

Abbreviated Syllabus
Spring 2008 Econ 260

Relevant instructor's and division material from 200-level econ syllabi still applies.

Materials for Course:

The Economic Transformation of America, 1600 to Present, 4th edition, Robert Heilbroner and Aaron Singer

Course Description:

The US was widely considered an economic powerhouse in the go-go 1990s, yet in just the decade before, people were moaning about the dominant force that Japan was becoming and now in the 21st century, all eyes are turning to China. How did we become an economic superpower? Have we lost it? Would it be so bad if we did?

What contributes to the economic development of a country? What forces play a role in setting up and sustaining prosperity? Is economic development the same as prosperity? In this class, we will use historical information to look at how the US has developed and attempt to identify what features have contributed consistently towards that development.

Calendar

There can be some flexibility on when we hold discussions but for reading purposes, please adhere to this schedule:

Weeks 1-2: Module One, Colonies (preface and first 3 chapters of text)

Weeks 3-4: Module Two, Birth of a Nation (Chapters 4-6 in text)

Week 5-6: Module Three, Industrialization for Businesses (Chapters 7-9)

Week 7: Module Four, Industrialization from the Perspective of Workers (Chapters 10-11)

Week 8: Module Five, The Great Depression (Chapter 12)

Week 9: Module Six, Expansion of Government (Chapters 13-16)

Week 10: Module Seven, Looking to the Future (Chapter 17 and supplemental materials)

Week 11: Review and Final Discussion

GRADING

There are 6 primary modules dealing with the history (and a last set looking to the future). Of the first 6, I will only count the 5 highest when calculating your score. Each of the module's score will count as 15% of your grade. That score will depend on your submission (written notes) and discussion contribution during our class meetings.

The remaining 25% comes from the Final Discussion during Week 11.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the quarter, students will be able to do the following:

- Define and explain the relationships between the basic economic concepts that are used in theories of economic growth and transformation.
- Describe the structure and operation of a capitalist economic system, and identify the forces that led to its establishment in the United States.
- Identify the critical events, such as Civil War and Depression, in the historical life of the U.S., and analyze the causes and effects of those events from the perspective of the development of the economy.
- Explain the relationship between the role of government and the market system, tracing the development of that relationship throughout the history of the U.S. economy.
- Identify and describe the forces that have shaped a labor force in the United States, in particular the role of immigration, unionization, and the differentiations of race and class and gender.
- Define the stages in the development of the structure of enterprise in the United States, compare and contrast the structure and functioning of types of businesses, and explain the transitions in the nature of the business system.
- Describe the relationship of the U.S. economy to the international economic system at key points in history, from colony to economic superpower, and explain the changing nature of that relationship.
- Describe and explain the changes in the class structure of U.S. society throughout its history.
- Identify the main trends in technological development, the role each played in U.S. economic growth and the effects technology has had on the material and economic life of the population.