

Economic History of North America

[CRN: 20898]

Course Outline and Reading List

[I] Introduction

This is a course in the economic history of North America, namely the economic history of Canada, the United States and Mexico over the period 1500-1940. The main focus of the course is on Canada and the United States.

Topics to be covered in the course include: the political economy of European colonialism and mercantilism on North America; the population history of the colonies; the staple hypothesis and forward and backward linkages of staple production and export; the Jeffersonian ideal, the family farm and the settlement of frontier lands; the impact of the frontier on the choice of technique and the “American system of manufactures”; the economics of slavery and the political economy of the Civil War in the United States; transportation and infrastructure development and the impact of the railroads; the demographic transition, immigration and human development; growth accounting and structural change; theories of innovation and technological change.

My office hours are **11: 30 am to 12:15 pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday** or by appointment. My office is **378 Business and Economics Building**, on the third floor. I will meet students outside of these hours but only by appointment (please see me at the end of lecture for an appointment.) Because I find to answer questions via e-mail, I discourage students from making enquiries or asking informational questions through e-mail. Moreover, I do not guarantee that I will respond to e-mail messages.

A copy of this course outline is available on my personal webpage www.carlmosk.com.

[II] Administrative Matters

It should be stressed that performance in this course depends upon your ability to read and write. For this reason, you should complete Economics 225 (Writing for Economists) before you enroll in this course.

Grading is based upon numerical scores on a midterm and on a final. The midterm score is weighted by .4, and the final score is weighted by .6, the two scores added together to yield a total numerical score out of 100. The midterm is tentatively scheduled for **Wednesday, February 11.**

Students are expected to take examinations at the scheduled time and places. The only exception is for an authorized medical excuse. In assigning percentage grades I employ the schedule established by the University of Victoria applicable beginning with the Summer Session 2014. The meaning of these grades is as follows:

Percentage Range	Meaning of the percentage
90-100 %	Outstanding scholarship
85-89 %	Excellent scholarship
80-84 %	Very good scholarship
77-79 %	Good displaying substantial knowledge
73-76 %	Steady performance
70-72 %	Good knowledge but not complete
65-69 %	Satisfactory knowledge
60-64 %	Satisfactory but limited knowledge
50-59 %	Marginally (barely) satisfactory
49 %	Has achieved at least 50% score in course but has failed to complete identified course requirements (midterm and final)
0-49 %	Has achieved less than 50% score in course and has failed to complete identified course requirements (midterm and final)

For further details concerning percentage grades, conversion of percentage grades to scores ranging up to 9, and letter marks please consult the calendar or inquire at the registrar's office.

Students are expected to take examinations at the scheduled time and places (except for students taking the examinations at the Resource Centre for Students with a Disability). The only exceptions are for authorized medical excuses.

Students should make note of the following policy adopted by the Department of Economics:

Plagiarism and Cheating: The standards and reputation of a University are the shared responsibility of its faculty and students. Students are expected to observe the same standards of scholarly integrity as their academic and professional counterparts. Plagiarism and cheating are considered to be serious breach of academic integrity and shall be dealt with as such by the Department of Economics.

Please see the University Calendar for examples of plagiarism.

Students should also be aware of the following University policy:

The University of Victoria is committed to promoting, providing and protecting a positive and safe learning and working environment for all its members.

Students are advised not to make travel plans until after the examination timetable has been finalized. Students who wish to finalize their travel plans at an earlier date should book flights that depart after the examination period (see the University Calendar.) There will be no special accommodation if travel plans conflict with the examination.

[III] Readings

The required readings are drawn from two sources: four books – all in paperback editions - and a Course-pack. Both the books and the Course-pack are available for purchase at the University Bookstore.

The four books to be purchased are as follows:

David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are So Rich and Some So Poor* (New York: Penguin, 1998, ISBN 978-0-393-318-883) [paperback]

Michael Lind, *Land of Promise: An Economic History of the United States* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2013, ISBN 978-0-06-183481-3) [paperback]

Douglas McCalla and Michael Huberman, *Perspectives on Canadian Economic History* [second edition] (Mississauga: Copp Clark Longman, 1994, ISBN 0-7730-5377-8) [paperback]

Gavin Wright, *Slavery and American Economic Development* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006, ISBN 978-0-8071-5228-7) [paperback]

The readings in the **Coursepack/Reader** mainly focus on the United States. The contents mainly consist of copies of overheads that I show in class lectures.

In the case of the readings assembled in the McCalla and Huberman volume, I refer to the Section of the volume and to the specific author(s) within that Section.

In the course of the lectures we will be making reference to the historical geography of the North America on a number of occasions. Students interested in consulting atlases that contain maps that make prove informative are asked to consult the following atlases in the Reference/Atlas Cases of the Main University Library:

Patrick K. O'Brien [ed], *Atlas of World History*

Geoffrey Barraclough [ed], *The Times Atlas of World History*

John Hemming [Royal Geographic Society], *Atlas of Exploration*

National Geographic Society, *Historical Atlas of the United States*

Geoffrey J. Matthews, *Historical Atlas of Canada*

[IV] Outline of the Topics Covered in the Course

I. Under the European Yoke

In this section we focus on European oceanic exploration and commercial expansion; mercantilism and colonialism; the demography of European colonialism and the impact of European settlement upon First Nations peoples in the Americas; and Malthusian theory and high and low pressure equilibrium systems.

Readings: Landes, Chapters 1-12; Lind, Chapter 1; Section 1 in McCalla and Huberman [Carlos and Lewis; Carlos and Hoffman].

II. Agriculture and Staples

In this section we discuss the regional development of the economy of North America and the role of staple exports to industrializing Great Britain and the European continent; the Jeffersonian model of a republic peopled by farm families; and the frontier thesis, the elasticity of labour supply and the theory of the “American system of manufacturers”.

Readings: Landes, Chapters 13-16, and 19-20; Lind, Chapters 2-5; Sections 2 and 3 in McCalla and Huberman [Paquet and Wallot and McInnis in Section 2, and Sager and Fisher and Inwood in Section 3].

III. Slavery and the Political Economy of the American Civil War

In this section we discuss the economics and geography of slavery. We also discuss the Beard thesis about the causes of the American civil war, imbedding the analysis in the literature on Marxist stage theory, and in the revised version of the Beard thesis due to Ranson and Sutch.

Readings: Landes, Chapter 2; Lind, Chapter 6; Wright (entire book: Introduction, Chapters 1-3, and Epilogue).

IV. Transportation

In this section we discuss the importance of infrastructure investment for economic development, the Schumpeter/Rostow leading sector/building ahead of demand theory of railroadization, and the importance of backward and forward linkages for transportation.

Readings: Lind, Chapters 7-9.

V. The Demographic Transition, Immigration and Human Development

In this section we discuss the theories of demographic transition and the role of land

availability for shaping fertility in North America. We also discuss the impact of immigration on population growth, and the growing importance of human development for economic growth towards the close of the nineteenth century.

Readings: **Newell in Section 5 of McCalla and Huberman; Section 7 in McCalla and Huberman [McInnis, Loewen, and Day]**

VI. Industrialization, Total Factor Productivity Growth and Technological Change

In this section we discuss industrialization in Canada and the United States, growth in income and growth accounting, and the role of structural change and knowledge in promoting total factor productivity growth. We also discuss theories of innovation and the Kondratieff waves.

Readings: **Landes, Chapter 26; Lind, Chapters 10-15; Sections 4 and 5 in McCalla and Huberman [Green and Urquhart in Section 4, and Newell and Dow in Section 5].**

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