The political economy of economic growth:  
The past thousand years

This course analyzes the sources of economic growth, focusing on the interaction of economic and political factors. We look at a series of experiences over the past 1400 years, from early medieval Venice through modern South Korea. In each case, we try to understand what explains the success or failure of long-term economic growth.

Most of the class will be devoted to discussion, so that it is important for students to come to class having done the reading. All students are expected to design and carry out an independent research project addressing some question having to do with the political economy of economic growth. A substantial amount of class time will be devoted to discussing research design. There will be periodic assignments related to the research paper. The paper is due on Wednesday, May 2 (the last day of reading period).

The research paper will count for 75 percent of your grade. Class participation will count for the remaining 25 percent.

Two books are required for purchase:


The Coop provides a link for ordering: [http://tinyurl.com/W18-GOV9-94JF-1](http://tinyurl.com/W18-GOV9-94JF-1)

At several points during the semester, members of the class are asked to read and summarize additional articles. These articles are indicated with an asterisk. They are not required reading for the rest of the students in the class.
Collaboration Policy: This course encourages collaboration on assignments for class presentations. However, collaboration on work submitted for formal evaluation – i.e. the final research paper – is not permitted. You are encouraged to discuss your research with other students, but your research paper should be entirely your own, and should use appropriate citation practices to acknowledge the use of books, articles, websites, lectures, discussions, etc., that you have consulted in the course of your research.
January 22  Introduction: The Political Economy of Economic Growth

January 29  Theoretical Perspectives I

Acemoglu and Robinson, chapters 1-3 (pages 7-95)


February 5  Theoretical Perspectives II

Engerman and Sokoloff, Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 10 and 11 (pages 1-56, 315-359)


February 12  Venice: The First Modern Economy

Acemoglu and Robinson, chapter 6 (pages 152-181)


February 19  Presidents’ Day – No Class
February 26   The free cities of medieval Europe


David Stasavage, “What we can learn from the early history of sovereign debt,” Explorations in Economic History 59 (January 2016), pages 1-16


*Mark Dincecco and Yuhua Wang, “Violent Conflict and Political Development over the Long Run: China versus Europe,” Annual Review of Political Science forthcoming 2018

March 5   Spain: Brilliant Failure

Acemoglu and Robinson, chapter 8


March 12  Spring break – No Class

March 19  England: From Civil War to Industrial Revolution

Acemoglu and Robinson, chapter 7


One-paragraph statement of research question due March 26

March 26  The New World: North and South

Acemoglu and Robinson, chapters 10-11 (pages 274-334)

Engerman and Sokoloff, chapter 3 (pages 57-93)

*Melissa Dell, “The Persistent Effects of Peru’s mining mita,” Econometrica 78, No. 6 (November, 2010), 1863–1903


April 9  
**The New World: North and South in the United States and Brazil**

Engerman and Sokoloff, chapter 4 (pages 94-120)


Engerman and Sokoloff:


*chapter 6: “Inequality and the Evolution of Taxation,” pages 168-211

*chapter 7: “Land and Immigration Policies,” pages 212-244

**One-paragraph statement of argument due April 16**

April 16  
**Colonialism and its effects**

Acemoglu and Robinson, chapters 9 and 12 (pages 245-273, 335-367)

Engerman and Sokoloff, chapter 9 (pages 295-314)


April 23  Post-colonial development

Acemoglu and Robinson, chapters 13-14 (pages 368-427)


April 30  Student presentations