

**Economic History Reading Group**  
**Spring 2024**  
**Syllabus – January 23, 2024**

**Time:** Wednesdays: 10:15am-11:45am

**Location:** L9, 1-2, 002

**Instructors:** Philipp Ager and Jochen Streb

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## **Course Description**

This reading group is for Ph.D. candidates and advanced master students with an interest in economic history. We will discuss recent research papers concerning relevant topics in economic history, demography, labor economics, innovation and technological change. Some of the papers will cover tools and advances in methods that are useful for economic historians and economists in conducting empirical research. Examples are applications of machine learning to digitize data, automatized linking, or the use of GIS methods.

## **Guidelines**

The aim of this course is to understand the issues and methods of research in economic history on the basis of current discussion papers and thereby gain inspiration and guidance for your own research projects. You will be required to present a discussion paper and write an essay.

All course participants will present a current discussion paper in detail and discuss its strengths and weaknesses with the class. Students are not required to simply summarize the research project. Instead, the students are asked to go into depth and critically analyze the project based on the following key questions (the background literature provides help to answer these key questions).

Use the following key questions to structure your presentation. Encourage an open discussion about your topic.

1. **What is the research question?** Answering this question is not just about identifying the research question (or the starting hypothesis). Rather, it is about contextualizing the research project within the current state of research. Has the state of research been correctly identified and assessed? What are the current gaps in research and what is this project doing to close these gaps? It should also be discussed whether and why the answer to the research question is interesting for a broader audience. Is the project, for example, motivated by current (economic) political discourse?
2. **Which method is used to answer the research question?** Here too, of course, it is not simply a matter of naming the research method. Instead, the research method

must be placed in the scientific context. Is the research method suitable for answering the research question? Does the research method reflect the state of the art? Are there alternative approaches? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the chosen research method? Was the method applied correctly? Did the scholars attempt to prove causality?

3. **What is the theoretical basis of the research project?** Is the research project motivated by specific social science models? What theoretical hypotheses underlie the research question? Do theorists agree on the models and hypotheses used in this research project or is there dissent (such as between monetarists and Keynesians)? How is the choice of the underlying theory justified? Does the theory fit the economic-historical question? Is the theoretical background convincing?
4. **Which research data are used?** The empirical basis of economic history research can be qualitative and quantitative data. It is important to subject both types of data to serious source criticism. Who originally collected and provided the data and for what purpose? Is the data used trustworthy and consistent? Are the data quantitatively sufficient and representative? Do the data measure what they should measure? Was the data newly collected or taken from published sources? Is there better data available?
5. **What are the results of the research project?** Have the scientists come to a clear conclusion? Do they confirm or falsify their initial hypothesis? Is the result new and surprising? Has causality been shown? Has the research project improved our understanding of certain economic-historical or theoretical relationships? Has the project led to scientific progress? These are questions about the contribution of the project.
6. **In your opinion, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the project?** The answer to this question should be based on the previous key questions. What specific mistakes were made? What could have been done better? Formulate constructive criticism. What was done particularly well? What have you learned from this project?
7. **What further research projects are conceivable?** Try to develop ideas on how you could expand the research area discussed here with your own research. Do you know better data? Do you know of a better research method? Is there a better theory or a better historical case study? Would you like to disprove an established hypothesis?

At the end of the course, you will be required to reflect on the content discussed in a short essay (up to three pages).

## Grades

Final essay (50%), Chair of Discussion (25%), Class Participation (25%)

# Reading List

- (\*) indicates that the articles are required reading. These articles should be presented and discussed in class.

## 1 Session 1 (February 21, 2024)

### Persistence I

- (\*) Kelly, M., 2020. Understanding persistence. Working Paper [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3688200](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3688200)
- Voth, H.J., 2021. Persistence—myth and mystery. In the handbook of historical economics (pp. 243-267). Academic Press. <https://www.zora.uzh.ch/id/eprint/198736/1/CEPR-DP15417.pdf>
- Nunn, N., 2020. The historical roots of economic development. *Science*, 367(6485), p.eaaz9986.

## 2 Session 2 (February 28, 2024)

### Persistence II

- (\*) Guinnane, T.W. and Hoffman, P., 2022. Persistence and Historical Evidence: The Example of the Rise of the Nazi Party. Working Paper <https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/items/2020bbd4-ff5e-4825-81c0-2ff2a05c23dc>
- Voigtlaender, N. and Voth, H.J., 2012. “Persecution Perpetuated: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Semitic Violence in Nazi Germany,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 127 (3), 1339–1392.
- Nunn, N., 2014. “Historical Development,” *Handbook of Economic Growth, Volume 2*. Philippe Aghion and Steven Durlauf (eds). North Holland, 347–402.
- Acemoglu, D., Johnson, S. and Robinson, J.A., 2001. The colonial origins of comparative development: An empirical investigation. *American economic review*, 91(5), pp.1369-1401.

### 3 Session 3 (March 6, 2024)

#### Persistence III

- (\*) Cantoni, D., Hagemeister, F. and Westcott, M., 2019. Persistence and activation of right-wing political ideology. [https://epub.ub.uni-muenchen.de/60795/1/Cantoni\\_Hagemeister\\_Persistence\\_and\\_Activation\\_of\\_Right-Wing\\_Political\\_Ideology.pdf](https://epub.ub.uni-muenchen.de/60795/1/Cantoni_Hagemeister_Persistence_and_Activation_of_Right-Wing_Political_Ideology.pdf)
- Ochsner, C. and Roesel, F., 2020. Migrating extremists. *The Economic Journal*, 130(628), pp.1135-1172.
- Schindler, D. and Westcott, M., 2021. Shocking racial attitudes: black GIs in Europe. *The Review of Economic Studies*, 88(1), pp.489-520.
- Guriev, S. and Papaioannou, E., 2022. The political economy of populism. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 60(3), pp.753-832.

### 4 Session 4 (March 13, 2024)

#### German Separation and Reunification

- (\*) Donges, A. and Streb, J., 2023. How the West was Settled. The Location Choice of East German Companies Migrating to West Germany after World War II. The Location Choice of East German Companies Migrating to West Germany after World War II. [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=4538079](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4538079)
- Becker, S.O., Mergele, L. and Woessmann, L., 2020. The separation and reunification of Germany: Rethinking a natural experiment interpretation of the enduring effects of communism. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 34(2), pp.143-171.
- Redding, S.J., Sturm, D.M. and Wolf, N., 2011. History and industry location: evidence from German airports. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 93(3), pp.814-831.

### 5 Session 5 (March 20, 2024)

#### The Effects of Deindustrialization

- (\*) Choi, J. 2023. "The Effect of Deindustrialization on Local Economies: Evidence from New England Textile Towns." Job Market Paper [https://jchoi7206.github.io/JiwonChoi/JiwonChoi\\_JMP\\_web.pdf](https://jchoi7206.github.io/JiwonChoi/JiwonChoi_JMP_web.pdf).
- Franck, R. and Galor, O., 2021. Flowers of evil? Industrialization and long-run development. *Journal of Monetary Economics*, 117, pp.108-128.

- Gagliardi, L., Moretti, E. and Serafinelli, M., 2023. The World's Rust Belts: The Heterogeneous Effects of Deindustrialization on 1,993 Cities in Six Countries (No. w31948). National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Koistinen, D., 2002. The causes of deindustrialization: The migration of the cotton textile industry from New England to the South. *Enterprise & Society*, 3(3), pp.482-520.

## 6 Session 6 (April 10, 2024)

### Trade

- (\*) Huning, T.R. and Wolf, N., 2019. How Britain unified Germany: endogenous trade costs and the formation of a customs union. Centre for Economic Policy Research. [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3363547](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3363547)
- De Bromhead, A., Fernihough, A., Lampe, M. and O'Rourke, K.H., 2019. When Britain turned inward: the impact of interwar British protection. *American Economic Review*, 109(2), pp.325-352.
- O'Rourke, K.H., 2019. Economic history and contemporary challenges to globalization. *The Journal of Economic History*, 79(2), pp.356-382.

## 7 Session 7 (April 17, 2024)

### Women in the Labor Force

- (\*) Li, S., 2023. The Effect of a Woman-Friendly Occupation on Employment: US Postmasters Before World War II. Job Market Paper [https://sophieli-econ.github.io/pdfs/SophieLi\\_JMP.pdf](https://sophieli-econ.github.io/pdfs/SophieLi_JMP.pdf)
- Goldin, C., 2006. The quiet revolution that transformed women's employment, education, and family. *American Economic Review*, 96(2), pp.1-21.
- Olivetti, C., 2013. The female labor force and long-run development: the American experience in comparative perspective (No. w19131). National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Alesina, A., Giuliano, P. and Nunn, N., 2013. On the origins of gender roles: Women and the plough. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 128(2), pp.469-530.

## 8 Session 8 (April 24, 2024)

### The Effects of Agricultural Mechanization

- (\*) French J. 2022. Technological Change, Inequality, and Intergenerational Mobility: The Case of Early 20th Century Agriculture. Job Market Paper <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oCoRDSgcXp90PDTDL74FmuragSiYj1zG/view>
- Ager, P., Goñi, M. and Salvanes, K.G., 2023. Gender-biased technological change: Milking machines and the exodus of women from farming. Working Paper [https://www.philippager.com/\\_files/ugd/eacb99\\_40f767e772ac4e7c9d9bcabd148f7942.pdf](https://www.philippager.com/_files/ugd/eacb99_40f767e772ac4e7c9d9bcabd148f7942.pdf)
- Alvarez-Cuadrado, F. and Poschke, M., 2011. Structural change out of agriculture: Labor push versus labor pull. *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics*, 3(3), pp.127-158.
- Olmstead, A.L. and Rhode, P.W., 2001. Reshaping the landscape: the impact and diffusion of the tractor in American agriculture, 1910–1960. *The Journal of Economic History*, 61(3), pp.663-698.

## 9 Session 9 (May 8, 2024)

### Technological Change and the Displacement of Workers

- (\*) Cockriel W. M. 2023. Machines Eating Men: Shoemakers and their Children After the McKay Stitcher. Job Market Paper [https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/8wk3ngxp6q2esf6u4so2d/WillCockriel\\_JMP.pdf?rlkey=qoqy0yzngduovx341ptpxlpc8&d1=0](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/8wk3ngxp6q2esf6u4so2d/WillCockriel_JMP.pdf?rlkey=qoqy0yzngduovx341ptpxlpc8&d1=0)
- Feigenbaum, J. and Gross, D.P., 2020. Answering the Call of Automation: How the Labor Market Adjusted to the Mechanization of Telephone Operation (No. w28061). National Bureau of Economic Research. Conditionally Accepted at *Quarterly Journal of Economics*
- Atack, J., Margo, R.A. and Rhode, P.W., 2019. “Automation” of manufacturing in the late nineteenth century: The hand and machine labor study. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 33(2), pp.51-70.
- Acemoglu, D. and Restrepo, P., 2019. Automation and new tasks: How technology displaces and reinstates labor. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 33(2), pp.3-30.

## 10 Session 10 (May 15, 2024)

### Distance as Instrument in Historical Research

- (\*) Zhao, Q.C., 2023. Rethinking 'Distance From': Lessons from Wittenberg and Mainz. Working Paper. [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=4495711](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4495711)
- Kersting, F., Wohnsiedler, I. and Wolf, N., 2020. Weber revisited: The protestant ethic and the spirit of nationalism. *The Journal of Economic History*, 80(3), pp.710-745.
- Dittmar, J.E., 2011. Information technology and economic change: the impact of the printing press. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 126(3), pp.1133-1172.
- Becker, S.O. and Woessmann, L., 2009. Was Weber wrong? A human capital theory of Protestant economic history. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 124(2), pp.531-596.

## 11 Session 11 (May 22, 2024)

### Newspaper Data in Historical Research

- (\*) Beach, B. and Hanlon, W.W., 2023. Historical newspaper data: A researcher's guide. *Explorations in Economic History*, 90, p.101541.
- Ferrara, A., Ha, J.Y. and Walsh, R., 2022. Using Digitized Newspapers to Refine Historical Measures: The Case of the Boll Weevil. *Forthcoming Journal of Economic History*.
- Kuziemko, I. and Washington, E., 2018. Why did the Democrats lose the South? Bringing new data to an old debate. *American Economic Review*, 108(10), pp.2830-2867.

## 12 Session 12 (May 29, 2024)

### Inflation

- (\*) Braggion, F., Von Meyerinck, F., Schaub, N. and Weber, M., 2023. The long-term effects of inflation on inflation expectations. Working Paper [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=4503275](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4503275)
- Braggion, F., Von Meyerinck, F. and Schaub, N., 2023. Inflation and individual investors' behavior: Evidence from the german hyperinflation. *The Review of Financial Studies*, 36(12), pp.5012-5045.

- Lehmann-Hasemeyer, S., Neumayer, A. and Streb, J., 2023. Heterogeneous inflation and deflation experiences and savings decisions during German industrialization. *Journal of Banking & Finance*, 154, p.106978.