Topics in Economic History

Course: ECON 315
Term: Fall 2017
Professor: Dr. Melanie Meng Xue
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Overview of class

This course will deal with the economic history of China from a comparative perspective. It mainly tackles Chinese economic history from the late imperial period to the modern period, but also aims to provide a historical perspective for understanding the strength and limitations of the contemporary Chinese economy.

The first part of the class (before the midterm) surveys watershed events in Chinese history in a global context. The second part of class considers special topics in Chinese history. These include considering how culture and institutions have shaped modern growth in China.

There will be two lectures a week. These lectures will integrate class discussion and student participation. The lecture materials and readings should be viewed as largely complementary. All lecture slides will be made available on the Canvas site for this course following the lectures.

Discussion sections will be held on Fridays from 2–320 pm. However, discussion sections will be held only in certain weeks: please watch the announcements on the course home page. TA office hours are offered on the same days as the discussion sections. Time and locations are to be decided.

Registration Requirements

The following classes are required: ECON 310-1 and ECON 311.

Assignments & Evaluation

- Students will write a one page (typed) summary of a paper that we have studied in class. It should outline the main argument of paper or book and assess in details the type and quality of evidence they bring to bear. This will be graded by the TA. 10%.
- A midterm. 40%.
- A final. 50%.
There will be one mandatory midterm exam and an inclusive final exam. The midterm will cover all reading materials and lecture material of weeks 1-4. Students who score in the top 50% in the midterm will have the option of writing a paper in lieu of the exam. The topic and methodology have to be approved and the paper has to be submitted by the day of the final. The final exam is on December 6 from 12 to 2pm. There will be review sessions on Fridays before both the midterm and final.

**Recommended Books**


**1 Readings**

**1.1 Introduction and Overview: September 19 & 21**

- Nathan Nunn, The Importance of History for Economic Development., *Annual Review of Economics* 1, Nr. 1 2009

**1.2 A Brief History of imperial China: September 26 & 28**


**1.3 The Great Divergence: October 3 & 5**


1.4 The Treaty Port Era: October 10 & 12


• Mark Koyama, Chiaki Moriguchi and Tuan-Hwee Sng, Geopolitics and Asia’s Little Divergence: State Building in China and Japan After 1850 June 2017

1.5 Communism: October 17 & 19


1.6 Midterm: October 24

1.7 Trade and Markets: October 26 & 31


1.8 State and Society: November 2 & 7


• Melanie Meng Xue and Mark Koyama, Autocratic Rule and Social Capital: Evidence from Imperial China September 2017

1.9 Gender and Family Structure: November 9


1.10 Religion, Confucianism, Hierarchy, and Autocracy: November 14


1.11 Scientific Development in China: November 16


1.12 Cultural Persistence and Modern Growth: November 21

- Alberto Alesina and Paola Giuliano, Culture and Institutions, *Journal of Economic Literature* 53, Nr. 4 2015

1.13 Reading Period: November 28 & 30