Advanced Economic History course – Syllabus and program 2017-2018

Advanced Economic History is the core course of the Economic History topic and, as such, is highly recommended for students wishing to specialize in economic history and related subjects. This is a collective course designed and taught by members of the Centre d'histoire économique et sociale François-Simiand. It aims at presenting the state of the field using examples and topics from various research areas in economic history. The course is jointly taught by Facundo Alvaredo, Jérôme Bourdieu, Denis Cogneau, Lionel Keszenbaum, Eric Monnet, and Thomas Piketty.

Although this is not a formal prerequisite, it is assumed that students have already taken the "Introduction to Economic History" course and are familiar with the basic facts regarding the historical evolution of income and wealth, the changing composition of capital ownership, etc. Students who have not taken this course (or need to refresh their memory) are strongly encouraged to go through the syllabus and slides used in this course.

"Advanced Economic History" is organized in 12 lectures of 3 hours. To validate the course, students are required (1) to attend and actively participate to all lectures; (2) to take the exam.

Each session is focused on one topic in economic history and discusses that topic in length. In each case, there are two ‘mandatory paper’—reference papers on the topic—and various ‘advanced readings’ for those more interested by these topics. At the very least reading the ‘mandatory paper’ in each session is necessary/useful to follow the course. In addition these two papers will be used for the exam. For those who want to go further there is an additional list with the main references on each topic, which form the basis of the talk.
This session will introduce the course and describe the topics for the year. In particular, it will focus on presenting Economic History as a discipline: what sets it apart, what makes it different from both Economics and History. In addition the session will give a (very) brief history of the discipline and an overview of its main topics and their evolution through time.

Mandatory reading:

Additional references
This lecture addresses the evolutions of health over the last 300 years. We will present these evolutions with a specific focus on inequality in health in the long run—in particular, but not limited to, socio-economic inequalities. We will then discuss the respective role of public and private goods in explaining the increase in life expectancy over this period. Finally, we will briefly address the issue of early-life effects.

Mandatory reading:


Additional references

Session 3 – Consequences of war  
Lionel Keszenbaum and Eric Monnet

With a focus on the XIXth and XXth centuries, this session investigates the consequences of wars in historical perspective, looking both at the aggregate and the individual level. On the one hand, we will discuss the macro-level interrelation between war and economies by study how economies mobilized for wars, how wars affected economic outcomes (production, capital etc.) and, most of all, what have been the long-term consequences of the two World Wars on domestic economic and political institutions as well as on the rebalancing of power in world politics and international economic relationships. On the other hand, we will look at the micro-level impacts of war. We will discuss the growing literature related to medium- and long-term effects of wars for those who fought them. But an important issue, often overlooked, is who gets to fight during wars and, perhaps more importantly, who were exposed to combat during wartime.

Mandatory reading:

Additional references
We will review the functioning of the Gold standard and the Bretton Woods system with an emphasis on the reasons explaining the stability or instability of the international monetary system. Why did countries enter a fixed exchange rate regime? How does the international monetary system work? What are the constraints on domestic economies? Was the gold standard as cause of the Great Depression, of financial crises? What are the relationships between payments, financial systems and the international monetary system?

Mandatory reading:

Additional references:
Inequality and land reform in historical perspective. We will attempt to study land reforms and their relationship to inequality in the 20th century; the involvement of the United States in the reforms in Asia after WWII; the Alliance for Progress and Latin America; landless workers movements and other contemporary issues.

We will try to cover in more detail the cases of Mexico and Spain. Over several decades, Mexico redistributed nearly half of the national productive land, a scale exceeded only by Russia and China; this happened in the context of a revolution, and the subsequent property structure was heavily influenced by contemporary misunderstandings of the agrarian structures of the colonial period. The land reform in Spain initially took place in a democratic framework, with strict regard for due process of law; but the process led to violence and was at the origin of the civil war; it was not successful in redistributing large estates and was eventually abandoned.

Mandatory reading:

Additional references
Our global times came out of a world system that had been shaped by Western imperialism and colonialism from the 16th to the WW2, before to be shaken by socialist and anti-colonial movements, and East Asia emergence. Today, political tensions in Western societies around migration, turmoil in the Middle East, but also climate change issues, bring back to the table old debates on Western responsibility in the underdevelopment of the Rest of the world. The two lectures aim at providing an overview of the historical and economic literature on the benefits and costs of imperialism and colonialism for the West and for the Rest. The starting point will be the now consensual view that imperialism / colonialism was not necessarily a zero-sum game, in which what was gained by imperial powers would have been lost by the periphery or vice-versa.

The first lecture aims at providing an overview of the historical and economic literatures discussing to which extent the conquest and domination of the world by Europe brought a major contribution to its takeoff, or to the consolidation of its advantage in the 19th century. It will also examine the arguments according to which colonial empires turned into a burden in the 20th century and dragged down growth in metropolitan economies. Finally, it will discuss to which extent the pre-WW2 globalization waves promoted unequal exchange and retarded or hampered development in the periphery.

Mandatory reading:


Additional references

The lecture aims at providing an overview of the historical and economic literatures discussing whether European colonialism prevented development and even brought deindustrialization and impoverishment to colonized regions. Both non-institutional and institutional channels will be considered.

Mandatory reading:

Additional references
This lecture focuses on the transition from ternary societies (based upon functional economic-political-religious inequality) to proprietary societies (based upon a sharp demarcation between property rights and political rights) and their followers (including social-democratic, communist and post-communist societies). Additional references and information on this session are available online.

Mandatory reading:
- M. Finley. 1979. *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, chap.1

Additional references
This lecture studies the joint evolution of property and inequality regimes and party systems in electoral democracies. In particular, I stress the interaction between inequality dynamics and the structure of political cleavages (class-based vs identity-based). Additional references and information on this session are available online.

Mandatory reading:

Additional references
- C. Boix. 2015. Political Order and Inequality, CUP.
In labor history, the question of how to mobilize the labor force is very important. Two modes of mobilization are opposed: mobilization by coercion and mobilization by the market. The first part of the course will be devoted to evaluating this opposition in different contexts.

Mandatory reading:

Additional references
Jérôme Bourdieu

One way of observing work mobilization is to observe the duration of work. The evolution of working time over the long term is an important marker of the place of work in societies. Various measures and interpretations of these developments are available. In a second phase, we will look at different forms of resistance to the mobilization of work by employers. We will see that sometimes powerful forms of resistance exist even in slave systems. Emphasis will be placed on the formation of trade unions and the problem of the organization of employees in contemporary societies.

Mandatory reading:


Additional references

- G. William Domhoff, “The Rise and Fall of Labor Unions In The U.S. From the 1830s until 2012”
  http://www2.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/power/history_of_labor_unions.html