

World Economic History Since 1600

First Paper Assignment

This assignment asks you to identify a historical topic, locate and carefully read at least two scholarly articles on that topic, and write a 5 page (max 1500 word) paper that discusses and examines the articles' treatment of the topic.

1. Topic

Choose a topic or issue that relates in some way to the first 4-5 weeks of this course—in other words, a topic related to economic history before roughly 1850. I am glad to talk through ideas with you. Generally, the more focused the issue, the easier the research and writing.

The main test for whether your initial choice of topic will work lies in your ability to locate 2 scholarly articles that examine that topic, and that you can discuss and explain in a short paper. You will probably find yourself adjusting your topic or shifting your focus as you begin to search for and look at possible articles.

2. Research

Locate two scholarly articles that examine the topic you have chosen. You will probably have to be flexible with your initial choice of topic, adapting it to what you are able to find – or allowing your searches to suggest new topic ideas.

There are several ways to search for academic articles in economic or business history – refer to our class discussion of this and the notes on class PPT slides.

Do not use books or book chapters. You are to locate and use 2 articles of the sort published in academic journals. For example, you could search in journals where economic history is published, including the *Journal of Economic History*, *Economic History Review*, *European Journal of Economic History*, *Explorations in Economic History*, *Enterprise and Society*, *Business History Review*, and some others in this field. Conventional library search tools can be useful for searching in such journals, including:

- JSTOR
- Article search
- Google scholar

One of the more useful strategies is to search the collection hosted by the “New Economic Papers – History” website (NEP-HIST). Many of these have not yet been published in journals, but all are written by serious scholars and will later be published in journals.

There are several ways to access and search this site. The most useful is found here:

<http://econpapers.repec.org/scripts/search.pf?neplist=nephis2015-02-05;pg=-1>

Make sure you use the box under “Items in NEP report on:” and then select “Business, Economic, and Financial History” from the drop-down menu.

You can use the “free text search” box, but it is probably more efficient to use the “keywords and title” box for your search terms. Be sure that as you search for a topic or issue, that you identify articles that examine that topic in the appropriate historical period (and not in today’s world). Under the “Search” list on the right side, click “Working Papers” and “Journal Articles.” It might be helpful to click the “single list” button in the upper-right hand corner of the results screen.

You will likely get a long-ish list of results. Feel free to use the paper titles on the results list to suggest ways to revise, change, or modify the potential focus of your paper.

I am glad to provide additional individual advice if you make an appointment or via email.

3. Preliminary Assignment

See the assignment instruction on the Canvas Assignments page. You will turn in, via Canvas, a 1-page preliminary report containing the following:

- 1) Formal bibliographic citation for the two articles you are likely to use. See below for format.
- 2) One-sentence statement of the topic or issue that the two papers allow you to discuss.
- 3) After at least a quick look at the articles, list in 3-5 bullet points several issues that you may be able to address and discuss in your essay.

Due Friday 9/15 by midnight. The grade for this preliminary assignment will be incorporated in the final grade for the Essay.

4. Writing

Finally, write a 5 page formal paper (max, 1500 words text) in which you discuss the way in which the two papers examine the topic. The goal is NOT to write a paper on the topic, using the two articles as sources, but rather to explain to your readers how two scholars have gone about examining the topic. Assume that your reader has not read the papers, and has only a vague understanding of the topic. You will have to provide an introduction to the topic and its historical importance, and then structure your paper around a presentation of the two articles and, most importantly, a discussion and explanation of their approach, methods, and arguments. There is no best-way to do this, but a classic compare and contrast approach could be useful. Your paper should be more an *explanation* than a *description*. Do not simply describe or summarize one paper, then the other.

The paper is due in class on Friday 9/22 by midnight.

Please use the following format for the heading of your paper:

Your Name

World Economic History

First Paper -- Date

Title of your paper (Note: what makes a good title??)

Then list the two articles, in alphabetical order, using the Chicago Manual bibliographic format (last name first, and here is a quick link: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html). Note that many of the papers on NEP-HIST are “working papers” or “discussion papers.” The citation format is a combination of that for journal articles and for unpublished papers, in the Chicago style. Provide the hyperlink also.

Then, the text of your paper, approx. 5 pages, max 1500 words (double spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font). The Word document file should begin with your last name and then Research paper 1 (e.g. Beatty Research Paper 1.doc)

As always, let me know if you have any questions.