

Topics in Economic History

The seminar reviews recent research in the field of Economic History. Despite being one of the oldest, if not the first, emerging field in the discipline of Economics, History has gained novel prominence thanks to groundbreaking developments in data analysis and availability. We will discuss recent papers that stand out for their innovative approach and the use of historical data.

Structure: The seminar will be conducted on a paper discussion basis. A typical session starts with a (25 minutes) presentation of a published paper. This presentation is followed by a (5 minutes) comment. Finally, there will be a class discussion.

Requirements: All participants have to prepare (**in English**¹):

- a written review of a paper from the reading list (max. 25 pages) (40% of the grading),
- a presentation of the paper in the class (as if they were the author) (40%), and
- a comment on another paper (preparing slides is useful) (10%).

In addition, we expect that all seminar participants are familiar with the paper that is discussed; active class participation is part of your grade (10%). Of course, joining all sessions is **mandatory**.

Administrative details: The seminar will take place as a “Blockseminar” probably in June 2025. Joining all sessions is mandatory. The latest submission of the written review is one month after presenting via email. Delayed submissions are not accepted. The number of participants is restricted to 28 students. For registered participants, we will give further instructions by e-mail and in a **brief meeting** probably taking place at the beginning of the semester (tentative date is 23. April at 14:00).

Contact: The best way to reach me is to send an email to nitsch@vwl.tu-darmstadt.de. If you have organizational questions, please contact Fabio Enrico Traverso: traverso@vwl.tu-darmstadt.de.

¹ Please note that presenting and/or writing the review in other languages than English will lead to a final grade of 5, with no appeal.

Literature:

The following list offers a selection of papers. Own proposals are welcome.

- Acemoglu, D., De Feo, G., De Luca, G., & Russo, G. (2021).** *War, socialism and the rise of fascism: An empirical exploration.* *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, **137**(2), 1233–1296.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjab001>
- Auriol, E., Platteau, J.-P., & Verdier, T. (2023).** *The Quran and the Sword.* *Journal of the European Economic Association*, **21**(5), 1772–1820.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jeea/jvad015>
- Bakker, J. D., Maurer, S., Pischke, J.-S., & Rauch, F. (2021).** *Of Mice and Merchants: Connectedness and the Location of Economic Activity in the Iron Age.* *Review of Economics and Statistics*, **103**(4), 652–665.
<https://direct.mit.edu/rest/article/103/4/652/97649/Of-Mice-and-Merchants-Connectedness-and-the>
- Barjamovic, G., Chaney, T., Cosar, K., & Hortaçsu, A. (2019).** Trade, Merchants, and the Lost Cities of the Bronze Age, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, **134**(3), 1455–1503.
<https://academic.oup.com/qje/article-abstract/134/3/1455/5420484>
- Becker, S. O., Ferrara, A., Melander, E., & Pascali, L. (2020).** *Wars, taxation and representation: Evidence from five centuries of German history* (CEPR Discussion Paper No. 15601). Centre for Economic Policy Research. <https://cepr.org/publications/dp15601>
- Becker, S. O., Grosfeld, I., Grosjean, P., Voigtländer, N., & Zhuravskaya, E. (2020).** *Forced migration and human capital: Evidence from post-WWII population transfers.* *American Economic Review*, **110**(5), 1430–1463. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20181518>
- Bennedsen, M., Mehrotra, V., Shim, J., & Wiwattanakantang, Y. (2021).** *Dynastic control without ownership: Evidence from post-war Japan.* *Journal of Financial Economics*, **142**(2), 831–843.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0304405X21002889>
- Bisin, A., Rubin, J., Seror, A., & Verdier, T. (2024).** *Culture, institutions and the long divergence.* *Journal of Economic Growth*, **29**(1), 1–40. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10887-023-09227-7>
- Chambru, C., Henry, E., & Marx, B. (2024).** *The Dynamic Consequences of State Building: Evidence from the French Revolution.* *American Economic Review*, **114**(11), 3578–3622.
<https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20220110>
- Donaldson, D., & Hornbeck, R. (2016).** Railroads and American Economic Growth: A Market Access Approach, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, **131**(2), 799–858.
<https://academic.oup.com/qje/article/131/2/799/2606976>
- Ellison, M., Lee, S. S., & O'Rourke, K. H. (2024).** The ends of 27 big depressions. *American Economic Review*, **114**(1), 134–168.
<https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/aer.20221479>
- Figueroa, V., & Fouka, V. (2023).** *Structural transformation and value change: The British abolitionist movement* (NBER Working Paper No. 31708). National Bureau of Economic Research. <https://doi.org/10.3386/w31708>
- Flückiger, M., Hornung, E., Larch, M., Ludwig, M., & Mees, A. (2021).** Roman Transport Network Connectivity and Economic Integration. *Review of Economic Studies*, **89**(2), 774–810.
<https://academic.oup.com/restud/article/89/2/774/6318792>
- Fujita, S., Ramey, V. A., & Roded, T. (2024).** *Why Didn't the US Unemployment Rate Rise at the End of WWII?* (No. w33041). National Bureau of Economic Research.
https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w33041/w33041.pdf

- Giuliano, P., & Tabellini, M. (2020).** *The seeds of ideology: Historical immigration and political preferences in the United States* (No. w27238). National Bureau of Economic Research. <https://doi.org/10.3386/w27238>
- Jacks, D. S., Meissner, C. M., & Wolf, N. (2024).** *Suez* (No. w33250). National Bureau of Economic Research. https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w33250/w33250.pdf
- Jordà, Ò., Knoll, K., Kuvshinov, D., Schularick, M., & Taylor, A. M. (2019).** The Rate of Return on Everything, 1870-2015, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, **134**(3), 1225-1298. <https://academic.oup.com/qje/article-abstract/134/3/1225/5435538?redirectedFrom=fulltext>
- Ottinger, S., & Voigtländer, N. (2025).** *History's masters: The effect of European monarchs on state performance*. *Econometrica*, **93**(1), 95–128. <https://doi.org/10.3982/ECTA20830>
- Pascali, L. (2017).** The Wind of Change: Maritime Technology, Trade, and Economic Development. *American Economic Review*, **107**(9), 2821-2854. <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/aer.20140832>
- Rogoff, K. S., Rossi, B., & Schmelzing, P. (2024).** Long-Run Trends in Long-Maturity Real Rates, 1311-2022, *American Economic Review*, **114**(8), 2271-2307. <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/aer.20221352>
- Steinwender, C. (2018).** Real Effects of Information Frictions: "When the States and the Kingdom became United". *American Economic Review*, **108**(3), 657-696 <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/aer.20150681>