Instructions for Mini-Paper 1

Overview: In this assignment you will pick a topic on European economic history, relating to Europe’s eventual industrialization, research that topic, and write a short paper on the subject. Through this project you will learn about a topic in financial history, hone your research skills, and improve your writing methods.

Your paper will likely have some characteristics of a “survey paper”, i.e. an overview of the current knowledge and understanding of a topic. That being said, you want your paper to be as tightly focused as your sources will allow.

For instance, assume that both Amy and Bob write a paper on the Black Death (Bubonic Plague). Amy’s paper overviews what the Black Death likely was, how it came to Europe, it’s spread through Europe, etc. Amy’s paper does discuss the idea that the Black Death may have helped Europe’s long-run development by reducing population (i.e. increasing land per capita and physical capital per capita). Amy, however, does not discuss any ways to test the “Black Death was good for development hypothesis”, nor does she go into great detail about the history or intricacies of the idea. Amy’s paper, while it might earn a passing grade, lacks the in-depth analysis I desire.

Bob’s paper, also on the Black Death, spends several paragraphs or even pages surveying the Black Death. He introduces the reader to some of the basics of the Black Death. The heart of Bob’s paper, however, focuses on a more specific question. Bob investigates the debate regarding whether the Black Death was bad or good (in the long-run) for European development. Bob explores both the traditional argument that the Black Death was good for long-run development. He also investigates the argument that, by reducing the size of markets, the Black Death reduced innovation and long-run growth. Although Bob does not test the competing theses in a definitive way, he discusses potential ways to test the theories. Finally, he anecdotally examines evidence in support of each theory. Go Bob! That’s the type of paper I want.

Your topic should revolve around a question (or small group of related questions). Again, the more specific the question, the better. For instance, assume the central question of Carlita’s paper is; “How did Merchants of the Italian City-States Finance Long-Distance Trade in the 14th and 15th Centuries?” Dan’s question is; “What did the Medieval Europeans Use for Money?” Assuming Carlita has the sources to address her question reasonably well, her paper will almost certainly be a better paper than Dan’s. Go Carlita!

You will need to have a specific thesis statement or question. We’ll discuss this further in class. For now, just remember that a thesis statement is usually a one (sometimes two) sentence that clearly tells the reader what topic your paper is addressing and the questions it will address.
You will need **at least 4 academic sources**, not including those in our reading packet. Academic sources include: 1) peer-reviewed journals (ex. *The Journal of Economic History*, *The Journal of the Early Republic*, *Economic History Review*, etc.), 2) books, preferably those from quality academic publishers (ex. Oxford University Press, Penguin, etc.), 3) Working papers, etc. While you can use other sources such as Wikipedia, magazines (ex. *Civil War History*), web sites, other academic sources from our reading packet, etc. make sure you have at least 4 academic sources that are not from our reading packet.

**More sources are usually better than fewer.** My minimum expectation, however, is four academic sources.

**If you use a book extensively and it is a pretty good book, you can count it as two sources.** Assume, for example, that Beth reads Tonio Andrade’s book titled; *The Gunpowder Age: China, Military Innovation, and the Rise of the West in World History* (2016). Andrade, like some other modern historians, argues that the perception of Europe as being more advanced on almost every technical front is wrong. In particular, Andrade argues that Europe’s advantages came down to a very short list of: 1) gunpowder cannon, 2) ships that can sail well into the wind, and 3) modern fortresses. Beth wants to write a paper investigating Europe’s technological advantages over China (ca. 1600 to 1900). She can pull a lot of information from Andrade's book. It will give her more information than any one journal article. Beth, however, still needs to look outside of Andrade’s book for more information and thoughts on the topic.

**Topic Areas:** Your topic must concern both: 1) European Economic History, and 2) namely Europe’s economic divergence from the rest of the world.

That being, said, many, many, topics fall within this category. Edward might, for instance, write a paper on block printing in China, how it did (or did not) influence later printing in Europe, and why it failed to result in an explosion of printing in China. This topic is fine as long as Edward does a good job of explaining to the reader why the question is of interest (and not just tangentially) to someone examining Europe’s modernization. Go Edward!

Likewise, Francine wishes to investigate banking during the Roman Republic and Empire. As long as Francine can convince the reader this topic is quite relevant to Europe’s (much later) modernization, the topic is fine. Perhaps some aspects of Roman banking survived for several centuries. Maybe Roman institutions inspired later European ones. Perhaps the failure of Roman banking to develop further sheds light on Europe’s later developments. For example; “What features in the Roman world prevented the banking system from developing any further?” You go Francine!

Your topic does not have to fall within a rigidly time period. For most students, however, mini-paper # 1 will focus on the Late Medieval to Early modern period, roughly 1250 to 1550.
How to Find Your Topic: Giuseppe doesn’t know where to start. He’s not interested in Chinese block printing or Roman banking. What should he do? Here are some suggestions for coming up with a topic area.

1) Think about aspects of History and/or Economics you like.
   Do you like technology? Are you interested in gender issues? Farming? Banking? Military history? The French Revolution? What’s a historical/economic documentary that you would be interested in watching? Generally, there’s a sub-topic you can research.

2) Talk to Dr. Lovett.
   If you have a starting area of interest, let me know. I can suggest topics that relate to your general area of interest.

3) Start a general investigation of your broad topic area, and see what sub-topics you find.
   For example, Henrietta loves military history. She gets a few books on European military history during the late Medieval and Renaissance period. One of the things that keeps coming up is the idea that the scale of military units greatly increased during this period. Around 1250, effective military campaigns revolved around small units. A lord with about 100 armed men and a small castle could easily hold off a much large besieging force for months. While battles tended to involve much larger armies, the armies could easily be cobbled together from feudal levies (a bunch of lords, each bringing a few dozen men service of the king). Small feudal units could survive. Beginning sometime between about 1300 and 1500, small political units became less and less survivable. Gunpowder meant the small “curtain wall” castles could quickly and easily be defeated. Evolving military technology meant well trained bodies of infantry (and archers, and gunners) became necessary for any chance at military success. The old system of cobbbling together small units no longer worked. Henrietta learns that a historian named Tilly wrote about this “military revolution” and how it led to large nation states replacing the older Feudal system in Europe. Way to go Henrietta! You have found a good topic area. Keep up the research and soon you’ll find a good sub-topic!

4) Scan the reading packet for topic areas

5) Look up an economic history journal’s call number. Go to the library periodical stacks and skim this journal for topics

6) Read a history book and see what topics interest you

7) Look at the very random sampling of topic areas below
   - The failure of the Roman world to break into modernity
   - The failure of the Islamic (Mediterranean) world to break into modernity
   - Technological Progress during the “Dark Ages” and “Middle Ages
- The Changing Role of Women in Society. For example, how textile machines invented in the late 1700’s changed gender roles and opportunities
- Male versus female property rights and economic opportunities
- The Black Death’s effects on European development
- Was there a link between the Black Death and the peasant revolts of the 14th-15th centuries
- The effects of a particular event (ex. the Crusades, the 100 Years War, etc)
- Banking and finance
- The structure of business organizations
- What caused the (relative) decline of the Dutch Republic? From about 1590 to 1670, the Dutch Republic was arguably the most modern and wealthy (on a per capita basis) economy in the world. However, the Dutch Republic was soon eclipsed by England. Much later, when it came to industrialization, the Dutch were laggards among the nations of Western Europe. What caused the relative decline in the Dutch Republic?
- What caused the decline of the city states of Northern Italy?
- The rise and decline of late Medieval trade fairs
- Private versus public funding of early railroads: A comparison of Britain and France
- The role of learned societies in Britain’s Industrial Revolution Britain had many intellectual societies such as the Lunar Society and the Royal Society? How prevalent were these institutions prior to the Industrial Revolution? How did British learned societies differ from those on the continent? Did the unique nature of British learned societies facilitate the Industrial Revolution? If so, how?
- Colonialism’s effect on the development of late Manchu (Qing) China
- The Development and economic effects of Britain’s toll roads?
- Peter the Great’s push for modernization: A Description of his Policies and their Likely Effects.
- A critical analysis of Lynn White’s feudalism thesis. In 1962, Lynn White published Medieval Technology and Social Change. In it, he argued that two technological innovations (or adoptions) led to the feudal system: the stirrup and the heavy plow. The stirrup made the mounted warrior much more effective in combat. Knights, however, were much more expensive to equip than foot soldiers. Lords attempted to retain mounted warriors by giving them land in exchange for vows of military service. As for the heavy plough … well the book is still a good read even after 50 years. Have White’s arguments stood the test of time and historians’ scrutiny?
- The enclosure movement in Britain Economists such as Deirdre McCloskey have given much attention to the enclosure movement that occurred in England during the 18th and 19th century.
During this time, many of the open fields of England were converted to private land both by market transactions and acts of Parliament. How and why did these enclosures take place? Was this enclosure movement really as pivotal in increasing English productivity as McCloskey and others have argued?

- Innovations in Agriculture. Moving from the 2-field System to More Advanced Systems

- Innovations in Agriculture. Were the padded horse collar and heavy mouldboard plow really as important as many historians argue?

- The Attempted Reforms of Egypt’s Muhammad Ali Pasha (1805 – 1848) Muhammad Ali Pasha is often considered to be the father of modern Egypt. During his reign he attempted to modernize Egypt and increase its stature relative to the European powers. He also left Egypt heavily indebted. What were the policies of Muhammad Ali? How effective were they given the constraints Egypt faced?

- The Long-run Economic Effects of the Black Death

- The English Witan, Key to England’s Restrained Monarchy or Cultural Myth? From about 600 AD to 1000 AD, Kingdoms in Anglo-Saxon England had a tradition of the Witenagemot or Witan. This was a meeting of lesser lords who would advise the king and sometimes even choose the king’s successor. In many histories, the Witan has been portrayed as the root of England’s tradition of liberty and restrained monarchy. How did the Witan operate? How unique was the Witan to England? Did the Witan truly act to both empower and restrain the King? How much of the English tradition of liberty and restrained monarchy is actually due the Witan.

- The English Magna Carta, Key to England’s Restrained Monarchy or Cultural Myth?

- The Glorious Revolution and England’s 1688 Bill of rights, Key to England’s Restrained Monarchy or Cultural Myth?

- Technological innovations in shipping and their effects
Structure of the Paper

1) 1st page: Your first (cover) page should look something like what you see below. Your abstract should summarize your paper and be about 150 to 250 words.

Your Code Name
Your Paper’s Title

for

ECON 30423 U.S. Economic History
Fall 2015
Class Days & Time (ex. MWF @ 1:00)
Dr. John Lovett
Semester Paper # 1


Thesis Statement/Question: In this paper I investigate the question of Yaddi, yaddi, yah. Yakkity Yakkity Yak. Blah, blah, blah.

2) Main body: Start your paper with an introduction. Make sure you clearly state the questions your paper investigates. Next, move on to the “meat” of the paper. Finally summarize your main points in a conclusion section. Don’t forget to use in-text citations (using APA format) when you quote from, refer to, or discuss ideas from a source. Failure to do so
constitutes academic dishonesty. Such academic dishonesty typically results in a 0 on the assignment (assuming it is your first offense) and a letter with the Dean and Campus Life detailing the incident. If you have a prior recorded incident of academic dishonesty, the sanctions can be much higher.

Feel free to break the main body of your paper into sections with each section title in bold font. An example (George Washington: The Alien Question) is below.

**Introduction**
George Washington is usually described as one of the “Great Men” of American History, but was he really a man? This paper will investigate the question of whether George Washington was human, or a space alien from the planet Tochkov. Since the commonly accepted view is that Washington was human, only a brief review of the “humanity” evidence is given. The majority of this paper will focus on evidence suggesting Washington was indeed an alien, and what his purpose on earth was. ... Yaddi yaddi yah. Blah, blah, blah, blah. Yaddi yaddi.

**History of the Alien Thesis**

**Why the Aliens Invaded Earth**

**The Government Institutions the Aliens Left Us With**

**Conclusion**

**Bibliography**

3) **End of Text Bibliography:** List the sources you used using APA format.
Other Criteria

Use APA style (preferred) or Chicago Style for your citations and bibliography.

I prefer 11 to 12 font and 1.5 line spacing … but this is just a weak preference.

Take time to proofread and tweak your paper. Try to have a “completed” paper a day or two before the due date. Then read the paper out loud a few times to catch errors and ponder different ways of saying things. You might also have someone else read your paper and offer suggestions.

I’d like your paper to be 2,500 words … but I don’t always get what I want. I’m still waiting on the disco suit I asked for as an 11 year old (see below). Generally, longer papers are better papers. There are, however, many factors other than length that go into making a paper good.

Grading

Grading consists of 2 stages. In the first stage I read your paper and plug numbers into a rubric (formula) to come up with a rough grade. This helps me to order the papers for the final grading. The rubric is, more or less, as follows.

1. Citation: This will count for about 5% of the rough grade. That being said, if it appears your statement (or paper) contains many instances in which you fail to properly cite a source, I might take more than 5% off. If your paper contains examples of plagiarism, I will assign a zero (if you have no prior instances of reported academic dishonesty) for the assignment and file an academic dishonesty report. If you have prior instances of reported academic dishonesty, I will consult the dean regarding appropriate penalties.

2. Sources: The weight will be about 25% of the rough grade. I want you to have the minimum number of sources (4 and hopefully more). I also try to ascertain the quality of your sources. Are they professional, academic sources that are directly relevant to your topic area? Do you have the seminal sources in your topic area?

3. Focus: This is about 25% by the final paper. I prefer papers that focus on one (or a few) theses or questions. For example, a paper on “Why was Britain the first to industrialize?” is definitely too broad for a semester paper. A paper examining; “The Role of Edward I’s ‘Model Parliament’ of 1295 in giving Britain a Powerful, yet Restrained Government” is a nice size and focus for a semester paper.

4. Writing: This is typically about 15% of the rough grade. Please write using correct spelling, syntax, and punctuation. Nice transitions between paragraphs and a smoothly flowing paper are also good. I would suggest having someone else proofread your paper (and statements of interest) before you turn it in.
5. **Analysis:** This is about 25% of the rough grade. The more insightful your analysis of the questions, points of contention, etc. is, the better your project is.

6. **Boldness:** This is about 10% of the rough grade for the final paper. **Boldness relates to pursuing a topic that is not easy because there is a general lack of pre-existing literature on that topic.** Please note that I (the grader), not you (the student), **determine the level of boldness.** An example of a “bold” topic is “Reasons for the Failure of Sweden’s North American Colonies: Lack of Investment or Wartime Shock?” Good luck finding a lot of literature on that topic. An example of a topic that, while a fine topic, is not nearly as bold is: “Did Monetary Forces Cause the Initial Downturn During the Great Depression?” There’s a lot of literature on this topic. I can’t think of any topic with 0% boldness, but I can think of some that could get half of the boldness points (5% of the 10%).

7. **Hey! That adds up to 105%:** The key point is that, while I appreciate and reward boldness, your paper does not have to be super bold to have a shot at a 100% score. I have never had a paper that scored over 100%, but several have been in the very high 90’s.

In stage 2 I look at the papers again in order of their rough grade. Grading rubrics sometimes ignore the intangibles or how all the parts go together. Now is the time to look at the paper holistically. Do I really believe that Henry’s paper with a rough grade of 88 is better than Indira’s with a rough grade of 87? I assign a grade, write comments … and Yeah! … the assignment is done! … and look!!! I finally got my disco suit!!