

University of London International Programmes
BA in History

Royal Holloway and Bedford New College
University of London, Department of History, 2012/13

H11008 British Social and Economic History 1945-1997

1 Overview

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this first year half-unit is to introduce students to aspects of social science and quantitative methods they may not have come across before, which are relevant to the history, and particularly the twentieth century history, they will be studying.

A range of different authors and approaches within the field of economic history will be used to achieve this, to broaden students' understanding of the functioning of the economy in the latter part of the twentieth century, as economic policy becomes a more central part of political decision making, and therefore of political history.

The focus of this course will be on the basics necessary to help students understand the nature and workings of economies at the national level. This will be done through consideration of some of the recurring themes in modern economic history - growth, labour supply, overseas trade and national accounting. These topics will be considered using historical examples drawn from British economic history between 1945 and 1997.

Learning Outcomes

Students successfully completing this course should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the underlying economics (in historical context) used by the Economic Historians considered;
- Analyse and comment on specialist writings in Economic History, including those incorporating qualitative material;
- Broadly comprehend the nature and workings of national economies, with reference to the topics covered in the lecture and class programme.

Health warning: some students become faint at the thought of doing anything which involves "theory" and "statistics". Not unreasonably, it might be assumed that most arts and humanities students have self-selected away from methodologies more commonly followed in the social and natural sciences. You are therefore asked to please remember that economic history IS NOT ECONOMICS, although economic history does draw from the theories and methodologies of the economist. This distinction is important, as the economic principles essayed in the course will be in the context of the historical examples used to illustrate them. Similarly, any statistics introduced will be related to the historical events considered. No assumption of prior knowledge of economics or statistics is made.

Methodology

This half-unit will be a little unusual within the canon of courses offered within the University of London International Programmes BA in History by Royal Holloway. It is very uncommon for the Department to base a course around a specific textbook, although for the distance learning programme certain books are emphasized as 'core' for the units taken online. In the Royal Holloway teaching programme, this unit is taken principally by students reading for the degrees in History and International Relations, and Modern History and Politics. As mentioned in the aims and objectives above, this is done to allow students to have a better grasp of the political processes associated with economic policy formation *in a historical context*. This last phrase is important, and we will return to this point presently.

We might better think about how modern economic policy is formed by government as being a process of 'political economy', the nexus between economic theory and the *realpolitik* of passing policy into law (and implementing it). Very rarely, if at all, is an economic theory transferred and applied by governments following an academic theoretic 'blue print': the economic principle must be translated into policy through the filter of 'what is possible' or 'what the electorate will tolerate'. On the basis that first year undergraduate students reading for a history degree have most likely not done any formal mathematics since 16 years of age, and probably no economics at all, a heavily theoretical approach to this teaching may not yield the outcomes we hope for.

Therefore, think in terms of an old adage, that 'history is the laboratory of the social sciences': we will look to understand the underlying economics relevant to the course by dealing with the history of Britain in the second half of the twentieth century, and deriving an understanding of the principles involved that way, rather than consulting with the (potentially dry) theory in isolation first.

To help focus on this task, we are predominantly going to concentrate on the third volume of *The Cambridge Economic History of Britain*. Not only are we going to consider the economic and social history contained in this very good, multi-authored text, but we are going to attempt to get to grips with the language used by economists and to demystify some of the terms, graphs and tables included to broaden the historical understanding of what went on.

You might think of the implicit objective here in these terms: you hopefully will be able to pick up *The Economist* magazine at the end of this course, and be able to broadly understand the main articles – as, in truth, there is relatively little theoretical economics in *The Economist*.

To help you cope with the task of learning the history, the economic language, and the analytical meaning of statistics and graphs describing events, we will concentrate on *The Cambridge Economic History of Britain*. You will find that, in other history courses, it is the breadth of reading which is valued and emphasized, whereas here we are trying to get you to embrace a range of different approaches in one text, and we will thus concentrate on that book.

Much of the material contained in the module will be an explicit discussion of the graphs and tables included in *The Cambridge Economic History of Britain*. It will be tempting to skip over these sections of each chapter and concentrate on the written text. However, since most discussion of British society and economy is reliant on this material, at least having some insight over what the statistics means, is useful ... not least of which because it will allow you to decide if you agree with the author's interpretation. So in this case, we are looking to extend your critical thinking beyond the text and into the numbers, and some of the squiggly-lines on the graphs. We will encourage you to read a range of other materials, but let us concentrate on the parts you might find most

‘challenging’ in the written part of the course, and concentrate on a more rounded discussion of the history when it comes to the seminars and your essays.

2 Reflective Task:

Before going any further with this course, take a deep breath, and ask yourself:

‘How much do I really hate the idea of undertaking this form of study’.

Make a note of your answer somewhere. (Having taught this type of material to first year undergraduates reading for arts and humanities degrees, I am under no illusion as to how most approach this half-unit initially.) At the end of the course, go back to this note, and review what you wrote in answer to this question. For some of you, your feelings will be the same but hopefully, a number of you will have overcome your concerns, and will find dealing with this material a little easier.

3 Readings

The core textbooks for this course are:

Floud, Roderick & Paul Johnson (eds). *The Cambridge Economic History of Britain*, vol. 3 1939-2000. CUP: Cambridge, 2004.

Marwick, Arthur. *British Society Since 1945: The Penguin Social History of Britain*. Penguin: London, 2003 (Revised 4th Edn).

Floud and Johnson is a multi-authored work, written by a range of experts in various areas of British history. You will note on page xv-xvi of volume three that the authors come to British history from an economics or management perspective: there is only one person – Katherine Watson – listed (in 2004) as a ‘Lecturer in Modern History’. For a more analytical appraisal of the series, you might like to consult

Booth, Alan. “Review. The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain by Roderick Floud; Paul Johnson.” *The Economic History Review*, 57:4 (2004): 778-779
(<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3698638>)

via JSTOR (more of which below). This volume is intended to be accessible to an undergraduate audience; however, as noted in the methodology section, we are going to spend a reasonable amount of time going through the individual Floud and Johnson chapters so that you have an understanding of what is being argued.

In contrast, the Marwick text is almost the complete antithesis of Floud and Johnson, and will look more like the sort of published history you are used to. At one extreme, economic and social history was described, perhaps in the 1960s, as ‘history with a few tables’, dealing with the mass experience of a population. What Floud and Johnson embodies – and fully embraces – is the ‘new’ economic history from the 1970s, which was more explicitly driven by the application of economic theory. You will find Marwick’s text does not even have very many tables, in contrast.

You might find it useful to read Marwick's book cover to cover, to give you a broader context of the history of the period – the fourth edition was published the year before Floud and Johnson, so they can be seen complementing each other from a certain perspective. If you like, Marwick will round out some of the arguments in Floud and Johnson by taking almost the opposite approach to the material. We are likely to use Marwick more to discuss the social implications of some of the Government policies we will consider, in the seminars, and in your essays.

While it is not a compulsory purchase for this course, it is probably wise to have access to an economic dictionary. There are many very good ones: this, from Oxford, is the last one I ordered:

Black, John, Nigar Hashimzade and Gareth Myles (Eds). *A Dictionary of Economics*. OUP: Oxford, 2012. (4th Edn).

Knowledge of some of the specialist terms is going to be needed at some point or other. Unfortunately, neither Floud and Johnson or Marwick are available as e-books, nor is the fourth edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of Economics*. The third edition is, however. *The Economist* magazine provides a list of economic terms (<http://www.economist.com/economics-a-to-z>), which you can consult, but PLEASE use discretion when selecting your web resources: a very good way of putting staff offside is by using W*k*p*d** - students on this course at Royal Holloway will mandatorily receive a mark of 0% on any essay using this website.

Another useful resource to help you come to grips with a number of terms is EH.NET – the website of the Economic History Association (simply enter 'eh.net' into an online search engine to gain access). It includes an online encyclopaedia (<http://eh.net/encyclopedia>), written by a number of prominent academic economists and economic historians. This covers a large range of materials, most beyond the scope of this course, but there are some which you will find useful, such as Jerry Mushin's discussion of the Sterling Area (<http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/sterling-area>)

Useful as well is the Economic History Society's ReFRESH web page (<http://www.ehs.org.uk/ehs/refresh/default.asp>). These articles, originally published 1985-2001, are short, eight page, 2,000 word summaries on particular subjects, initially aimed at the A-Level market in the UK (the course author has an A-Level in British economic and social history, amongst other things). These are both accessible and very good for the purposes of this course. Again, not all are relevant, but when we consider the legacy of the Second World War, Jim Tomlinson's article 'Understanding Mr Attlee: the economic policies of the Labour Government, 1945-51' (<http://www.ehs.org.uk/ehs/refresh/assets/Tomlinson27a.pdf>) will be of value.

Otherwise, many topics will be supplemented with academic journal articles from JSTOR (<http://www.jstor.org/>) to develop a broader perspective. You will need to keep in mind that these articles are predominantly not written with you (as undergraduate students) in mind – when originally published, these were intended to disseminate new research to the academic community in peer-reviewed journals. That said, many are excellent and accessible, and commonly used by undergraduate students the world over.

4 Reflective Task:

Go to any chapter in Floud and Johnson, or a financial article in a reputable newspaper or news website. Read for five minutes, making a note of all the terms and concepts you (currently) do not

understand. Review this list in the context of how much you are going to have to engage with a language which might not be (presently) familiar to you.

5 Seminars

Over the course of the year we will be running five fortnightly asynchronous seminars. During this time, we will go through individual JSTOR articles and Floud and Johnson chapters, looking at the meaning of the content, and reflecting on how this changes our understanding of the history of the period and topic we are considering. Roughly speaking, the seminars will map to pairs of topics, to deal with material introduced via the online texts.

From the way we used to run the seminars 'face to face', I will provide a series of detailed questions for each of the seminars. This started with a jokey comment from one of the students at Royal Holloway a number of years ago: "It would be really helpful to have '20 questions' to prepare for class". So ... I wrote 20 questions for each chapter initially and perhaps a few more or a few less for some of the articles. Students could then come into the classroom with some idea of how to interpret the reading, and I believe it helped some comprehend this question. I would imagine over a fortnight we would be able to deal with the majority of questions for each seminar; but if you are not confident on any of the subject areas, at least you can bone up in advance of us starting.

6 Reflective Task:

- 1) Read one of the Floud and Johnson chapters set for a seminar;
- 2) Now take the set of questions for that chapter, and read it again in parallel to the questions, perhaps taking notes as you go along.

Consider how much more you were able to understand the second time around.

7 Essays:

A list of 12 essays covering the course will be available from the beginning of the teaching. These will cover themes and issues we will deal with over the year, but will not necessarily map directly to any of the topics of seminars. They will be more expansive questions, allowing you to link themes across the individual topics we will consider online. The writing of the essays is *voluntary*, but is recommended. The essay this term will be formative and, while they will not count towards your final mark for the course, they will allow us to give you feedback (and will be marked out of 100). The essay must be your own work, written very largely in your own words. All quotations must be attributed. Note that a quotation without attribution constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism is not acceptable in any form, and plagiarism takes many forms, including:

- deliberately copying another student's work;
- copying directly from textbooks and other sources without using quotation marks;
- not acknowledging the sources you have used in your work (i.e. you must cite all references);
- re-submitting an assignment used in one course as an original piece of work for another course.

Work that shows evidence of plagiarism will be penalised in line with the seriousness of the case. This may involve work being returned unmarked. In extreme cases, University academic disciplinary procedures may be invoked. Students therefore **CANNOT WRITE THEIR ESSAYS OR EXERCISES IN COLLABORATION WITH OTHER STUDENTS**

Essays handed in up to a week late will have 10% reduction made to the final mark; essays handed in later than a week after the deadline will be given a mark of **ZERO**. The deadlines for the essays will be in February and March, and we will confirm these in the period up to Christmas.

Essay Regulations: Confirmation

Each essays will be marked out of 100. Essays will be based on the topics and seminar programmes combined. Essays must conform to the following conventions:

1. Essays must include a bibliography and footnotes (including page references). Staff reserve the right to return an essay to a student to be properly referenced, and to deduct marks as if the essay was late.
2. The word limit is 2,000-2,200. Do not write more than the acceptable limit for the respective deadlines (see the table below). Footnotes do count toward the word limit while the bibliography does not.
3. Essays must be typed.
4. Essays up to one week late will have 10 marks deducted.
5. Essays over one week late will be graded with a mark of 0%.
6. Essays will **NOT** be marked unless an electronic version is submitted to Turnitin.

Word Limits and Penalties

Assessment	Word Limit	10% Penalty	Zero Mark
Essay	2,000-2,200	2,201-2,399	2,400 and above

8 Reflective Task:

Consider the last essay you wrote which was returned to you with feedback – I appreciate that for some of you this might have been some time ago. Most academics and teachers have perhaps an unreasonable expectation that students will a) pay attention to comments added to student essays; and b) students will use this feedback when writing their next essay. Somewhat depressingly for us, this doesn't always happen.... Think about what you can learn from the comments you have received previously, and how you can use these to improve or refine you essay writing in future.

9 The Exam

One-hundred percent (100%) of the assessment for this course will be on the final exam, to be sat in May/June (i.e. at the end of the academic year of study). The exam paper will consist of nine to twelve (9-12) questions, and you will be expected to answer any two from the paper in two hours.

More details on the exam paper will be given as the year goes on, but you will not be given information on the individual topics coming up. You should assume that not all of the material covered in the course will be coming up in the exam. Further, as with the essays, exam questions may test you on your knowledge spanning a number of topics and seminars subjects.

Our belief is that 1) you should be considering your revision strategy from the very beginning of the course; and 2) that writing the coursework essays – which allows you to order your notes and construct an answer to the question posed – is a good way to start preparing for the exam.

We will arrange for previous exam papers from the course taught at RHUL to be scanned and mounted in the UoLIP Moodle site in due course. While I would not recommend using previous papers for the purpose of ‘question spotting’, you will at least get a feeling for the style of the questions you may expect in the exam.

10 Reflective Task:

If you are going to write an exam paper requiring two questions to be answered in two hours, how many topics are you going to revise? Think about this now, before we start the course, and come back to your answer once you near the end.