

AMERICAN ECONOMIC HISTORY SINCE 1900

ECO 327-800
SUNY OSWEGO
SPRING 2019

LAST REVISED ON 29 APRIL 2019

In this course we will gain a fuller understanding of modern-day America by exploring America's economic and social development since 1900. In addition to examining overall growth and fluctuations in the economy, we will explore the economic progress of blue-collar workers, women, African Americans, immigrants, and other groups. We will devote considerable time to the Great Depression and the various migrations that went with it, by reading scholarly economic history sources and through a group project in which students will write economically and historically minded annotations to John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath*. We will gain insight into these issues by studying them in depth from the dual perspectives of economics and history. Since this is an upper-level expository writing class, you will have many opportunities to work on and improve your writing.

Class meeting place and time:

Mahar 108
MW 3:00–4:20

Prof. Ranjit S. Dighe

Office: Mahar 416
Phone: 312-3484
E-mail (your best bet): ranjit.dighe@oswego.edu
Office hours: MTW 1–2*
(*or by appointment if you can't make those times)

The Blackboard site for this course contains links to nearly all of the outside readings, lecture outlines, course announcements, and more. You will want to check it at least a few times a week.

And you may ask yourself, "Well, how did I get here?"
— David Byrne

For every complex problem there is an answer that is clear, simple, and wrong.
— H. L. Mencken

Good questions outrank easy answers.
— Paul Samuelson

You don't have to burn books to destroy a culture. Just get people to stop reading them.
— Ray Bradbury

Required texts

- Marc Levinson. *An Extraordinary Time: The End of the Postwar Boom and the Return of the Ordinary Economy*. New York: Basic Books, 2016. (Available at the College Store and on 3-hour reserve at Penfield Library.)
- John Steinbeck. *The Grapes of Wrath*. New York: Penguin, 2006. (Any non-abridged edition is fine. Two other editions are on 3-hour reserve at Penfield Library.)
- Various articles and book chapters, available through the Blackboard site for this course.

Optional texts that I cannot recommend strongly enough

- Diana Hacker & Nancy Sommers. *Rules for Writers*. Any edition. Hopefully you already have it, 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.

Something you should not be without for this course: A willingness to reach for a dictionary (print or online).

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.

Learning objectives

Upon the successful completion of this course, you will be able to demonstrate:

- knowledge of a basic narrative of American economic history since 1900, including growth and fluctuations in the economy as well as economic influences upon key historical developments;
- understanding of the growth of the government and the Federal Reserve, including both causes and effects;
- understanding of how social and economic changes have affected women, African Americans, Hispanics, blue-collar workers, and other groups;
- understanding of America's changing relationship with the rest of the world through such factors as immigration and trade policy and practices of American and foreign businesses;

and write about these phenomena in clear and concise English.

Assessment

Since this course is an expository writing class, written work will constitute an important part of your grade, and the clarity of your writing will affect how it is graded. Your course score will be a weighted average of the following:

Weekly short papers			50%
	Weekly one-sentence summaries (submitted in class, starting in Week 1; 12 in all)	20%	
	Weekly discussion-preparation papers (300+ words, organized into paragraphs, submitted in Blackboard, starting in Week 1; 12 in all)	30%	
Group project: Economic history annotations of <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i>			30%
	Final edits of annotations (about ten total, spanning five assigned chapters, i.e., an average of two annotations per chapter)	20%	
	Participation in group, as well as in class and Blackboard discussion forum	10%	
Midterm exam			10%
Final exam			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.			

Weekly short papers:

- **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 Monday, 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 14 weeks in the semester, 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 Wednesday and will be submitted on Blackboard. These should be written as coherent short papers with two or three paragraphs and an interesting title. The minimum length is 300 words (yes, even in weeks when we only meet once). 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. A prep paper should *not* contain much summary.

A total of 12 prep papers are required. Since there are 14 weeks in the semester, 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.

Group project ("Annotating *The Grapes of Wrath*"):

- **Annotations:** A guidelines sheet will soon be distributed in class and posted on Blackboard. For now, some basics: Students will be assigned to groups containing 4-6 students apiece, and five different chapters from *The Grapes of Wrath* will be assigned to each group. (For example, Group 1 might get Chapters 4, 6, 15, 19, and 30.) There will be six groups in all, so altogether the groups will cover all 30 chapters of the book. Each group will be responsible for producing annotations – ten in all, averaging a full paragraph each. Groups will be assigned around the end of Week 2, and a significant portion of class time will be allotted for group meetings. Group work will continue through Wednesday, May 1, when the final edits are due.
- **Participation:** Your participation score for the course will depend mainly on your apparent effort in the group project, as it shows up in such factors as class attendance, contributions to the Google Document containing your group's annotations, and assessments by other group members. Participation in class discussion, which this class tends to have a lot of, can raise your participation score as well. I will be counting on you to initiate at least *some* of the discussion; bringing your prep paper to class can help you with that. You can also participate online, by leaving comments, questions, and various tangential conversation starters (with or without web links) in the Blackboard discussion forum.

Exams: The exams will be part essay, part short answer, and possibly part multiple choice.

- The scoring on the exams will be "cumulative upwards" 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. Otherwise, the two exams count equally.
- Make-up exams will be an option only for students who have a valid, documented excuse for missing an exam. An unexcused absence on the midterm will count as a zero and will be ineligible for the "cumulative upwards" scoring described above.

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 campus events. Late extra credit work will not be accepted.

Writing and other help

The College Writing Center can offer valuable help in organizing, writing, and revising your papers. It is currently located in 168 Marano Campus Center and is reachable online: <https://www.oswego.edu/ols/writing-center>

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.

Classroom etiquette includes arriving on time and not leaving early, avoiding bathroom breaks, keeping one's cell phone silent and not texting, not eating noisily or blowing bubbles, and not having private conversations. Breaches of any of these things are distracting, disruptive, and disrespectful to me and your fellow classmates.

Crime does not pay!

Per College policy, students who are caught cheating on either of the exams or the group research assignment will 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). In either case I am *required* to notify the college authorities.

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

Course outline and schedule

Week	Dates	Coverage (subject to change – see Course Announcements on Blackboard)
1	Jan. 28, 30	<p><i>America Comes of Age</i></p> <p>What to read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course syllabus (every word!) • Gene Smiley. "The American Economy Prior to 1920." Chapter 1 of <i>The American Economy in the Twentieth Century</i>. Cincinnati: Southwestern Publishing, 1994. (10 pp.) • Raymond L. Cohn. "The Economic History of Immigration." Chapter 23 of <i>The Routledge Handbook of Modern Economic History</i>. London: Taylor and Francis, 2013. (12 pp.) <p>Your first one-sentence-summaries paper and your first prep paper are both due Wed., Jan. 30. (Normally the sentence summaries are due Mondays and the prep papers Wednesdays.) Both should cover all readings (except the syllabus). Sentence summaries should be typed, double-spaced, printed, and are due in class. Prep papers get submitted on Blackboard in the Drop Box.</p>

2	Feb. 4, 6	<p><i>The First World War and the First Drug War</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert Higgs. "The World Wars" (edited to include only World War I). Pages 431-440 of Chapter 14 of <i>Government and the American Economy: A New History</i>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. • Jack S. Blocker, Jr. "Did Prohibition Really Work? Alcohol Prohibition as a Public Health Innovation." <i>American Journal of Public Health</i> 96(2): 233-243 (February 2006). • Steinbeck, Chapters 1-5 (~40 pp.) <p style="text-align: right;">Wed., Feb. 6: Last day to add a class</p> <p>Reminder: One-sentence-summaries papers are due by the start of class Monday; they should be typed and printed, and submitted in class. Prep papers are due by the start of class Wednesday in the Drop Box on Blackboard. The same goes for all future weeks, except where noted.</p>
3	Feb. 11, 13	<p><i>The Roaring Twenties</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter Fearon. "The Economy During the 1920s." Chapter 3 of <i>War, Prosperity & Depression: The U.S. Economy 1917-45</i>. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1987. (20 pp.) • Steinbeck, Chapters 6-9 (~50 pp.) <p style="text-align: right;">Fri., Feb. 15: Last day to drop a class</p>
4	Feb. 18, 20	<p><i>The Great Contraction, 1929-1933</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Randall Parker. "An Overview of the Great Depression". EH.Net Encyclopedia, edited by Robert Whaples. March 16, 2008. Internet: http://eh.net/encyclopedia/an-overview-of-the-great-depression/ • Geoff Cunfer. "The Dust Bowl". EH.Net Encyclopedia, edited by Robert Whaples. August 18, 2004. Internet: http://eh.net/encyclopedia/the-dust-bowl/ • Steinbeck, Chapters 10-12 (~33 pp.)
5	Feb. 25, 27	<p><i>The New Deal Years, 1933-1941 (I)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter Fearon. "Banking, Money, and the Deficit Under the New Deal." Chapter 13 of <i>War, Prosperity & Depression: The U.S. Economy 1917-45</i>. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1987. (18 pp.) • Steinbeck, Chapters 13-15 (~40 pp.)
6	March 4, 6	<p><i>The New Deal Years, 1933-1941 (II)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David M. Kennedy. "What the New Deal Did." <i>Political Science Quarterly</i> 124(2): 251-268 (Summer 2009). • Steinbeck, Chapters 16-17 (~38 pp.)

7	March 11, 13	<p><i>Joads on the Road Again</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steinbeck, Chapters 18-19 (~39 pp.) <p style="text-align: right;">WED., MARCH 13: MIDTERM</p>
MON.–FRI., MARCH 18–22: SPRING BREAK		
8	March 25, 27	<p><i>World War II</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert Higgs. “World War II” (pages 440-451 of “The World Wars,” Chapter 14 of <i>Government and the American Economy: A New History</i>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. • Steinbeck, Chapters 20-21 (~45 pp.)
9	April 1 (Mon.)	<p><i>Sour Grapes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steinbeck, Chapters 22-25 (~65 pp.) <p style="text-align: right;">Wed., April 3: Quest – no class Fri., April 5: Last day of course withdrawal period</p>
10	April 8, 10	<p><i>The Great Migration of African Americans</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • William Sundstrom. “African Americans in the U.S. Economy Since Emancipation.” Chapter 27 of <i>The Routledge Handbook of Modern Economic History</i>, edited by Robert Whaples and Randall Parker. London: Taylor and Francis, 2013. (25 pp.) • Steinbeck, Chapter 26 (~56 pp.)
11	April 15, 17	<p><i>Women in the Workforce</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claudia Goldin. “The Quiet Revolution That Transformed Women’s Employment, Education, and Family.” <i>American Economic Review</i> 96(2): 1-21 (May 2006). • Steinbeck, Chapters 27-29 (~30 pp.)
12	April 22, 24	<p><i>The Party’s Over</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levinson, “Introduction” (pp. 1-13) • Levinson, Chapter 1 (“The New Economics”; 12 pp.) • Levinson, Chapter 3 (“Chaos”; 10 pp.) • Steinbeck, Chapter 30 (~20 pp.)
13	April 29; May 1	<p><i>Stagflation and Stagnation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levinson, Chapter 5 (“The Great Stagflation”; 15 pp.) • Levinson, Chapter 9 (“The End of the Dream”; 22 pp.) • Levinson, pp. 173-176 (excerpt from Chapter 10, “The Right Turn”) <p style="text-align: right;">WED., MAY 1: FINAL EDITS OF ANNOTATIONS DUE</p>

14	May 6, 8	<p><i>Well, You Wake Up in the Morning...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levinson, Chapter 13 (“Morning in America”; 20 pp.) • Levinson, Chapter 15 (“The New World”; 14 pp.) • Jeffrey A. Miron. “Is Prohibition Good Policy?” and “Conclusion.” Chapters 5 and 7 of <i>Drug War Crimes: The Consequences of Prohibition</i>. Oakland: The Independent Institute, 2004. (17 pp.) • Emily Weisburst and Sandra Black. “The Economic Case for Sentencing Reform.” <i>Econofact</i>. May 19, 2017. Internet: http://econofact.org/the-economic-case-for-sentencing-reform
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WEDNESDAY, MAY 15, 2:00-4:00: FINAL EXAM

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