



## Geography and Technology in Economic History

Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

Winter term 2021/22

### Instructors

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

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### Meeting times and locations

#### Lectures:

Lectures are given in person and start on October 22, 2021 12:00-14:00 (c.t.). They take place in room M110 in the main building, Geschwister-Scholl-Platz 1. Please note that the "3G" principle (proof of vaccination, negative test, or recovery from infection) is applied for access to the main building and to live lectures. Check here to verify LMU's current policy about teaching and access to buildings.

For those who do not wish or cannot attend live lectures, pre-recorded lectures covering the same materials will be offered. The recordings are available through VideoOnline.

Note that while the lectures have been recorded in the previous academic year, the instructor will stick to the same materials to avoid any disadvantage for students not attending the live lectures. Students who attend the recorded lectures also have the possibility to ask questions to Professor Cantoni in two special office hours:

- Dec 10, 2021, 10:00–12:00; [registration link](#)
- Feb 4, 2022, 10:00–12:00; [registration link](#)

To attend office hours, you need to register (with a LMU email address) through the links above. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing the Zoom link to join the meetings.

#### Classes:

Classes will take place on Zoom and are *not* recorded. Classes begin in the second week of the term (October 28, 2021). We offer two time slots:

- Thursdays, 8:30–10:00 (**s.t.**)
- Thursdays, 10:00–12:00 (**c.t.**)

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. You will then obtain Zoom links to the classes.

## Credits

90 minutes' exam, 6 ECTS points.

The final exam will likely take place in lieu of the last lecture, on February 11, 2022. Owing to the current pandemic, the format is a digital take-home exam. Time and exact mode: to be confirmed. You can sign up for the exam starting in December.

## 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 1–2:** Introduction; basic facts of long-run history; real wages.

**Meetings 3–4:** Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* as a theory of geographic determinants of development; the Neolithic Revolution; income and geography today.

**Meetings 5–6:** The Malthusian model; predictions and data; the European Marriage Pattern.

**Meetings 7–8:** Exit from Malthusianism: Solow, Unified Growth models; population and technological progress

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

**Meetings 10–12:** 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.

### Research papers

Classes will be based on recent research papers. These papers will be posted online. 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.

**Class 2:** 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

**Class 4:** Olsson, O. and Hibbs Jr., D. A. (2005). Biogeography and long-run economic development. *European Economic Review*, 49:909–938

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

**Class 6:** Voigtländer, N. and Voth, H.-J. (2013). How the West ‘Invented’ Fertility Restriction. *American Economic Review*, 103(6):2227–2264

**Class 7:** 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

**Class 8:** Voth, H.-J. (1998). Time and work in eighteenth-century London. *Journal of Economic History*, 58(1):29–58

**Class 9:** Squicciarini, M. P. and Voigtländer, N. (2015). Human Capital and Industrialization: Evidence from the Age of Enlightenment. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*

**Class 10:** 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