

Economic History: The Great Divergence, Convergence, and Beyond

LMH Summer Programmes are provided by Lady Margaret Hall, a college in the University of Oxford

Course:	Economic History: The Great Divergence, Convergence, and Beyond
Available:	Programme Session 1: 30 th June 2025 to 18 th July 2025
Lectures:	18 Hours
Seminars:	12 Hours
Tutorials:	3 Hours
Independent Study:	Approximately 120 Hours
Recommended Credit:	15 CATS / 7.5 ECTS / 4 US Credits

About this Course:	<p>What are the causes of the vast differences in wealth between nations? Why have certain societies prospered whilst others still grapple with poverty? Will inequality between the developed and developing worlds be permanent? Addressing these questions and understanding today's global economy requires a historical perspective.</p> <p>This course will begin with an introduction to Economic History as an interdisciplinary subject, and to the methods and sources economic historians use. You will then explore some of the key events of the past 500 years, including the Transatlantic slave-trade, colonialism, and the Industrial Revolution, examining their links to the phenomenon known as the 'Great Divergence', when levels of wealth in the Western world separated from everywhere else. We will then consider the more recent phenomenon of 'Convergence', and investigate why certain countries, including Japan and China, managed to catch up with their European counterparts, whilst others fell further behind. In the final part of the course you will reflect on the limits of 'Convergence', and assess whether inequality has become an immovable feature of global development. Throughout the course you will be introduced to frontline research and a variety of interdisciplinary approaches, with a particular focus on quantitative methods.</p>
Course Overview:	<p><u>Week 1: Epistemology and Methodology of Economic History</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic History as an inter-disciplinary subject, its methods and sources • The three 'revolutions' of Economic History <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Cliometric Histories ◦ Annales School ◦ Cambridge Group

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archives and databases: sources for Economic History studies • Qualitative & quantitative methods and their advantages & disadvantages • How to use evidence critically • Introduction to the theory and approaches of the ‘Great Divergence’ <p>In the first week you will be introduced to Economic History as a multi-disciplinary subject from the epistemological and methodological perspectives. We will begin with the definition of Economic History, examining what economic historians are interested in, and how their analyses have been shaped by the three ‘revolutions’ in the discipline – Cliometrics, the Annales School, and the Cambridge Group. We will discuss the sources and approaches used in Economic History studies as well as their advantages & disadvantages. The first week will end with an investigation into the theory and approaches of the scholarly topic of the ‘Great Divergence’, asking why the 19th Century saw Western European nations surpass the wealth and power of previously dominant civilizations such as the Ottoman Empire and those in China and India.</p> <p><u>Week 2: Slave Trade, Colonization, and Industrial Revolution</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The transatlantic slave trade and global colonisation • The Industrial Revolution: what happened • Why Britain? The role of exogenous factors in the Industrial Revolution • Why Britain? The role of culture in the Industrial Revolution • Why Britain? The role of institutions in the Industrial Revolution <p>The second week will proceed to the topic of the ‘Great Divergence’, focusing on the historical events and factors that contributed to the rise of Western Europe, and in particular Great Britain. We will first examine the emergence of the transatlantic slave trade from the 16th century and subsequent global colonialism, understanding their roles in the economic development of Western Europe. Our focus then moves to one of the most important events in economic history – the Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries. By focusing on three perspectives, exogenous factors (e.g., natural resources, climate, and disease), culture (e.g., gender norms, kinship, and religions), and institutions (e.g., property rights, merchant guilds, and parliament), we will comprehensively examine the driving forces of Industrial Revolution in Britain.</p> <p><u>Week 3: Beyond the Great Divergence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional developments since 1870 • Inequality within and between nations • The driving forces and limits of growth • Persistence studies: the shadow of the past <p>In the final week we will go beyond the topic of the ‘Great Divergence’ by exploring the period from the end of the Industrial Revolution to the present. In this period certain countries, such as China and Japan, reached parity with their European counterparts, while other nations fell even further behind. We will examine this phenomenon, dubbed ‘Convergence’, as well as investigating growing economic inequalities within and between nations, examining various underlying causes to gain a fuller understanding of economic development in this period. The course will conclude with an introduction to the features, strengths, and limitations of Persistence Studies, an increasingly influential analytical framework which seeks to understand the causal mechanisms of long-term trends in Economic History.</p>
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Key Texts:	<p>Broadberry, S., & Fukao, K. (Eds.), <i>The Cambridge Economic History of the Modern World</i>, Cambridge, 2021.</p> <p>Allen, R., <i>The British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective</i>, Cambridge, 2009.</p> <p>Pomeranz, K., <i>The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy</i>, Princeton NJ, 2000.</p> <p>Abramovitz, M., "Catching-up, Forging Ahead and Falling Behind", <i>Journal of Economic History</i> 46: 385-406, 1986.</p>
Learning Outcomes:	<p>By the end of this course, you will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop knowledge and understanding of Economic History as an interdisciplinary subject and its methodologies. • Be able to demonstrate knowledge of key historical events and their role in long-term economic development. • Be able to think critically about the sources and limits of economic growth.
Admissions Requirements:	<p>LMH Summer Programmes are designed for students who want to gain and develop knowledge in their chosen subject area. LMH Summer Programmes are intensive courses of study aimed at undergraduates who have completed one, two, or three years of their degree, or entry level postgraduate students.</p> <p>We will consider each applicant's academic ability and expect successful applicants to have a minimum grade point average equivalent to 2:1 level on the British grading scale. For example, this would mean at least a 3.2 GPA on the 4.0 grading scale in the United States, and 80% in China.</p> <p>This course would suit students in a Humanities or Social Sciences field, especially History or Economics, but including Political Science and Sociology. This course would be especially beneficial to students aspiring to undertake graduate study in History or Economics.</p> <p>To participate fully in the programme all students will need to have proficiency in English.</p> <p>English language requirements for students who are not native English speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TOEFL iBT score of 98 • IELTS score of 7.0 (no less than 6.5 in each component) • Duolingo English Test score of 125 (no less than 115 in each section) • Cambridge English Scale score of 185 <p>If the language of instruction in your home institution is English you do not need to provide evidence of your English proficiency.</p>
Teaching Methods:	<p>Core syllabus material will be covered in lectures. Students attend four lectures each week and each lecture lasts 90 minutes. Seminars in smaller groups offer students space to discuss and debate, to dig deeper into difficult concepts, and to explore their own ideas. Student contribution to seminars is vital, and tutors will ensure everyone takes part in discussions. Seminars last 1 hour and students will take part in four seminars each week.</p> <p>Independent study is a crucial part of an LMH Summer Programme and of the Oxford teaching model. Tutors will recommend important reading to do between lectures and seminars that will enable students to come to class equipped to understand the information presented and prepared to take part in discussion and debate. Each week students will have an assignment of independent work to complete and submit in advance of the tutorial. There is an appropriate amount of space in the timetable to complete the necessary reading, preparation, and</p>

	<p>assignments. Students should expect to do around 40 hours of independent study each week.</p> <p>The final class each week is a tutorial, a very small class typically including only 2-4 students and central to the teaching methods used by the University of Oxford and on LMH Summer Programmes. Guided by their tutor, students will receive feedback on their assignments and be challenged to defend, justify, or even rethink their work and ideas. These rigorous academic discussions help develop and facilitate learning in a way that cannot be done with lectures and seminars alone.</p>
Assessment:	<p>On a three-week LMH Summer Programme students produce one piece of assessed work every week, which is submitted to the tutor and then discussed in a tutorial. At the end of each week students will receive a percentage grade for their submitted work. Each week's work counts for a third of the final percentage grade, so the final grade is an average of the mark received for each piece of work. Students who stay for six or nine weeks will receive a separate grade for each 3-week course.</p>
Academic Credit:	<p>Lady Margaret Hall will provide a transcript of students' assessed work, and can send this directly to your home institution if required. LMH Summer Programmes are designed to be eligible for academic credit, and we will communicate with home institution to facilitate this as needed. As a guide, we recommend the award of 15 CATS / 7.5 ECTS / 4 US Credits for each 3-week course.</p>