

E365: Topics in International Economic History

Topics in Historical Development Economics

ECTS	6
Duration	One semester
Regular cycle	Winter and summer terms
Working language	English
Examination	Term paper (80%) and presentation (20%)
Person responsible	Prof. Dr. Jörg Baten (Head of the Chair of Economic History)
Lecturer	Manon Stephan
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Course description and learning goals

This seminar introduces current research in historical development economics. Students choose a research paper in one of ten areas: long-term economic development, demography, health, religion, gender inequality, technology and growth, migration, education, agriculture and natural resources, or institutions. They examine the paper's historical setting, question, evidence, method, and conclusions, situate it in the literature, and carry out a feasible analysis of their own. By the end of the course, students should be able to assess an economic history paper critically, use historical evidence responsibly, and communicate an argument in writing and in a presentation. The seminar also prepares students for a bachelor's thesis.

Course structure and assessment

Current dates, deadlines, rooms, and any changes to the course arrangements are published on the Chair of Economic History's website and Alma. Please check the website for the semester in which you take the seminar.

Kickoff	Introduction to course requirements, research, writing, and presenting.
Paper proposal	Email a topic, proposed article or link, reason for choosing it, and an initial idea for your analysis. Check whether data and replication materials are available. The instructor confirms the paper's suitability.
Presentations	Present your work and discuss other students' work. Presentations usually take place in late January or February.
Term paper	Submit a PDF by email together with the files needed to follow your analysis.

Assessment: Term paper 80%; presentation 20%. Course materials are provided on ILIAS. Up to two individual meetings are available during the writing period; please schedule at least one early enough to discuss your proposed approach.

Term paper and presentation

The paper should be about 20 pages including tables and figures.

Your analysis can reproduce a figure, table, or calculation; apply an approach to another place or period; test an alternative measure or sample; or examine a related question. Choose software that suits the task. Stata or R are recommended for statistical analysis; Excel is suitable for small reconstructions or extensions. Document the steps. You are responsible for checking all sources, calculations, and claims, including any work assisted by AI; briefly disclose any AI tools used and their purpose.

Literature

Students choose literature relevant to their own topic and paper; the following are examples from the course materials:

- Alesina, A., Giuliano, P., and Nunn, N. (2013). "On the Origins of Gender Roles: Women and the Plough." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 128(2), 469–530.
- Dimico, A., Isopi, A., and Olsson, O. (2017). "Origins of the Sicilian Mafia: The Market for Lemons." *Journal of Economic History* 77(4), 1083–1115.
- Gruber, J., Hendren, N., and Townsend, R. M. (2014). "The Great Equalizer: Health Care Access and Infant Mortality in Thailand." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 6(1), 91–107.
- de Pleijt, A., Nuvolari, A., and Weisdorf, J. (2019). "Human Capital Formation During the First Industrial Revolution: Evidence from the Use of Steam Engines." *Journal of the European Economic Association*.
- Madsen, J. B., Raschky, P. A., and Skali, A. (2015). "Does Democracy Drive Income in the World, 1500–2000?" *European Economic Review* 78, 175–195.

For guidance on literature reviews: Webster, J., and Watson, R. T. (2002). "Analyzing the Past to Prepare for the Future: Writing a Literature Review." *MIS Quarterly* 26(2), xiii–xxiii.