

Time:           Section 01: TR 8:00–9:15am Central Time  
                  Section 02: TR 9:35–10:50am Central Time

Location:       Zoom

Instructor:     Ariell Zimran, PhD  
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Office Hours:  Thursday 11:30am–1:30pm or by appointment

**Introduction** Around the beginning of the nineteenth century, the western world—first Britain and then the rest of western Europe and North America—reached a major economic turning point. Spurred by the Industrial Revolution and the Demographic Transition, western economies gradually emerged from millennia in which any rise in living standards would eventually be reversed, into the period of modern economic growth that persists to today. This transition is arguably one of the most important changes in human history, marking the shift from a world in which poverty was the norm to the modern world in which, in developed countries, average living standards have improved to a level unimaginable just a few centuries ago. But as might be expected with such a fundamental change, this transition was not entirely smooth. This course explores this change and the disruptions it caused.

## Course Goals

### *Content*

- Understand the importance and uniqueness of modern economic growth.
- Explain why this change first happened in Europe, and specifically Britain, around the beginning of the nineteenth century. Specifically ...
  - ... what drove the Industrial Revolution?
  - ... what drove the Demographic Transition?
- Investigate some of the disruptions generated by modern economic growth

### *Skills*

- Read, understand, contextualize, and critique professional research papers in the economics literature
- Develop, implement, and describe the results of data analysis with causal inference

**Teaching Assistant** Colin Sharpe (colin.q.sharpe@vanderbilt.edu). Office hours Wednesday 9:00am–11:00am or by appointment.

**Prerequisites** Officially, only ECON 3010 or ECON 3012 (Intermediate Microeconomics) are required. However, you will find the course very difficult if you have not also taken ECON 1500 (Economic Statistics) or equivalent. If you are missing this course, please speak with me in office hours as soon as possible. A familiarity with European history is helpful but not necessary.

**Course Structure** This course is not a survey of European economic history. There are many interesting and important topics that we will not touch on. Instead, after one week of introduction and two weeks of methodological groundwork, the course will focus on one topic per week, organized thematically rather than chronologically. Each Tuesday, I will give a lecture on the week’s topic, surveying key issues and debates, and focusing on some results of particular interest. Each Thursday, we will discuss one professional research paper in detail.

All class meetings will be held synchronously on Zoom. Outside of special circumstances, students are expected to attend and participate synchronously in all class meetings with video on. If this will be a problem for you (e.g., if you have long-term technological or connectivity issues) please speak to me as soon as possible. Be aware now that I may record some or all class sessions; if this will be a problem for you, please speak to me as soon as possible.

**Note** This is my first time teaching online, and I ask that you bear with me as I adjust to the new medium. As a result, everything on this syllabus is subject to change. For this reason, be sure to check with me if you are planning to read more than a week ahead, and make sure that you check regularly on Brightspace that you have the most updated version of the syllabus.

We are dealing with very unusual and unprecedented circumstances. If you are having trouble, I will not judge you or think less of you. I hope you will extend the same grace to me. If you need extra help, to miss class, or more time with something, please ask and I’ll do my best to work with you. You do not need to give me any personal information about your physical or mental health, or anything else. That said, you are always welcome to talk to me about anything that is going on, though be aware that I am subject to some mandatory reporting requirements. I will do what I can to help.

**Request** I welcome feedback and constructive criticism—if you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions, please feel free to discuss them with me. It is most valuable to you if you provide feedback during the course so I can make use of it immediately (rather than it benefitting only next year’s students). Even if I am not able to make changes to address your requests and suggestions, it is helpful to be aware of your perspective.

**Course Materials** No textbook is required, but those interested in expanding their libraries are encouraged to purchase Allen (2009) and Mokyř (2009), of which we will cover large segments. Students interested in further study or an additional reference are also encouraged to acquire Angrist and Pischke (2015), which is a useful handbook for applied econometrics, though we will not use it directly. All readings listed below will be accessible through Brightspace. Let me know if you have trouble finding anything. During each class, I will produce a virtual “blackboard” and will post this online after class; note that this will not be an exhaustive set of notes, so you will still need to have your own. I will also circulate handouts from time to time that I will distribute on Zoom and through Brightspace.

The data assignments will also require access to statistical software. You may use whichever software you prefer, but the only “supported” package for this course is Stata. You can access Stata in a variety of ways:

- It is my understanding that the computer labs in Wilson and Stevenson are available to students outside of regular class times. However, I am not certain if this is the case, and in any event I imagine that access will be difficult under present circumstances.
- Remote access to Stata is possible at <https://anywherevu.vanderbilt.edu>. Be aware, however, that there are a limited number of licenses and a large number of students in this class and others will be using them, so there may be congestion in getting access. Note also that a quick inspection does not reveal any persistent storage, so you will need to figure out a way to store your data and code elsewhere (e.g., Dropbox).
- You can purchase a license to use on your personal computer at <https://www.stata.com/order/new/edu/gradplans/student-pricing/>. A 6-month Stata/IC license is sufficient for our needs in this course, and costs \$48. I strongly recommend this option.

## Evaluation

- *Participation and Attendance* (5%). Participation in class, and in particular in the Thursday paper discussions, is essential for this course's function, and is especially important given that we will not be meeting in person. Therefore, participation and attendance are a part of your grade. I understand that there are times that you will be unable to attend class, and this is fine as long as it is an exception rather than the rule. If an issue arises that consistently prevents you from attending class, please inform me as soon as possible.
- *Weekly Reading Responses* (10%). There will be 10 discussion papers that we cover on Thursdays during the semester, from September 17 to November 19. By **7:00am each Thursday morning**, you must complete on Brightspace a response to the reading for that day, following a standard prompt that I will circulate separately. The goal of this assignment is to get you to think seriously about the week's reading before we discuss it on Thursday. As a result, these assignments will be graded for completion, so it is alright if you didn't understand the paper fully—as long as it is clear that you made an effort to understand the paper and think seriously about your responses, you will receive full credit; otherwise you will receive no or partial credit at the TA's discretion. Because these are intended to prepare you for the week's discussion, no late responses will be accepted. You are encouraged to discuss the week's reading with your classmates, but each student must complete their own response. To address assorted conflicts that might prevent you from being able to complete these assignments, your 3 lowest scores on these responses will be dropped. If you must miss more than 3 papers, please let me know as soon as possible.
- *Additional Reading Response* (10%). Choose one topic that we cover in the course or another topic relevant to the course (with my approval). Find another professional research paper that relates to the topic and get it approved by the TA (allow a few days for this). This should, in general, be an empirical paper written by an economist in the last 20 years or so. Then read that paper and write a reading response for it in an essay form and in somewhat more detail than the typical weekly responses (about 3–5 pages). Unlike the weekly responses, this one will be graded for quality. You may submit the response at any time during the semester, but you must submit it no later than **11:59pm on Wednesday, December 2**.
- *Data Assignments* (15%). There will be 3 assignments throughout the semester that will require you to work with data and statistical software. These assignments will give you the opportunity to gain hands-on experience with the statistical tools that we will discuss throughout the semester. These assignments will be graded for accuracy. You are encouraged to consult with other students, but ultimately each student must produce their own statistical code and assignment to turn in. Each assignment is equally weighted and the due dates are listed in the reading list below.
- *Quizzes* (15%). Every two weeks, there will be a quiz administered through Brightspace. The quiz will be timed (expect about 30 minutes) and closed-note. You will not be permitted to discuss the quizzes with other students. Quizzes will **begin at noon on Thursdays of odd-numbered weeks** (other than week 1) and will be **due at noon on Tuesdays of even-numbered weeks** (except week 2 and the last quiz, which will be circulated the Thursday before Thanksgiving break and will be due on the last day of classes). There will be a total of 6 quizzes and the lowest 2 quiz grades will be dropped. Each quiz will cover the material from the previous two weeks (e.g., the quiz beginning on Thursday of week 3 will cover weeks 2 and 3), and will be graded for accuracy.
- *Midterm Examination* (15%). The midterm examination will be an open-note take-home exam, but during the period of the exam, you are not permitted to discuss it with anyone except me and the TA. I will circulate it at **3:00pm on Thursday, October 15, and it will be due at 11:59pm on Tuesday, October 20**. It will cover all material through Week 7 of the course ("Culture"). More details on the exam will be circulated closer to the date, but I expect it to take longer than a typical in-class exam. If these dates pose a problem, please inform me immediately.

- *Final Examination (30%)*. Like the midterm examination, the final examination will be an open-note take-home exam that you will not be permitted to discuss with anyone except me and the TA. The final examination will be cumulative and its structure will be announced closer to the date. Like the midterm, I expect it to take longer to complete than a typical in-class exam. The date and time will be announced later in the term, and will depend on guidance from the registrar's office. Substantial improvement in performance between the midterm and final examinations will be given consideration in assigning final grades.

The numerical grades assigned above yield a single score for each student at the end of the semester, on which the final grade is based. I will grade the class on a curve, meaning that—except in unusual cases—the rank of your score in the distribution of scores of the course rather than your score itself is used to determine the final grade. Approximately 30 percent of students will receive an A or A-, 40 percent will receive a B+ or B, and 30 percent will receive a B- or below. The cutoff between a B+ and B will be set at approximately the median. Note that this is the combined curve for both sections of ECON 3160, not for each section separately.

**How to do well in this course** This course is very different from most that you have probably seen, either in economics or history. To borrow a description from a friend, economic history is a “whole-brain” subject, in that it combines economic theory, data analysis, and the construction and critique of written arguments. Here is a non-comprehensive list of tips on how to well in this class:

- Make sure you don't fall behind, especially at the beginning of the course—everything we do in weeks 4–13 builds on what we will do in weeks 2 and 3.
- To avoid falling behind, be sure to study the material as we go over it rather than waiting until there is a quiz or exam. That is, make sure that, after each class, you take some time to go back over your notes to see what you understand and what you don't. This will help you solidify your grasp on the material and will encourage you to get help on things you didn't understand.
- Don't bang your head against the wall too much. Some degree of frustration in studying and preparing assignments is healthy, and overcoming it is a valuable part of the learning process. But if you are spending hours on end trying to understand something and it isn't happening, it's probably time to ask someone for help.
- Building on the above, if you don't understand something, make sure to ask for help. I suggest that you take advantage of at least the following three mechanisms:
  - Speak up in class. If, at the time I teach something, it doesn't make sense to you, odds are that you are not the only one who didn't understand. Don't be shy to say so—it's better to resolve the confusion immediately and for the whole class. And if, after studying the material from a previous class, you don't understand something, please ask in class—I will (almost) always set aside time at the beginning of class for questions. Again, if you are confused by something, odds are that someone else is.
  - Do not be shy to ask me or the TA for help in office hours. In the past, at least 75% of my office hours were not attended by a single student. We are here to help you, but you have to tell us that you need help. Even if you are so confused that you don't know what questions to ask, we can still help.
  - Talk to your classmates. You might consider forming a study group if you think that would be helpful.

## Policies

- *Minimum Requirements*. To pass the class, students must, at minimum, submit by the applicable deadlines, the additional reading response and the final examination. Note that this is a necessary condition but not a sufficient condition. The College of Arts and Science's policy on incomplete grades

details the circumstances under which these requirements may be completed after the conclusion of the semester.

- *Late Assignments.* In general, late assignments will not be accepted; but if circumstances arise that would require you to submit an assignment late, please inform me as soon as possible.
- *Academic Integrity.* As a part of online learning, an increased degree of trust and respect between students and instructors is necessary. I trust that all of you will be honest and honorable in your behavior in this course. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be addressed in accordance with Vanderbilt University's Honor System. Each exam and assignment has guidelines listed above as to whether you are permitted to collaborate with your classmates, and I will make these expectations clear again when the assignment is circulated. Please speak to me or the TA if you are ever unsure of what is permissible.
- *Accessibility.* Students should contact Student Access Services for specific accommodations. If there are any circumstances that make our learning environment and activities difficult, please let me know as soon as possible.

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**Schedule of Meetings and Topics** The readings listed below in roman text form the basis for the Tuesday lecture on that topic; you are responsible for what I cover in class. You may wish to refer back to these readings when you are studying, but be aware that there will likely be large aspects of them that we will not cover, so don't get caught up on those parts. The reading in italics is the discussion paper for that topic. You should read it closely before Thursday's class and prepare a response to it, due 7:00am each Thursday on which we have a discussion.

Week	Dates	Topic	Readings	Notes
1	Aug. 25	Course Overview		
	Aug. 27	Growth in the Long Run	Clark (2007, ch. 1) Galor (2011, ch. 2) Mokyr (1990, chs. 1, 5, 6, 9)	
2	Sep. 1-3	Econometrics		
3	Sep. 8-10	Econometrics		
4	Sep. 15-17	The Malthusian Economy	Clark (2007, ch. 2) Kelly and Ó Gráda (2012, 2014) Chaney and Hornbeck (2015) Voigtländer and Voth (2013) <i>Ashraf and Galor (2011)</i>	
5	Sep. 22-24	The Rise of Europe	Acemoglu et al. (2005) Becker and Woessmann (2009) Cantoni (2015) Cantoni et al. (2018) <i>Dittmar (2011)</i>	
6	Sep. 29-Oct. 1	Induced Innovation	Crafts (2011) Allen (2009, chs. 2, 6) San (2020) Humphries and Schneider (2018) Kelly et al. (2014) Mokyr (2009, pp. 267-278) <i>Hanlon (2015)</i>	Assignment 1 due 11:59pm 9/30

7	Oct. 6–8	Culture	Crafts (2011) Mokyr (2009, chs. 3, 5, 6) Kelly et al. (2020) Allen (2009, ch. 10) <i>Squicciarini and Voigtländer (2015)</i>	
8	Oct. 13–15	Institutions	North and Weingast (1989) Acemoglu et al. (2001) Acemoglu and Johnson (2005) Shiue and Keller (2007) <i>Acemoglu et al. (2011)</i>	Midterm starts 3pm 10/15
9	Oct. 20–22	Leaders and Followers	Becker et al. (2011) Mitch (1993) Squicciarini (2020) Hornung (2015) <i>Juhász (2018)</i>	Midterm due 11:59pm 10/20
10	Oct. 27–29	Demographic Transition	Galor (2011, ch. 2) Guinnane (2011) Becker et al. (2010) Beach and Hanlon (2019) <i>Ager et al. (2018)</i>	
11	Nov. 3–5	Living Standards	Voth (2003) Antràs and Voth (2003) Lindert and Williamson (1983) Mokyr (1988) Feinstein (1998) Mokyr and Ó Gráda (1996) <i>Beach and Hanlon (2018)</i>	Assignment 2 due 11:59pm 11/4
12	Nov. 10–12	The Age of Mass Migration	Hatton and Williamson (1998, chs. 2–4) Spitzer and Zimran (2020) Spitzer (2016) <i>Karadja and Prawitz (2019)</i>	
13	Nov. 17–19	The Age of Mass Migration	Spitzer and Zimran (2018) Hatton and Williamson (1998, ch. 9) Abramitzky et al. (2012) <i>Collins and Zimran (2020)</i>	
14	Dec. 1–3	Office Hours During Class Time		Assignment 3 due 11:59pm 12/4 Additional response due 11:59pm 12/4 Final Exam Distributed 12/3
	Dec. 10	Final Exam Due 2:00pm		

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## References

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