

Vanderbilt University  
Department of Economics  
Economics 9440  
*Topics in Economic History: Microeconomic*  
Fall 2021

*Revised November 18, 2021*

Time: TR 1:10-2:25pm  
Place: Calhoun 413B  
Instructor: Ariell Zimran, PhD  
Assistant Professor of Economics  
Email: ariell.zimran@vanderbilt.edu  
Office Hours: By appointment

**Course Description** This course exposes students to frontier research in microeconomic history, with a focus on topics chosen to fit the research interests of the instructor and students. Although the focus of the course is historical, the topics covered are intended to be of interest to any student with an interest in applied microeconomic research. With a grade of B or better, this course can be used in partial fulfillment of the elective concentration requirement for the PhD in Economics.

**Prerequisites** ECON 8310 (Econometrics I) and ECON 8400 (Introduction to Economic History).

**Course Structure** We will cover five topics throughout the semester, devoting four class meetings to each topic. Some of these topics were selected based on my research interests and others were selected based on preferences solicited from the class. In each class meeting, we will discuss two papers that you are expected to have read in detail in advance. Throughout the course, each student will also be expected to complete 3 referee reports, and to be continually working on a research project. More details on each of these are presented below.

**Seminar Attendance** Students enrolled in this class are strongly encouraged to attend our seminar and workshop series in economic history and applied microeconomics. Economic history seminars are currently scheduled for September 28, October 19, November 2, November 16, and December 7 from 4:00–5:20pm; these will be a mixture of virtual and in-person seminars. The applied microeconomics seminar is held at the same time in weeks without an economic history seminar. The economic history tea is scheduled for Thursdays from 3:00–4:00pm (sometimes 4:15pm); contact Professor Quincy to be added to the mailing list. The VEAM-WIPT workshop is scheduled for Mondays from 2:05–2:55pm; contact Professor Carpenter to be added to the mailing list.

**Notes** Everything on this syllabus is subject to change. For this reason, be sure to check with me if you are planning to read more than a week ahead or to work on a referee report before I have announced in class that the paper is finalized. Since the syllabus is not final, please feel free to let me know if there is a paper that you'd like to discuss in class that isn't listed on the syllabus; we may be able to make some adjustments to include it. If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions, please feel free to discuss them with me.

Although conditions have improved from last academic year, we continue to deal with very unusual and unprecedented circumstances. If you are having trouble, I will not judge you or think less of you. I hope you will extend the same grace to me. If you need extra help, to miss class, or more time with something, please ask and I'll do my best to work with you. You do not need to give me any personal information about your physical or mental health, or anything else. That said, you are always welcome to talk to me about anything that is going on, though be aware that I am subject to some mandatory reporting requirements. I will do what I can to help.

**Course Materials** The course focuses entirely on journal articles or unpublished papers, all of which are available online. For published papers, be sure to look at the published version. For unpublished papers in the NBER Working Papers or CEPR Discussion Papers Series, use that version. For all other unpublished papers, I will provide the version of record for the course (usually the version posted on the author’s website). Let me know if you have trouble finding anything.

## Evaluation

- *Research Project* (25%). One of the main goals of this course is to help students in the transition from consumers to producers of knowledge. To this end, each student will spend the semester developing and working on a research project. By the end of the semester, you are expected to submit a prospectus of about 10–15 pages developing a research question, relating it to a larger literature, proposing an empirical strategy and data source(s), and detailing preliminary results. This project should be more than a simple proposal—I expect some actual empirical work to be completed. The details will depend on the specific data sources that you wish to use, but a benchmark is that I expect to see some preliminary results in your prospectus. In cases in which considerable effort is necessary to access data, a different standard is possible, but we should discuss this as early in the semester as possible.

The deliverables for the project are as follows. On October 12 (the last day of class before Fall Break), you must submit a proposal, laying out your research question, motivating it in the context of a larger literature, and sketching your plans for the data work. You will also present your progress to the class on that date (about 25 min). During the last week of class, you will give a final presentation (about 45 min). Your final write-up is due when you submit the final exam.

The ultimate goal of this assignment is to get you started on a project that can be a third-year paper or even a dissertation chapter. That said, if it turns out that the project does not have the potential to develop to such an extent, that is fine—knowing when to decide that a project is not going to work and should be put aside is an important skill to develop.

- *Referee Reports* (25%). I have designated below a supplemental paper for each of the five course topics. Each student is expected to select three of these papers and to complete a referee report on it, following guidelines to be circulated separately. The report is due on the first day of class for the topic following the topic of the paper that you have chosen (e.g., if you choose to write a referee report on the paper for Topic I, it is due on the first day of class for Topic II).

The papers for the referee reports are listed below, but if there is another paper that you want to write a referee report on, please let me know.

- *Topic I: Migration*. Calderon et al. (2020)
- *Topic II: Inequality and Mobility*. Michelman et al. (2021)
- *Topic III: Health and Demography*. Hollingsworth et al. (2021)
- *Topic IV: Public Economics*. Marchingiglio and Poyker (2021)
- *Topic V: Firms and Industry*. Bleakley and Rhode (2021)

- *Class Participation* (25%). It is crucial that all students come to class having thoroughly read the papers to be discussed and that students actively participate in all class discussions. The course is based entirely on discussion, and will not work without active student participation.
- *Final Exam* (25%). There will be a take-home final examination on a date that we determine to be mutually convenient. You will be permitted to consult any source you wish (including the papers that are asked about) in the course of the exam, but are not permitted to consult any other person. More details of the structure of the exam will be announced later.

\*\*\*

## Schedule of Meetings and Topics

Date	Readings	Notable Events
Aug. 26		Course Overview
<b>Topic I: International and Internal Migration</b>		
Aug. 31	Collins and Zimran (2021) Abramitzky et al. (2021)	
Sep. 2	Zimran (2021) Biavaschi et al. (2021)	
Sep. 7		No Class
Sep. 9	Gagliarducci and Tabellini (2021) Fontana et al. (2021) Ager et al. (2020)	We will discuss only 2 of these papers. More details in class.
Sep. 14	Bandiera et al. (2019) Becker et al. (2020)	
Sep. 16		No Class
<b>Topic II: Inequality and Mobility</b>		
Sep. 21	Collins et al. (2021) Miller (2020)	
Sep. 23	Ager et al. (2019) Alesina et al. (2020)	
Sep. 28	Aaronson et al. (2021) Fishback et al. (2020)	
Sep. 30	Jácome et al. (2021) Derenoncourt et al. (2021)	
<b>Topic III: Health and Demography</b>		
Oct. 5	Bleakley and Lange (2009) Ager et al. (2018)	
Oct. 7	Bleakley (2007) Hansen and Lønstrup (2015)	
Oct. 12		Project Presentations
Oct. 19	Lowes and Montero (2021) Feir et al. (2018)	
Oct. 21	Jacks et al. (2020) Zimran (2020)	
<b>Topic IV: Public Economics</b>		
Oct. 26	Bound and Turner (2002) Fetter (2013)	

Oct. 28	Angrist and Chen (2011) Costa (1995)
Nov. 2	Fetter et al. (2021) Goodman-Bacon (2021)
Nov. 4	Moreira and Pérez (2021) Cunningham et al. (2021)
<b>Topic V: Firms and Industry</b>	
Nov. 9	Gross (2020) Loualiche et al. (2019)
Nov. 11	Hanlon and Jaworski (2020) Lafortune et al. (2021)
Nov. 16	Atack et al. (2020) Gregg (2020)
Nov. 18	Clay and Troesken (2003) Hernández (2016)
<b>Project Presentations</b>	
Nov. 30	No Class—Work on Projects
Dec. 2	No Class—Work on Projects
Dec. 7	Project Presentations
Dec. 9	Project Presentations

\*\*\*

## References

- Aaronson, Daniel, Daniel Hartley, and Bhashkar Mazumder (2021). “The Effects of the 1930s HOLC ‘Redlining’ Maps.” *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* Forthcoming.
- Abramitzky, Ran, Leah Platt Boustan, Elisa Jácome, and Santiago Pérez (2021). “Intergenerational Mobility of Immigrants in the United States over Two Centuries.” *American Economic Review* 111:2, pp. 580–608.
- Ager, Philipp, Leah Platt Boustan, and Katherine Eriksson (2019). “The Intergenerational Effects of a Large Wealth Shock: White Southerners after the Civil War.” NBER Working Paper 25700.
- Ager, Philipp, James J. Feigenbaum, Casper Worm Hansen, and Hui Ren Tan (2020). “How the Other Half Died: Immigration and Mortality in US Cities.” NBER Working paper 27480.
- Ager, Philipp, Casper Worm Hansen, and Peter Sandholt Jensen (2018). “Fertility and Early-Life Mortality: Evidence from Smallpox Vaccination in Sweden.” *Journal of the European Economic Association* 16:2, pp. 487–521.
- Alesina, Alberto F., Marlon Seror, David Y. Yang, Yang You, and Weihong Zeng (2020). “Persistence Through Revolutions.” NBER Working Paper 27053.
- Angrist, Joshua D. and Stacey H. Chen (2011). “Schooling and the Vietnam-Era GI Bill: Evidence from the Draft Lottery.” *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 3:2, pp. 96–118.

- Atack, Jeremy, Robert A. Margo, and Paul W. Rhode (2020). “Mechanization Takes Command’: Inanimate Power and Labor Productivity in Late Nineteenth Century American Manufacturing.” NBER Working Paper 27436.
- Bandiera, Oriana, Myra Mohnen, Imran Rasul, and Martina Viarengo (2019). “Nation-Building Through Compulsory Schooling during the Age of Mass Migration.” *Economic Journal* 129:617, pp. 62–109.
- Becker, Sascha O., Irena Grosfeld, Pauline Grosjean, Nico Voigtländer, and Ekaterina Zhuravskaya (2020). “Forced Migration and Human Capital: Evidence from Post-WWII Population Transfers.” *American Economic Review* 110:5, pp. 1430–1463.
- Biavaschi, Costanza, Corrado Giulietti, and Yves Zenou (2021). “Social Networks and (Political) Assimilation in the Age of Mass Migration.” CEPR Discussion Paper 16182.
- Bleakley, Hoyt (2007). “Disease and Development: Evidence from Hookworm Eradication in the American South.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 122:1, pp. 73–117.
- Bleakley, Hoyt and Fabian Lange (2009). “Chronic Disease Burden and the Interaction of Education, Fertility, and Growth.” *Review of Economics and Statistics* 91:1, pp. 52–65.
- Bleakley, Hoyt and Paul Rhode (2021). “Economic Effects of American Slavery Redux: Tests at the Border.” Mimeo., University of Michigan.
- Bound, John and Sarah Turner (2002). “Going to War and Going to College: Did World War II and the GI Bill Increase Educational Attainment for Returning Veterans.” *Journal of Labor Economics* 20:4, pp. 784–815.
- Calderon, Alvaro, Vasiliki Fouka, and Marco Tabellini (2020). “Racial Diversity and Racial Policy Preferences: The Great Migration and Civil Rights.” HBS Working Paper 20-017.
- Clay, Karen and Werner Troesken (2003). “Strategic Behavior in Whiskey Distilling, 1887–1895.” *Journal of Economic History* 62:4, pp. 999–1023.
- Collins, William J., Nicholas Holtkamp, and Marianne H. Wanamaker (2021). “Black Americans’ Landholdings and Economic Mobility after Emancipation: New Evidence on the Significance of 40 Acres.” Mimeo., Vanderbilt University.
- Collins, William J. and Ariell Zimran (2021). “Working Their Way Up? US Immigrants’ Changing Labor Market Assimilation in the Age of Mass Migration.” Mimeo., Vanderbilt University.
- Costa, Dora L. (1995). “Pensions and Retirement: Evidence from Union Army Veterans.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 110:2, pp. 297–319.
- Cunningham, Jamein, Donna Feir, and Rob Gillezeau (2021). “Collective Bargaining Rights, Policing, and Civilian Deaths.” IZA Discussion Paper 14208.
- Derenoncourt, Ellora, Chu Hyun Kim, Moritz Kuhn, and Moritz Schularick (2021). “The Racial Wealth Gap, 1860–2020.” Mimeo., Princeton University.
- Feir, Donna, Rob Gillezeau, and Maggie E. C. Jones (2018). “The Slaughter of the Bison and Reversal of Fortunes on the Great Plains.” Mimeo., University of Victoria.
- Fetter, Daniel K. (2013). “How Do Mortgage Subsidies Affect Home Ownership? Evidence from the Mid-Century GI Bills.” *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 5:2, pp. 111–147.
- Fetter, Daniel K., Lee Lockwood, and Paul Mohnen (2021). “The Intergenerational Incidence of Government Old-Age Support: Evidence from the Early Social Security Era.” Mimeo., Stanford University.
- Fishback, Price V., Jessica LaVoice, Allison Shertzer, and Randall Walsh (2020). “Race, Risk, and the Emergence of Federal Redlining.” NBER Working Paper 28146.

- Fontana, Nicola, Marco Manacorda, Gianluca Russo, and Marco Tabellini (2021). “Emigration and Long-Run Economic Development: The Effects of the Italian Mass Migration.” Mimeo., Harvard Business School.
- Gagliarducci, Stefano and Marco Tabellini (2021). “Faith and Assimilation: Italian Immigrants in the US.” Mimeo., Harvard Business School.
- Goodman-Bacon, Andrew (2021). “The Long-Run Effects of Childhood Insurance Coverage: Medicaid Implementation, Adult Health, and Labor Market Outcomes.” *American Economic Review* 111:8, pp. 2550–2593.
- Gregg, Amanda G. (2020). “Factory Productivity and the Concession System of Incorporation in Late Imperial Russia, 1894–1908.” *American Economic Review* 110:2, pp. 401–427.
- Gross, Daniel P. (2020). “Collusive Investments in Technological Compatibility.” *Management Science* 66:12, pp. 5485–6064.
- Hanlon, W. Walker and Taylor Jaworski (2020). “Spillover Effects of Intellectual Property Protection in the Interwar Aircraft Industry.” Mimeo., Northwestern University.
- Hansen, Casper Worm and Lars Lønstrup (2015). “The Rise in Life Expectancy and Economic Growth in the 20th Century.” *Economic Journal* 125:584, pp. 838–852.
- Hernández, Carlos Eduardo (2016). “Adaptation and Survival in the Brewing Industry during Prohibition.” Mimeo., Universidad de los Andes.
- Hollingsworth, Alex, Krzysztof Karbownik, Melissa Thomasson, and Anthony Wray (2021). “A Gift of Health: The Duke Endowment’s Impact on Hospital Care and Mortality.” Mimeo., University of Southern Denmark.
- Jacks, David S., Krishna Pendakur, and Hitoshi Shigeoka (2020). “Urban Mortality and the Repeal of Federal Prohibition.” NBER Working Paper 28181.
- Jácome, Elisa, Ilyana Kuziemko, and Suresh Naidu (2021). “Mobility for All: Representative Intergenerational Mobility Estimates over the 20th Century.” Mimeo., Princeton University.
- Lafortune, Jeanne, Ethan G. Lewis, José Pablo Martínez, and José Tessada (2021). “Changing Returns to Scale in Manufacturing 1880–1930: The Rise of (Skilled) Labor?” NBER Working Paper 28633.
- Loualiche, Erik, Chris Vickers, and Nicolas L. Ziebarth (2019). “Firm Networks in the Great Depression.” Mimeo., Auburn University.
- Lowes, Sara and Eduardo Montero (2021). “The Legacy of Colonial Medicine in Central Africa.” *American Economic Review* 111:4, pp. 1284–1314.
- Marchingiglio, Riccardo and Michael Poyker (2021). “The Economics of Gender-Specific Minimum Wage Legislation.” Mimeo., University of Nottingham.
- Michelman, Valerie, Joseph Price, and Seth D. Zimmerman (2021). “Old Boys’ Clubs and Upward Mobility Among the Educational Elite.” Mimeo., BYU.
- Miller, Melinda C. (2020). “‘The Righteous and Reasonable Ambition to Become a Landholder’: Land and Racial Inequality in the Postbellum South.” *Review of Economics and Statistics* 102:2, pp. 381–394.
- Moreira, Diana and Santiago Pérez (2021). “Civil Service Reform and Organizational Practices: Evidence from the Pendleton Act.” NBER Working Paper 28665.
- Zimran, Ariell (2020). “Transportation and Health in the Antebellum United States, 1820–1847.” *Journal of Economic History* 80:3, pp. 670–709.
- Zimran, Ariell (2021). “Immigrant Distribution in the United States during the Age of Mass Migration.” NBER Working Paper 28812.