essays will then be written under exam conditions on the day of the exam. The essays must be substantial pieces of writing that critically consider the breadth of the literature relevant to the questions chosen. They must be fully referenced.

**Recommended texts**

This module has no textbook. All the readings listed on the this module’s syllabus are articles published in academic journals. The works listed below expand on some of these topics. Available from the library, they should prove especially useful when writing essays.


**Syllabus topics and reading list**

All readings can be accessed on-campus by clicking on the various links. Access off-campus is through the library catalogue (http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/InformationServices/TheLibrary/).

**Introduction: Economics and History**

*What is economic history? What is the relationship between economic history, economics and history? What is the Cliometric Revolution?*

D. N. McCloskey (1976), ‘Does the past have useful economics?’, *Journal of Economic Literature* 14(2), pp. 434-461.


Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1257/jep.9.2.191.

**Topic 1: Malthusian Demographics and the Demographic Transition**

*What determined economic life before modernity? How and when did Europe escape Malthus?*


Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/498123


Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0022057106000301.

**Topic 2: Britain, France and the Industrial Revolution**

*What are the causes of the Industrial Revolution? Why did it occur first in Britain and not France? Does it matter?*


**Topic 3: Institutions and the Financial Revolution**

*What were the Financial and Fiscal Revolutions? What were their causes, and what were their (long-run) consequences for economic development?*


Topic 4: China, Europe and the Great Divergence

How, and when, did Europe diverge from China to become the world’s leading region?


Topic 5: Human Capital and the Protestant Work Ethic

What is the relationship between religion and economic growth? Did Christianity lead to industrialisation?


Topic 6: Height, Health and Human Development

How can we measure and explain historical standards of living in the absence of standardised statistics?


Topic 7: Death, Migration and the Great Irish Famine

What caused the Great Irish Famine? What were its economic and social consequences?


Topic 8: American Capitalism in European Perspective

How did the US become an economic superpower? What is unique about American capitalism?


Topic 9: Railroads, Cinemas and Social Savings

How can we measure the economic impact of revolutionary technologies in history?


Topic 10: Origins of the Great Depression

What caused the US Great Depression in the early 1930s? How does the Great Depression compare to the recent Great Recession?


**Topic 11: Planning, Coercion and Command Economies**

*How were resources allocated in Europe’s totalitarian states? Why did their economies collapse? And how have they fared since?*


**Topic 12: European Integration, Consumerism and (Relative) Decline**

*How can we measure the economic impact of European integration? What explains Britain’s (relative) economic decline? How is this decline consistent with improvements in societal standards of living?*


Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2014.977875.

**Conclusion: History Matters, OK?**

*How do economic and social tendencies and events from distant history affect us today?*

Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1257/aer.91.5.1369.

Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1257/aer.102.6.3059.

Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev.economics.050708.143336.

**Timetable and deadlines**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Lecture</th>
<th>Tutorial</th>
<th>Deadlines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Introduction &amp; Topic 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Topics 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>Topic 1</td>
<td>Presentation schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Topic 2</td>
<td>Topic 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Topic 3</td>
<td>Topic 3</td>
<td>Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Topics 4 &amp; 5</td>
<td>Topics 3 &amp; 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Topics 5 &amp; 6</td>
<td>Topic 5</td>
<td>Essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Topic 7</td>
<td>Topic 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Topics 8 &amp; 9</td>
<td>Topic 10</td>
<td>Distribution of exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Topic 10</td>
<td>Topics 8 &amp; 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Topic 11</td>
<td>Topic 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Topic 12</td>
<td>Topic 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Last updated: 2 October 2015.*