

AMERICAN ECONOMIC HISTORY BEFORE 1900

ECO 326

FALL 2019

T TH 2:20–3:40 IN MAHAR 108

LAST REVISED ON 23 AUGUST 2019

In this course we 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. We will also get the unique historical perspective of Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which is set in the mid-nineteenth century and deals with numerous historical issues. Since this is an upper-level expository writing class, you will have ample opportunity to improve your writing.

Prof. Ranjit S. Dighe

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(and by appointment if you can't make those times)

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The Blackboard 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.

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

The past is never dead. It's not even past.

— William Faulkner

When the legend becomes fact, print the legend.

– from “The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance” (John Ford movie)

Required texts

- Ranjit S. Dighe, annotator. *The Historian's Huck Finn: Reading Mark Twain's Masterpiece as Social and Economic History*. Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2016.
- (The other required readings will be available through the course page on Blackboard.)

Optional texts that I cannot recommend strongly enough

- Diana Hacker & Nancy Sommers. *Rules for Writers*. Any edition. (Hopefully you already have this, as the college requires it for ENG 102. It's the best guide I've ever seen to writing, a comprehensive reference that works for writers of all levels. The more you consult books like this one, the better you'll write.)

- William Strunk, Jr., & E.B. White. *The Elements of Style*. Any edition. This slim, inexpensive paperback is packed with valuable tips on 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 nineteenth century, and give likely reasons for those changes;
- provide plausible explanations of America's emergence as a top industrial power in the late nineteenth 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, papers 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 as follows:

Short research paper			30%
	Preliminaries: Topic paper (3%); Data appendix (2%); Annotated bibliography (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 (300+ words, organized into paragraphs, submitted via Blackboard, starting in Week 1; 12 in all)	30%	
	Weekly one-sentence summaries (submitted in class, starting in Week 1; 12 in all)	20%	
	Class participation, including trailing comments and questions in the Blackboard discussion forum	10%	
Midterm exam			10%
<i>Final exam (optional; not extra credit – averaged in on 110-point scale)</i>			10%

The grading scale is basically the standard one:

93-100% A; 90-92% A-; 88-89% B+; 83-87% B; 80-82% B-; 78-79% C+; 73-77% C;
70-72% C-; 68-69% D+; 63-67% D; 60-62% D-; 0-59% E.

Short research paper: See handout, “Guidelines for Short Research Papers” (also on Blackboard)

Discussion and preparation:

- **One-sentence summaries: Each week you will write a set of one-sentence summaries, one summary for each of the readings for the current week.** Each set of summaries is due at the start of class on Tuesday, typed, double-spaced, 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 author’s name and the reading’s title with each summary, so that it is clear which reading is being summarized.
A total of 12 summaries papers are required. Since there are 15 weeks in the semester and no papers due Thanksgiving week, you can either skip two summaries papers or do one or two for up to 2 points of extra credit. You can decide for yourself which two weeks to skip, as long as neither of them is the first or second week of class.
- **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 Thursday and will be submitted online via Blackboard. These should be written as coherent short papers with two or three paragraphs and an interesting title. The minimum length is 300 words. 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.
A total of 12 prep papers are required. Since there are 15 weeks in the semester and no papers due Thanksgiving week, you can either skip two prep papers or do one or two for up to 3 points of extra credit. You can decide for yourself which two weeks to skip, as long as neither of them is the first or second week of class.
- **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. On a typical day we will devote about half the class time to discussion. I will be counting on you to initiate at least *some* of the discussion. Students can also participate online, by leaving trailing comments, questions, and various tangential conversation starters (with or without web links) in the online discussion forum.

Extra credit: I do not offer emergency extra credit, but there are opportunities to write additional prep papers and one-sentence summaries for extra credit (see above). There may also be extra credit for attending certain talks or events on campus. Late extra credit work will not be accepted.

Exams: The exams will 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 a 110-point scale instead of a 100-point scale. (In other words, the final is not extra credit and is unlikely to affect your course score by more than a point or two. So an outstanding final exam would raise your grade if your course score going into the final was 89 but probably not if it was 83.) 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 the exam. An unexcused absence on the midterm will count as a zero (and will be ineligible for the asymmetrically-cumulative scoring described above).

Writing and other help

The College Writing Center can offer valuable help in organizing, writing, and revising your papers. It is located on the first floor of Penfield Library and is also reachable online: <http://www.oswego.edu/academics/support/OLS/writing.html>

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

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

Mutual respect is all-important. We can foster an environment of mutual respect by observing some basic classroom etiquette. This includes arriving on time and not leaving early, avoiding bathroom breaks, keeping our cell phones silent and not texting, not eating noisily or blowing bubbles, not wearing ear buds, and not having private conversations.

Crime does not pay!

Per College policy, students who are caught cheating should expect to 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://catalog.oswego.edu/content.php?catoid=31&navoid=2603#inte_inte

SUNY Oswego is committed to enhancing the safety and security of the campus for all its members. In support of this, faculty may be required to report their knowledge of certain crimes or harassment. Reportable incidents include harassment on the basis of sex or gender prohibited by Title IX and crimes covered by the Clery Act. For more information about Title IX protections, go to <https://www.oswego.edu/title-ix/> or contact the Title IX Coordinator, 405 Culkin Hall, 315-312-5604, titleix@oswego.edu. For more information about the Clery Act and campus reporting, go to the University Police annual report: <https://www.oswego.edu/police/annual-report>.

Course outline and schedule (not set in stone, but close)

Week	Dates	Coverage
1	Aug. 27, 29	<p><i>Introduction: What Is American Economic History?</i></p> <p>What to read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Course syllabus (every word!) · Ranjit S. Dighe, “The Raging, Tearing, Booming Nineteenth Century,” chapter 2 (pp. 19-47) of <i>The Historian’s Huck Finn: Reading Mark Twain’s Masterpiece as Social and Economic History</i> (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2016). (From now on, “Twain/Dighe.”) <p>Your first one-sentence summaries paper and your first prep paper are both due on Thurs., Aug. 30. (Normally the sentence summaries are due on Tuesdays and the prep papers on Thursdays.) Both should cover the Dighe chapter but not the syllabus. Sentence summaries should be typed, double-spaced, printed, and submitted in class. Prep papers get submitted on Blackboard in the Drop Box.</p>

2	Sept. 3, 5	<p><i>Multiple Perspectives on North American Economic History</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green, “The European Invasion,” chapter 2 of <i>North American Indians: A Very Short Introduction</i> (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010; 23 pp.) · 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>Reminder: One-sentence-summaries papers are due at the start of class Tuesday; they should be typed and printed, and submitted in class. Prep papers are due in advance of class Thursday; they get submitted on Blackboard in the Drop Box. Both should cover all of the assigned readings for this week. The same goes for all future weeks, except where noted.</p> <p>Thurs., Sept. 5: last day to add a class</p>
3	Sept. 10, 12	<p><i>The Colonial Economy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Edwin J. Perkins, “The Entrepreneurial Spirit in Colonial America,” from <i>Major Problems in American Business History</i>, edited by Regina Lee Blaszczyk & Philip B. Scranton (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006; 9 pp.) · Allan Kulikoff, “From Outpost to Slave Society, 1620-1700,” Chapter 1 of <i>Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800</i> (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1986; 22 pp.) <p>THURS., SEPT. 12: TOPIC PAPER DUE IN CLASS</p>
4	Sept. 17, 19	<p><i>Revolution 1</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Edwin J. Perkins, “Living Standards and Income Growth,” chapter VIII of <i>The Economy of Colonial America</i> (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980; 20 pp.) · Gordon S. Wood, “Origins,” chapter I of <i>The American Revolution: A History</i> (New York: The Modern Library, 2003; 22 pp.) <p>Mon., Sept. 16: Last day to drop a class</p>
5	Sept. 24, 26	<p><i>Revolution 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Edwin J. Perkins, “Taxes and Politics,” chapter VII of <i>The Economy of Colonial America</i> (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980; 20 pp.) · Gordon S. Wood, “American Resistance,” chapter II of <i>The American Revolution: A History</i> (New York: The Modern Library, 2003; 18 pp.) <p>THURS., SEPT. 26: DATA APPENDIX DUE IN CLASS</p>
6	Oct. 3 (Thurs.)	<p><i>Economic Life in the New Republic (I)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Robert A. McGuire, “The Founding Era, 1774-1791,” chapter 3 of <i>Government and the American Economy</i>, edited by Price Fishback (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007; 28 pp.) <p>Tues., Oct. 1: No classes or office hours – Rosh Hashanah → This week’s sentence summaries and prep papers are both due Thursday.</p>

7	Oct. 8, 10	<p><i>Economic Life in the New Republic (II)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · John Steele Gordon, “The Hamiltonian Creation,” chapter 4 of <i>An Empire of Wealth</i> (New York: HarperCollins, 2004; 14 pp.) · John Steele Gordon, “Chaining the Lightning of Heaven,” chapter 9 of same (14 pp.) · Twain/Dighe, pp. 50-51 (“Notice,” “Explanatory,” map, and annotations) and chapters 1–5 (pp. 60-87) <p>Wed., Oct. 9: No office hours – Yom Kippur</p>
8	Oct. 15, 17	<p><i>The Political Economy of Slavery</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Jeffrey Rogers Hummel, “The Political Economy of Slavery and Secession,” chapter 2 of <i>Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men: A History of the American Civil War</i> (Chicago: Open Court, 1996; 31 pp.) · Twain/Dighe, chapters 6–10 (pp. 87-119) <p>THURS., OCT. 17: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE IN CLASS</p>
9	Oct. 22, 24	<p><i>The Political Economy of the Civil War</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Jeffrey Rogers Hummel, “The Confederate States of America,” chapter 5 of <i>Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men: A History of the American Civil War</i> (Chicago: Open Court, 1996; 20 pp.; best to focus on the first 10 pp.) · Twain/Dighe, chapters 11–16 (pp. 119-160) <p>Fri., Oct. 25: Last day of course withdrawal period</p>
10	Oct. 29, 31	<p><i>Social and Economic Life on the Mississippi, Through Huck’s Eyes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Twain/Dighe, chapters 17–22 (pp. 161-215) <p>TUES., OCT. 29: MIDTERM ➔ This week’s sentence summaries and prep papers are both due Thursday.</p>
11	Nov. 5, 7	<p><i>Westward Expansion</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 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.) · Twain/Dighe, chapters 23–28 (pp. 215-249) <p>THURS., NOV. 7: RESEARCH PAPER DUE IN CLASS</p>
12	Nov. 12, 14	<p><i>Postwar Growth and the Railroads</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Roger LeRoy Miller and Robert L. Sexton, “Peace and Renewed Progress,” chapter 9 of <i>Issues in American Economic History</i> (Mason, OH: Thomson South-Western, 2005; 15 pp.) · Twain/Dighe, chapters 29–34 (pp. 249-283)
13	Nov. 19 (Tues.)	<p><i>The Rise of Big Business</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Roger LeRoy Miller and Robert L. Sexton, “Increasing the Tempo of Economic Life,” chapter 10 of <i>Issues in American Economic History</i> (Mason, OH: Thomson South-Western, 2005; 9 pp.) · Twain/Dighe, chapters 35–Last (pp. 283-330) <p>Thurs., Nov. 21: No class – Dighe out of town ➔ This week’s sentence summaries and prep papers are both due Tuesday.</p>

14	Nov. 26 (Tues.)	<p><i>TBA</i></p> <p>Wed.–Fri., Nov. 27–29: Thanksgiving break – no classes or office hours</p> <p>There are no sentence summaries or prep papers this week.</p>
15	Dec. 3, 5	<p><i>Prairie Populism and the Gold Standard, in the Land of Oz</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ranjit S. Dighe, “Introduction: The Colors of Money,” chapter 1 of <i>The Historian’s Wizard of Oz</i> (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002; 9 pp.) · Ranjit S. Dighe, photo essay from same (13 pp.) · L. Frank Baum, <i>The Wonderful Wizard of Oz</i>, chapters I–VI, with annotations by Ranjit S. Dighe, from same (25 pp.) <p>THURS., DEC. 5: REVISED RESEARCH PAPER DUE IN CLASS</p>

TUES., DEC. 10, 2:00–4:00 FINAL EXAM (OPTIONAL)

The final exam is comprehensive, with extra weight on material after the midterm.