

AMERICAN ECONOMIC HISTORY BEFORE 1900

ECO 326
FALL 2020

T TH 2:40–4:00 IN MAHAR 108, WITH MASKS REQUIRED AT ALL TIMES, AND ON ZOOM* **

LAST REVISED ON 17 OCTOBER 2020

In this course we will gain a fuller understanding of America by exploring its 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; we will 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 wars, slavery, and nationalism. We will also devote much time to looking at how different groups were affected by all these changes. We will gain insight into these issues by studying them from the dual perspectives of economics and history. We will also get the unique historical perspective of Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, a novel set in the mid-nineteenth century. As this is an upper-level expository writing class, you will have ample opportunity to improve your writing.

Prof. Ranjit S. Dighe

My Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/3794230589>

Office: Mahar 416**

Office hours: Tu 1:00–2:00 in Mahar 416**
W 1:00–2:00 on Zoom
Th 1:00–2:00 in Mahar 416**
(or by appointment if you can't make those times)

E-mail: ranjit.dighe@oswego.edu

Phone: 312-3484 (email is better)

The Blackboard site for this course contains links to the outside readings, my lecture outlines, course announcements, recordings of class meetings, and more. You will want to check it frequently.

*Because of the pandemic, class meetings will be done simultaneously in the classroom (for half the students) and as live broadcasts on Zoom (for the other half). Recordings of all class meetings will be available on Blackboard.

**BIG CAVEAT: If all goes well, all of our classes (before Thanksgiving week) will be held in our classroom and Tuesday and Thursday office hours will always be in my office. But the coronavirus may force this class online at any time. I will teach and work from home if and when I feel unsafe on campus or if I am sick. Likewise, you can always attend class via Zoom. Our safety is more important than where and how we meet.

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

—William Faulkner

For every complex problem there is an answer that is clear, simple, and wrong.

—H. L. Mencken

When the legend becomes fact, print the legend.

– from the movie “The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance”

Good questions outrank easy answers.

—Paul Samuelson

Half of knowledge is knowing where to find it.

—Samuel Johnson

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.
- William W. Brown. *The Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave*. Mineola, NY: Dover, 2003 (originally published in 1847). [Free versions are not hard to find on the Internet].
- (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 be an important part of your grade, and the clarity of your writing will affect 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 (7 pages, 12-point font)	10%

	Final draft (7 pages, 12-point font)	10%	
Discussion and preparation			60%
	Weekly discussion-preparation papers (300+ words, organized into paragraphs, starting in Week 1; 12 in all)	30%	
	Weekly one-sentence summaries (one sentence per article/chapter, 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:

- **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 Tuesday 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 14 weeks in the semester (not counting 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.

- **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 Thursday and will be submitted on Blackboard. 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 (not counting 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.

- **Class participation:** Since this class thrives on discussion, class participation will be 10% of your final grade. A perfect class participation score would entail at least **12 helpful contributions to discussion**. (The number is 12 because that is the number of full weeks of classes, minus 2 skips). Each such contribution earns you a “participation point”; no more than one participation point can be earned in a

single day, and none can be earned after our last day of class, December 3. Having your prep paper handy during class will help you remember what you had to say. On a typical day we will devote a large portion of the class time to discussion. I will be counting on you to initiate at least *some* of the discussion. Students can also earn participation points 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 online. The format will be part essay and part short answer.

- 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 normally located on the first floor of Penfield Library, but it seems to be online this semester. Contact information is at <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). A student who is caught cheating more than once will automatically fail the course.

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. 25, 27	<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 prep paper and your first one-sentence summaries paper are both due on Thurs., Aug. 27. (Normally the prep papers are due on Tuesdays and the sentence summaries on Thursdays.) Both should cover the Dighe chapter but not the syllabus. Both get submitted on Blackboard in their respective Drop Boxes.</p>
2	Sept. 1, 3	<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: Prep papers are due at the start of class Tuesday. Sentence summaries are due at the start of class Thursday. Both should cover all of the assigned readings for this week. The same goes for all future weeks, except where noted.</p> <p>Wed., Sept. 2: Last day to add a class</p>

3	Sept. 8, 10	<p><i>The Colonial Economy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 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.) · 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.) <p>THURS., SEPT. 10: TOPIC PAPER DUE</p>
4	Sept. 15, 17	<p><i>The Road to Revolution</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Gordon S. Wood, “Origins,” chapter I of <i>The American Revolution: A History</i> (New York: The Modern Library, 2003; 22 pp.) · Edwin J. Perkins, “Taxes and Politics,” chapter VII of <i>The Economy of Colonial America</i> (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980; 20 pp.) <p>Mon., Sept. 14: Last day to drop a class</p>
5	Sept. 22, 24	<p><i>Revolution and Constitution</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Gordon S. Wood, “American Resistance,” chapter II of <i>The American Revolution: A History</i> (New York: The Modern Library, 2003; 18 pp.) · 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>THURS., SEPT. 24: DATA APPENDIX DUE</p>
6	Sept. 29, Oct. 1	<p><i>Economic Life in the Early Republic</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.) · Ranjit S. Dighe, “Samuel Clemens in His Times,” chapter 1 (pp. 1-18) of Twain/Dighe
7	Oct. 6, 8	<p><i>The Political Economy of Slavery (I)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · William W. Brown, “The Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave” (pp. 1-49) of <i>The Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave</i>. (Feel free to read other sections of the book, too.) <p>THURS., OCT. 8: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE</p>
8	Oct. 13, 15	<p><i>The Political Economy of Slavery (II)</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, pp. 50-51 (“Notice,” “Explanatory,” map, and annotations) and chapters 1–5 (pp. 60-87)

9	Oct. 20, 22	<p><i>Social and Economic Life on the Mississippi, Through Huck's Eyes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Twain/Dighe, chapters 6–11 (pp. 87-126) <p>TUES., OCT. 20: MIDTERM ➔ This week's sentence summaries and prep papers are both due Thursday.</p> <p>Fri., Oct. 23: Last day of course withdrawal period</p>
10	Oct. 27, 29	<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 12–17 (pp. 126-170)
11	Nov. 3, 5	<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 18–23 (pp. 170-219) <p>THURS., NOV. 5: RESEARCH PAPER DUE</p>
12	Nov. 10, 12	<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 24–31 (pp. 219-267)
13	Nov. 17, 19	<p><i>One Kind of Freedom</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Twain/Dighe, chapters 32–Last (pp. 267-330)
14	Nov. 24 (online)	<p>TBA</p> <p>(No prep paper or sentence summaries are due this week.)</p> <p>Wed.-Fri., Nov. 25-27: Thanksgiving Break – no classes or office hours</p>
15	Dec. 1, 3 (online)	<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.) <p>THURS., DEC. 3: REVISED RESEARCH PAPER DUE</p>

SOMETIME IN MON., DEC. 7 – FRI., DEC. 11: FINAL EXAM (OPTIONAL AND ONLINE)

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