

**Syllabus for Economics 395 - Seminar**  
**The Global Economy: Past and Present**  
**Grinnell College**  
**MW 2:15 - 4:05pm, Carnegie 305**

**Spring 2001**

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I maintain an open door policy -- when my door is open, I'm willing to meet with students. You can almost always find me in my office 9am to 4:30pm M-F except when I'm not in class [MWF 9-9:50 and 11-11:50]. You are welcome to stop by at your convenience without an appointment. If you want to ensure that I am in my office at a time convenient to you and that you won't need to wait, make an appointment. A sign-up sheet is always posted on my door for the current and forthcoming week showing when I'm scheduled to be out of the office and when others plan to meet with me. You may also send me an e-mail. I give priority to students who make appointments and then students without appointments on a first come, first seen basis.

**Course Description**

At the close of the 19th century the map makers' British red was splashed across every continent, western Europeans dominated world events and trade, and even the humblest laborers lived richer, longer and more varied lives than their grandparents could ever have imagined. Over the preceding centuries western European economies had gradually, but at an accelerating pace, been transformed, while those of their former rivals and peers (the Ottomans, Indians and Chinese) failed to keep pace as agricultural and industrial productivity gain slowed or even reversed. In this course we will examine the economic history of the world ca. 13,000 BC to the present in an attempt to explore how and why "the West" was unequivocally richer than the rest by ca. 1800-1950, and what the lessons of the past suggest for the future.

Until the middle and late 20th century, few rulers or societies collected the volumes of data we take for granted in the US today -- GDP accounts were first developed in the mid 1930s, routine "national" population and production censuses were only commonly and consistently conducted from the late 18th century, and even the discipline of economics was just escaping from the constraints of moral philosophers ca. 1800. Thus, much of the evidence we have from the past is fragmentary (both in time and space), subjective or qualitative rather than quantitative, and produced by scholars across a wide range of disciplines, including anthropology, archeology, genetics and history.

The course readings include some of the most recent, acclaimed and often controversial books relating to world economic history and the global links across regions, continents and oceans. None of the readings are a classic textbook, designed to pre-digest and present in linear format stylized "facts". All deal with substantive issues of economic growth and stagnation within a framework of an inter-linked world in which ideas, technology, products and people have always, albeit more or less readily at different times and places, crossed boundaries of political states, ethnic identity and geographical impediments. Each provides an insight into the many ways scholars (within and across disciplines) collect and organize knowledge in pursuit of a common set of goals, including the identification and explanation of the changes in the size, structure and productivity of economies in the millennia and centuries prior to 2000, and the examination of the causes of and inter-relationships between the agricultural, demographic, industrial, institutional, technological and transportation revolutions that mark human existence

and have allowed us to improve our individual and social chances for a long, healthy, drudge-free, prosperous life of opportunity.

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### **Required Readings**

- ◆ Available in Bookstore [on 2-hour reserve in Burling]
  - K. N. Chaudhuri, Asia Before Europe: Economy and Civilization of the Indian Ocean from the Rise of Islam to 1750 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 28-61, 71-91, 94-100, 115-48, 151-374. [DS339 C48]
  - Jared Diamond, Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fate of Human Societies (New York: Norton, 1997): 13-28, 35-52, 67-401. [HM206 D48]
  - Richard A. Easterlin, Growth Triumphant: The 21st Century in Historical Perspective (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996): 1-162. [HD75 E168]
  - E. L. Jones., Growth Recurring: Economic Change in World History (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000): 13-194. [not in Burling collection]
  - David S. Landes, The Wealth and Poverty of Nations (New York: Norton, 1997): 1-524. [HC240.Z9 W45]
  - Joel Mokyr, The Lever of Riches: Technological Creativity and Economic Progress (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990): 3-304. [HC79.T4 M648]
- ◆ Photocopied handouts
  - Andre Gundar Frank, ReORIENT: Global Economy in the Asian Age (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998): 1-12, 52-185, 205-09. [HF1359 F697]
  - Angus Maddison, "Explaining the Economic Performance of Nations, 1820-1989," in Angus Maddison, Explaining the Economic Performance of Nations (Hants, England: Edward Elgar Press, 1995), 91-32 [original page #s 91-61].
- ◆ Word files sent as attachments to ECN395-01@lyris.grinnell.edu.
  - student papers

### **Course Requirements**

- ◆ Class attendance and active, informed class participation are required.
  - To prepare for class you are expected to read the assignments prior to each meeting, and prepare a thoughtful 1 page (1-1/2 or doubled spaced, typed) paper setting forth the issues, questions, etc. you want to discuss during class based on the assigned readings. These should be sent to me as a Word file e-mail attachment by noon of each class day at frostmj@grinnell.edu.
  - Active, informed class participation entails initiating and responding to discussion, asking and answering questions, listening thoughtfully to others and engaging them in class discussions.
  - This component of the course will comprise 25% of your final course grade.
- ◆ Examinations -- there are no examinations scheduled during the term or finals week.

#### ◆Papers

·You may write i) three short (8-10 pages) papers, or ii) two short (8-10 pages) papers, one of which must be substantively revised and expanded (12-15 pages). You may choose any combination of Papers #1 - #3, subject to a minimum of 6 students selecting each Paper #. Each paper (including formal class presentations) will account for 25% of your final course grade.

·Paper #1 due Wednesday, March 14th will examine the economy of one of the

·classical 3rd to 1st millennium BC civilizations, e.g., Fertile Crescent, Indus Valley, Egypt, China

·classical 500 BC - 500 AD civilizations, e.g., Rome, Maurya or Gupta India

·classical 500 AD - 1500 AD, e.g., Aztec, Inca, Maya, Sung China.

·Paper #2 due on different dates from April 9th - 23rd will examine the economy of a society ca. 1600-1900 which had not begun modern economic growth prior to the middle of the 19th century, e.g., Ottomans, Tokugawa or Meiji Japan, Mughal India, Tsarist Russia.

·Paper #3 due May 2nd or 7th will examine a contemporary economy in the context of the global links examined in the course or a particular issue relating to those global links (e.g., human and capital migration; the exchange of goods, services and ideas; domestic and international institutions)

·Revised paper due 9am Tuesday, May 15th.

◆E-mail list - You are responsible for all communications sent via the course e-mail list ECN395-01@lyris.grinnell.edu. This is designed as a communication tool from me to you (revisions to assignments, etc.), and from you to each other. Use it to continue or raise issues for class discussion, share bibliographic sources, etc.

#### Course Outline

◆Attached as a tentative Course Outline by class meeting/date. You will be advised of revisions through the course e-mail list.

·The [#] for each class date is the approximate number of pages assigned for that day. None of these readings are technical, and some should read relatively quickly, but this information may help you schedule your time.