



LUDWIG-  
MAXIMILIANS-  
UNIVERSITÄT  
MÜNCHEN



## Geography and Technology in Economic History

Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

Winter term 2020/21

### Instructors

Professor: Davide Cantoni; email: [cantoni@lmu.de](mailto:cantoni@lmu.de).

Teaching assistant: Johannes Wimmer; email: [johannes.wimmer@econ.lmu.de](mailto:johannes.wimmer@econ.lmu.de).

### Meeting times and locations

All course materials will be posted to the LMU moodle page. The enrolment key is `malthus`.

### Lectures:

Lectures will be pre-recorded and posted online (link on Moodle).

To allow you to ask questions to professor Cantoni about the lecture material (lacking the possibility to ask questions in pre-recorded lectures), we will hold online office hours every 2–3 weeks, on Fridays, 11:00–12:00. The exact dates are:

- Questions about meetings 1–2: Nov 13, 2020, 11:00–12:00
- Questions about meetings 3–4: Nov 27, 2020, 11:00–12:00
- Questions about meetings 5–7: Dec 18, 2020, 11:00–12:00
- Questions about meetings 8–9: Jan 15, 2021, 11:00–12:00
- Questions about meetings 10–11: Jan 29, 2021, 11:00–12:00
- Review session: Feb 5, 2021, 11:00–12:00

To attend office hours, you need to register (with a LMU email address) through this website: <https://lmu-munich.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJ01deqtqTooGdF3cj1S77t65JhgFr20oICM>. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meetings.

### Classes (tutorials):

- Wednesdays, 14:00–16:00 (c.t.), online
- Wednesdays, 16:00–18:00 (c.t.), online

Both classes cover the same material. You can choose to attend either one. To attend the classes, you need to register (with a LMU email address) through this website: <https://lmu-munich.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJEvduGrpzIjE9KTCmHRkG3kLW41HHTzrKNw>. You will then obtain zoom links to the classes.

Classes begin in the second week of the term (November 11).

## Credits

90 minutes' exam, 6 ECTS points.

The final exam will likely take place in lieu of the last lecture, on February 12. Owing to the current pandemic, the planned format is a take-home exam. Time and exact mode: to be confirmed.

## Course overview

This course aims to explain the very long run trends in economic history. A core question that underlies this class will be: why are our societies so much more productive/rich than our ancestors' ones? In particular, this class will try to understand how differences in geography and in the technological modes of production (and their interaction with demography) can help understanding diverging patterns of economic development across the world and over time.

In doing this, we will try to blend a thorough understanding of historical facts and trends with some simple hypotheses and predictions based on workhorse models of macroeconomic growth theory, as well as with econometric analysis of historical data.

This course is complementary, but does not build on the course "Culture and Institutions in Economic History," which is offered in the summer term.

## Course prerequisites

It is expected that you have completed the compulsory sequence of economics classes in the economics (BSc) major; in particular, you should have a background in econometrics (equivalent to successful attendance of *Empirische Ökonomie I* and *II*) and in macroeconomics.

This course is not generally suitable for economics minors (*Nebenfachstudenten*) unless they meet these prerequisites or equivalent.

## Syllabus

**Meeting 1:** Introduction; basic facts of long-run history; real wages.

**Meetings 2–3:** Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* as a theory of geographic determinants of development; the Neolithic Revolution; income and geography today.

**Meetings 4–5:** The Malthusian model; predictions and data; the European Marriage Pattern.

**Meetings 6–7:** Exit from Malthusianism: Solow, Unified Growth models; population and technological progress

**Christmas break**

**Meetings 8–9:** Clark's *Survival of the Richest*; income and welfare in the Malthusian world.

**Meetings 10–11:** The Industrial Revolution; the future of growth; review.

## Literature

### Books

There are three required textbooks for this class. Actually, they are not truly economic textbooks. Rather, they are popular books by highly acclaimed researchers. As such, they are eminently readable, while at the same time rigorous in their analysis.

- Diamond, Jared (1997). *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Clark, Gregory (2007). *A Farewell to Alms: A Brief Economic History of the World*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Vollrath, Dietrich (2020). *Fully Grown: Why a Stagnant Economy Is a Sign of Success*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

For additional reference — to support the materials discussed — I will also occasionally post some research papers. They are *not* required reading, but they might be useful to look up to deepen your understanding of the lecture materials.

### Research papers

Classes will be based on recent research papers. These papers will be posted online in time before the class meetings. Please read the papers in advance of the class meetings so that you can have a fruitful discussion with your classmates and the teaching assistant.

**Week 3 (November 18, 2020):** Allen, R. C. (2001). The Great Divergence in European Wages and Prices from the Middle Ages to the First World War. *Explorations in Economic History*, 38:411–447

**Week 5 (December 2, 2020):** Olsson, O. and Hibbs Jr., D. A. (2005). Biogeography and long-run economic development. *European Economic Review*, 49:909–938

**Week 6 (December 9, 2020):** De Moor, T. and Van Zanden, J. L. (2010). Girl power: the european marriage pattern and labour markets in the north sea region in the late medieval and early modern period. *The Economic History Review*, 63(1):1–33

**Week 7 (December 16, 2020):** Ashraf, Q. and Galor, O. (2011). Dynamics and Stagnation in the Malthusian Epoch. *American Economic Review*, 101(5):2003–2041

**Week 9 (January 13, 2021):** Nunn, N. and Qian, N. (2011). The potato's contribution to population and urbanization: Evidence from a natural experiment. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 126(2):593–650

**Week 10 (January 20, 2021):** Voth, H.-J. (1998). Time and work in eighteenth-century london. *Journal of Economic History*, 58(1):29–58

**Week 11 (January 27, 2021):** Squicciarini, M. P. and Voigtländer, N. (2015). Human Capital and Industrialization: Evidence from the Age of Enlightenment. Forthcoming, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*

**Week 12 (February 3, 2021):** Hsieh, C.-T., Hurst, E., Jones, C. I., and Klenow, P. J. (2019). The allocation of talent and us economic growth. *Econometrica*, 87(5):1439–1474