This course surveys the conditions of material life and changing social and economic conditions in medieval Europe with reference to the comparative context of contemporary Islamic, and Asian societies. Subject covers the collapse of the Roman Empire and economy, the emergence and decline of feudal institutions, the transformation of peasant agriculture, the Viking economic system, living standards and the course of epidemic disease, and the ebb and flow of long-distance trade across the Eurasian system prior to the Industrial Revolution. Particular emphasis will be placed on the study of those factors, both institutional and technological, that have contributed to the emergence of capitalist organization and economic growth in Western Europe in contrast to the trajectories followed by the other major medieval economies. The course offers credit for the CI-H requirement and will strongly emphasize the teaching of expository and analytical writing as utilized by historians for the dissemination of their scholarly findings.

Each student will be expected to write a number of short discussion papers, and two substantive essays (of 4 and 6 pages) over the course of the term. The discussion papers will be due on February 9, February 18/20, March 11/13 (all at the beginning of class) and March 20 (by 5pm). The longer essays will be due on April 6 and May 1, with a revision of the final paper due on May 13.

There will be three (ridiculously) short lecture note quizzes at the start of section on February 25/27, March 4/6, and April 1/3.

No internet sources should be consulted for your papers, other than those which are either primary source collections, or are academically refereed sites. If you are unsure about a site, please consult with one of us prior to using it. If used, all internet sources must be properly footnoted and cited in your bibliography at the end of your paper just as for any other type of source. Plagiarism from any source will not be tolerated. Plagiarism earns an automatic F (0%) for the assignment. Moreover, all cases of plagiarism will be reported to the COD for their consideration of the appropriate disciplinary action to take with the student involved. If you are unsure what plagiarism is please see the MIT Online Writing Communication Center. If you are still uncertain, please see me.

The Writing and Communication Center (E39-115) offers you free professional advice from published lecturers about oral presentations and about all types of academic, creative, and professional writing. Go to http://writing.mit.edu/wcc and click on “Appointment.” If you cannot find an open appointment slot, click on the clock in the upper left-hand corner of each day’s block. When a cancellation occurs that day,
you will be automatically notified by email. Because several people might receive that same message, go online ASAP to schedule that open spot; 96% of clients who want an appointment end up with one if they use the Wait List. The best way to guarantee yourself an appointment is to schedule early!

The Center also offers instruction both to individuals and groups in methods of oral presentation (how to write a speech, how to use visual aids, how to conduct oneself when presenting scientific or nonscientific information). The Center provides specialized help to those for whom English is a second language.

Check out The MIT Online Writing and Communication Center

Check out Writing Resources on the World Wide Web for some immediate guidance.
http://web.mit.edu/uaa/www/writing/links/

Grading:
- 20% for shorter discussion papers (5% each)
- 15% for 4 page paper
- 5% for debate presentation
- 10% for first draft of final paper
- 15% for rewrite of final paper
- 15% for 3 section quizzes
- 20% for class participation -- demonstrating mastery of the assigned readings.

Late Paper and Absence Policy:
Late papers will be accepted without penalty in the case of a medical emergency or some other extreme contingency that has been approved in advance. Otherwise, late papers will be graded down 5% points for each day they are late. Students are expected to attend class, and to participate actively in section meetings. If you know in advance that you must travel during the week for professional reasons, please see us as soon as possible so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

Books for purchase at the COOP


All other readings are either available as on-line journal articles or can be found in PDF format on-line at the course Stellar site.
Lecture Schedule and Reading Assignments

Feb 4  Some big questions in economic history, and how to think about them.
**All sections meet together for first class in 16-160**
Assorted administrative trivia.

Feb 9  Late Roman Antiquity and Barbarian Europe

Feb 9  Assignment due:
2 page discussion paper on a ‘technology’ that you employ on a regular basis, but about the history or characteristics of which you rarely pause to consider. Your discussion should indicate the ways in which this particular technology intersects with the larger themes of economic history. Be creative and feel free to have some fun with this assignment. It has no right answer, but nevertheless your discussion should reveal a high level of thoughtfulness.

Feb 11/13  Fundamentals of good history writing
Reading: Epstein, ESHLME, Chapter 1, pp. 10-39.

Feb 17  Monday schedule of classes
**The ‘Dark Ages’: myth or reality.**
(Class should all meet together in 16-160)


Feb 18/20  Assignment:  2 page discussion paper of McCormick reading.

Feb 23  The structure of medieval life: manorialism and feudalism.

Reading: Epstein, ESHLME, Chapter 2, pp. 40-69.
**Lecture note quick quiz.**
Please also bring with you to class two primary source documents: “The Plan of St. Gall” and articles from “The Capitulary on the Maintenance of the Royal Estates.”

Mar 2  Medieval agriculture and commercialization: a revised story.

Bruce Campbell, “Economic rent and the intensification of English agriculture, 1086-1350,” from Medieval Farming and Technology.

Lecture note quick quiz.

Mar 9 The wider medieval world: Vikings, Mongols, and Saracens.
Viking film in lecture.

Mar 11-13 Reading: Epstein, ESHELME, Chapter 3, pp. 70-99.

Mar 11-13 Assignment: 3 page primary source analysis of one of the documents assigned for section.

Mar 16-18/20 Rise of the commune and revival of trade: counterpoint to autarkic agriculture.
Reading: Epstein, ESHELME, Chapter 4, pp. 100-128.
Also read documentary selections from Lopez, Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World, on “The Jewish Role in World Trade,” “Milan in 1288,” and “Reports from the Fairs of Champagne”; also read “The Great Fair at Thessalonika”; “Traveling to China.”

Mar 20 Assignment: 3 page discussion paper comparing traditional accounts of the medieval economy with more recent evaluations of it. Due by 5pm.

Mar 23-25 Spring Break

Mar 30 The plague and its consequences.

Apr 1/3 Reading: Barbara Harvey, “Introduction: the crisis of the early fourteenth century.”
Selections from Henry Knighton, Chronicle, 1348.
Background reading: Epstein, ESHELME, Chapter 6.
Lecture note quick quiz.

Apr 6-8/10 Overseas expansion of Europe.
Columbus, selections from the Diario.

Apr 6 Assignment: 4 page paper due on the plague and its consequences.

Apr 13-15/17 Methodology and theories of historical demography

Optional: Kremer, “Population growth and technological change.”

Apr 20  No Class: Patriot’s Day vacation.

Apr 22/24  In class debate: topic to be assigned on April 13th in lecture.

Apr 27-29/1  Grand theories about economic development: Malthusians, Marxists and the neo-Classical tradition.


May 1  Assignment: First draft of 6-page paper. Due by 5pm.

May 4-6/8  Capitalist organization of economic life: the globalization of trade and the rise of consumer culture.

Please bring with you to class a copy of Gregory King's "Social Table."

May 6/8  Paper drafts returned with comments.

May 11  Measuring welfare.
Reading: Amartya Sen, The Standard of Living, pp. 1-38; and I highly recommend you look at the comment by Keith Hart, pp. 70-93.

May 13  The rise of north-western Europe: improvements in the standard of living.
Class meets all together for final session.


May 13  Assignment: Final version of 6 page paper.