Course Description:

465 is designed to introduce you to the topics, methods, and materials of American economic history. The lectures identify the issues that have defined the field over the past three decades. At the beginning of each lecture I outline the day's topic and explain why I think it is worthy of your time and attention. The readings acquaint you with the very best that is written in the field. Each week in a two or three page written summary and in discussion you will analyze these readings, paying particular attention to the author's arguments and evidence. By the end of the semester, you should be able to pick up an article or a chapter of a book and quickly pen a clear, concise analysis. And if I have done my job, you will continue to enjoy economic history long after you have left this classroom.

Required readings:


Lecture Topics:

Sept. 4: Introduction to American Economic History
6: Capitalism and Commerce

Sept: 9: The Virginia Colony*
11: The Tobacco Colonies in the Seventeenth Century
13: Massachusetts Bay in the Seventeenth Century

Sept. 16: Agriculture in the Eighteenth Century*
18: The Extractive Industries and Manufacturing
20: Colonial Currency

Sept. 23: Colonial Commerce*
25: Unfree Labor: Servants and Slaves
27: Colonial Income and Wealth

Sept. 30: British Mercantilism and the Road to Revolution
Oct. 2: The Revolutionary War*
4: The Burdens and Benefits of Independence

Oct. 7: Comparative Colonial Development*
9: Adam Smith and the Institutional Origins of American Capitalism
11: The Courts and American Development

Oct. 13: From Market-Places to a Market Economy
15: The Golden Age of Commerce, 1790-1815
17: Midsemester Exam
No readings the week of the midsemester.
Oct. 21: The Beginnings of Modern Growth
23: The Transportation Revolution: I
25: The Transportation Revolution: II

Oct. 28: American Industrialization in an International Context
30: Two Patterns of Manufacturing Development: The Large Firm
Nov. 1: The Small Firm*

Nov. 4: Early American Banking*
6: Andrew Jackson and the Bank War
8: Government in the Antebellum Era

Nov. 11: Northern Agriculture: I
13: Northern Agriculture: II
15: Slavery and the Southern Economy*

Nov. 18: Slavery and the Family*
20: The Railroad

Nov. 25: The Iron Industry
27: The American System of Manufactures
29: The Changing World of Work*

Dec. 2: The Standard of Living Debate*
4: The Demographic Transition
6: Immigration and the Urban Boom

Dec. 9: The Coming of the Civil War*
11: The Civil War
13: Growth and Inequality

*Denotes discussion. You should have read the readings and written your two to three page analysis by the class hour.

Your grade will be determined as follows:
Weekly summaries.............50%
Midsemester examination..20%
Final examination............30%

On those days marked by an asterisk (*) you will turn in a brief (two to three page) essay. This essay should identify the author's argument, evidence, and methodology. The essay must be turned in at the beginning of the class hour, late papers will not be accepted. Students may take three byes, that is, may select three weeks in which they will not submit a paper. On those weeks you will just turn in a sheet of paper notifying me that this is your bye week. You will still be responsible for having read the readings and for contributing to discussion.

The examinations will consist of broad essay questions. Copies of old exams will be available.

My office is in 4125 Humanities, office hours are Monday and Friday from 10 to 11:30. If you cannot meet during those times, call me at 263-2366 (office) or 848-5456 (home) or email me at dllindst@facstaff.wisc.edu for an appointment.