Seminar in Politico-Economic History

Spring 2006

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This seminar will consider how modern theories of political economy can be employed to better understand important episodes in economic history. Topics will include (but not be limited to) the Rise of the West, Redistribution and Inequality in Historical Perspective, Colonialism and Economic Development, and the link between Representative Institutions and Government Commitment. Students will be expected to make class presentations on the readings in addition to writing a research paper. This paper can take several forms. It could extend the scope of one or more of the readings, or it could devise a new empirical test for one of the topics. It should not be restricted to a literature review.

Since this is the first time I am teaching this course, and in fact the first time I am teaching at NYU, I am quite open to suggestions for additions, modifications, or substitution of topics in this syllabus. Once the group is settled, we can consider these issues.

The vast majority of readings that follow are available electronically. The exceptions involves the following books that have been ordered for purchase, and the following contents ordered as a reading packet.

**Books ordered for purchase:**


**Reading packet contents:**


**January 17 - Introductory Session**

**January 24 - State Development in the Long Run**


Acemoglu, Daron (2005) “Modelling Inefficient Institutions”, mimeo, MIT.

Hoffman, Philip and Jean-Laurent Rosenthal “Divided We Fall: The Political Economy of Warfare and Taxation”, mimeo, UCLA and Caltech.

**January 31 - Further long run perspectives on state development**


Pirenne, Henri ([1937]) Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe, Harvest.

February 7 – Representative Institutions and Government Commitment


February 14 - Determinants of Democracy


February 21 - Democracy and Education in Historical Perspective


February 28 - Colonial institutions and Economic Development


March 7 - Trade and Nineteenth Century Tariffs


March 21 - Inequality in Historical Perspective


March 28 – The Politics of Redistribution


April 4 – Why Doesn’t the US Have a European Style Welfare State?


April 11 - Explaining Africa’s Economic Performance


**April 18 - Latin America**


**April 25 - Concluding session** (or additional topic to be set by the group)