1.1 — Introduction

ECON 452 • History of Economic Thought • Fall 2020

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Some Sociology of the Economics Profession

About This Course





"History is just one damned thing after another." - Arnold Toynbee (attributed)

- Isn't our useful history captured in our current practice?
 - Have we keept the good, thrown out the bad?



Economics is a Liberal Art





"The physicist who is only a physicist can still be a first class physicist and a most valuable member of society. But nobody can be a great economist who is only an economist—and I am even tempted to add that the economist who is only an economist is likely to become a nuisance if not a positive danger."

Hayek, Friedrich A, 21967, Studies in Philosophy, Politics and Economics

Friedrich A. Hayek

1899-1992

Economics Nobel 1974

Economics is a Liberal Art





George L. S. Shackle

"To be a complete economist, a man need only be a mathematician, a philosopher, a psychologist, an anthropologist, a historian, a geographer, and a student of politics; a master of prose exposition; and a man of the world with experience of practical business and finance, an understanding of the problems of administration, and a good knowledge of four or five languages. All this is, of course, in addition to familiarity with the economic literature itself...[The person best suited to economics is] the outstanding intellectual all-rounder with some leaning towards the arts rather than the natural science side."

Shackle, G. L. S., 1955, *Uncertainty in Economics and Other Reflections*

1903-1992

Progress: Female & POC John Bates Clark Medalists





Daron Acemoglu



Susan Athey



Esther Duflo



Amy Finkelstein



Raj Chetty



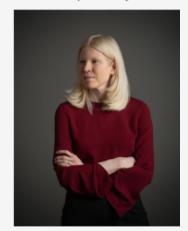
Roland Fryer Jr.



Parag Pathak



Emi Nakamura



Marissa Dell



- You have some interest in learning and applying economic way of thinking
- Most of you probably aren't going to graduate school

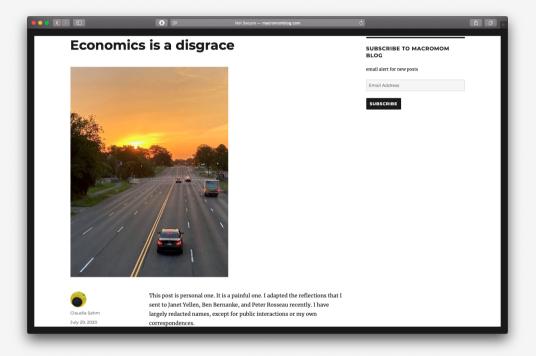
BUT you can still build up your:

- Critical thinking skills
- Additional perspectives and tools (nonmainstream)

And we have made mistakes as a profession!



Warts and All

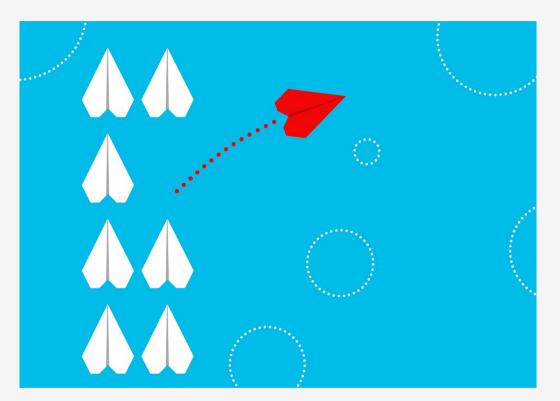




An Ongoing Critical Discourse



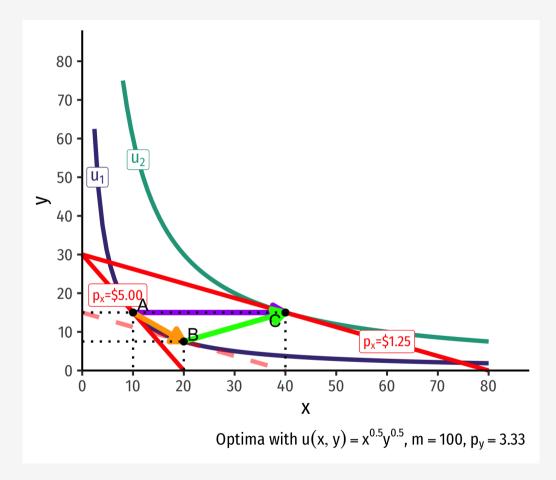
- Limitations of models (equilibrium, perfect competition)
- How did certain ideas enter/get rejected from "the mainstream"
 - Which persist as "heterodox"?
- An ongoing critical discourse
 - Lots of agreement
 - Lots of disagreement
 - Competing religions (*especially* macro!)



Think of Your Experience: What is Economics To You?



- Modern economics sequence
 - principles + intermediate micro & macro
 - ECON 305, ECON 306
- Privileges techniques over ideas
- A science of choice to be applied to find the optimum in politics, business, life



What is Economics To Economists?



- What counts as "scientific" or "economics"?
- Actual peer review on my 2nd academic article:

"There is basically no 'economics' in the paper at all." - Reviewer #2

What is Economics To Economists?



Journal of Institutional Economics (2020), 16, 423-425 doi:10.1017/5174415742000003X CAMBRIDGE

COMMENT

Economics is not statistics (and vice versa)

Peter T. Leeson

Department of Economics, George Mason University, Fairfax, USA Corresponding author. Email: pleeson@gmu.edu

(Received 23 December 2019; revised 21 January 2020; accepted 21 January 2020; first published online 14 February 2020)

Abstract

Economic analysis is a theoretical approach, not an empirical one. It is a way of thinking, not a way of testing. An analysis that has an empirical component can be economic without being quantitative: economics is not statistics. An atheoretical analysis can never be economic, no matter how impressive its regressions: statistics is not economics.

Keywords: Economic analysis; qualitative methods; quantitative methods

Journal of Institutional Economics (2020), 16, 553-556 doi:10.1017/5174415742000090 CAMBRIDGE

COMMENT

Economics is whatever the comparative advantage of economists is: a comment on Leeson (2020)

Ryan H. Murphy* (0)

Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX, USA "Corresponding author, Email: rhmurphw@smu.edu

(Received 11 February 2020; accepted 12 February 2020; first published online 6 March 2020)

Abstract

Leeson (2020) objects to the conflation of economics with applied econometrics, and argues that economics instead should be thought of as the implications of the assumption that individuals maximize, i.e. rational choice theory. But, narrowly defining economics in terms of method demands that we ignore alternative theoretical frameworks which potentially hold explanatory power about topics thought of as economics, all for the sake of a definition. I suggest that applying rational choice theory and applying econometrics became the comparative advantage for economists relative to other social scientists by accidents of history. These comparative advantages largely persist. It is reasonable to call applications of both rational choice theory and econometrics to topics outside conventional economic topics 'economics' simply because these applications remain the comparative advantage of economists.

Key words: Definition of economics; economic methodology; methodological nominalism

JEL Codes: B40; A11; A12

Example: RCTs are All the Rage







Professors Esther Duflo and Abhijit Banerjee, codirectors of MIT's @JPAL, receive congratulations on the big news this morning. They share in the #NobelPrize in economic sciences "for their experimental approach to alleviating global poverty."

Photo: Bryce Vickmark



Source: Vox (Oct 14, 2019)

But Not Everyone Agrees I





The RCT is a useful tool, but I think that is a mistake to put method ahead of substance. I have written papers using RCTs...[but] no RCT can ever legitimately claim to have established causality. My theme is that RCTs have no special status, they have no exemption from the problems of inference that econometricians have always wrestled with, and there is nothing that they, and only they, can accomplish.

Deaton, Angus, 2019, "Randomization in the Tropics Revisited: A Theme and Eleven Variations", Working Paper

Angus Deaton

Economics Nobel 2015

But Not Everyone Agrees II





Lant Pritchett

"People keep saying that the recent Nobelists "studied global poverty." This is exactly wrong. They made a commitment to a method, not a subject, and their commitment to method prevented them from studying global poverty."

"At a conference at Brookings in 2008 Paul Romer (last years Nobelist) said: "You guys are like going to a doctor who says you have an allergy and you have cancer. With the skin rash we can divide you skin into areas and test variety of substances and identify with precision and some certainty the cause. Cancer we have some ideas how to treat it but there are a variety of approaches and since we cannot be sure and precise about which is best for you, we will ignore the cancer and not treat it."

But Not Everyone Agrees III





"Lant Pritchett is so fun to listen to, sometimes you could forget that he is completely full of shit."

Source

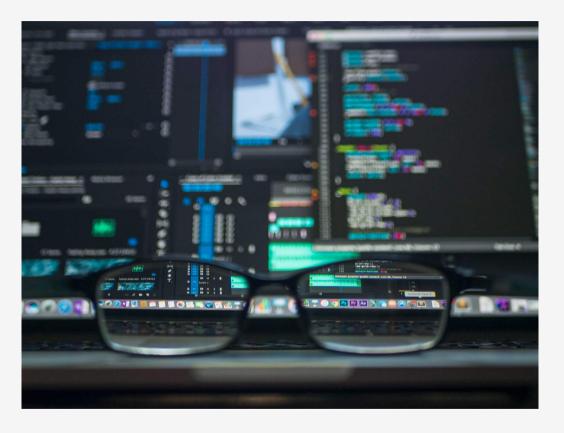
Angus Deaton

Economics Nobel 2015

Economics is Partially Determined by History



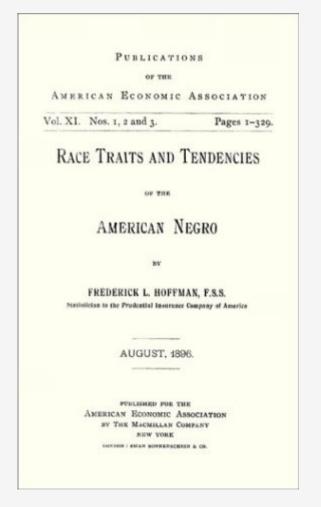
- Historical events partially determine the state of the mainstream
- Guided by current trends and fashions



Economics is Partially Determined by History



- Historical events partially determine the state of the mainstream
- *Mis*guided by current trends and fashions







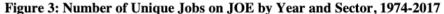
"Each year, almost every economics Ph.D. program produces more Ph.D.s than it can hire. As a result, candidates from the top departments trickle down, filling openings at lower-ranked departments, crowding most of the graduates of those departments to jobs in departments further down the rankings...the vast majority of new economics Ph.D.s ... moved to jobs in departments at least 50 ranks below their graduate department..." p. 7

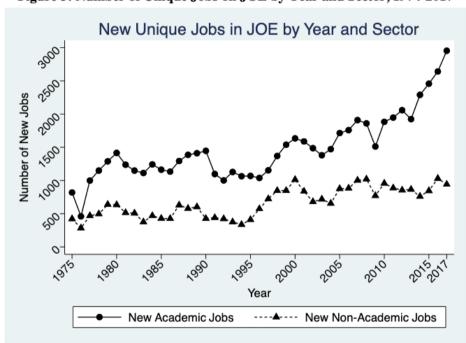
Cawley, John, 2018, "A Guide and Advice for Economists on the U.S. Junior Academic Job Market, 2018-2019 Edition," Working Paper



"[T]here is a strong demand in numerous sectors for new economics Ph.D.s, and almost everyone lands a job that they like. In a survey of economics job candidates from 2007 to 2010, job candidates received on average 16.8 interviews at the ASSA meetings, 5.7 flyouts, and 2.9 job offers (McFall et al., 2015). By the end of summer, 92% of job candidates had accepted a job...only 6% received no job offers....64% of job candidates got their top choice of sector (among: four-year college, university, nonprofit/government, business/industry, and postdoc). Another 20% got their second choice, and only 7% placed into jobs they had ranked fourth or fifth out of the five types. In addition, more than two-thirds of respondents (69.1%) were either "very satisfied" or "extremely satisfied" with their placements..."







Notes: Includes both junior and senior openings.

Sources: Report of the Director of Job Openings for Economists, AER P&P, various years. See, e.g. Siegfried (2018).

Table 2: Number of Employers Advertising on JOE, 2017

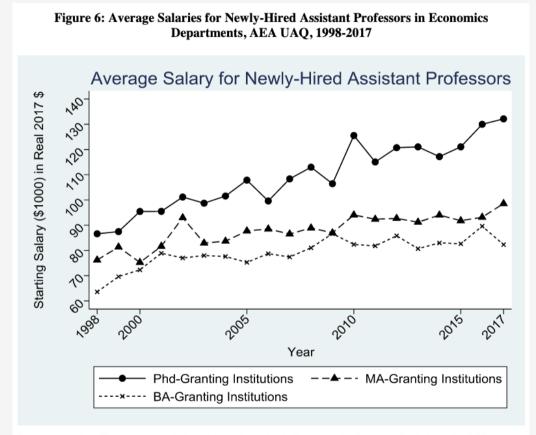
Type of Employer	2017
Colleges and Universities	1,427
Federal government	62
State / local government	18
Banking or finance	82
Business or industry	50
Consulting or research	155
Other	78
Total	1,872

Notes: Includes both junior and senior openings.

Source: Siegfried (2018).



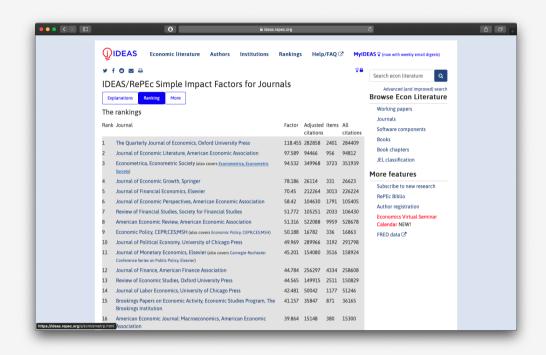
"[S]ince the year 2000,the real (inflation-adjusted) salaries of new assistant professors of economics in Ph.D.-granting institutions have risen over 36%. In 2017-18, the salary offered to new assistant professors of economics by Ph.D.-granting institutions averaged \$132,143 (Scott and Siegfried, 2018). Finally, National Science Foundation data indicate that Ph.D. economists have the lowest unemployment rate (0.9%) of any doctoral field, as well as one of the highest median salaries of any doctoral field." pp.7-8



Source: American Economic Association Universal Academic Questionnaire Summary Statistics, AER P&P, various years. See, e.g. Scott and Siegfried (2018). All salaries are converted to 2017 dollars using the CPI-U of the Bureau of Labor Statistics.



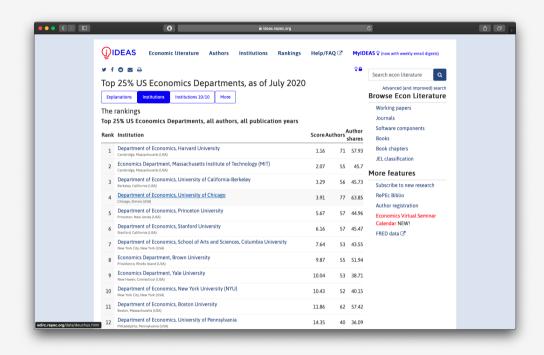
- Like many high-paying professions, professional economists are status whores
- Journal rankings (rePec)
- "Top 5":
 - 1. American Economic Review (AER)
 - 2. Econometrica (ECMA)
 - 3. Journal of Political Economy (JPE)
 - 4. Quarterly Journal of Economics (QJE)
 - 5. Review of Economic Studies (ReStud)



Source: RePEc



- Ph.D-granting Economics Department rankings^[Not the same as undergraduate school rankings!]
- "Top 5" Departments (U.S.)
 - 1. MIT
 - 2. Harvard
 - 3. Chicago
 - 4. Stanford
 - 5. Yale/Princeton



Source: RePEc

Academic Incest



 ${\it TABLE~8}$ Incest Coefficients: Publications in Top 5 between 2000–2016 by Author Affiliation Listed during Publication

		AER			ECMA			JPE			QJE			ReStud	
	Count	%	% All	Count	%	% Al									
Universities:															
Chicago	266	14.7	7.7	70	12.8	6.8	90	23.8	14.3	103	20.8	15.4	25	7.4	3.5
Columbia	169	9.4	4.9	28	5.1	2.7	27	7.1	4.3	43	8.7	6.4	33	9.8	4.6
Harvard	412	22.8	11.9	58	10.6	5.7	55	14.6	8.7	165	33.3	24.7	26	7.7	3.7
MIT	255	14.1	7.3	75	13.7	7.3	47	12.4	7.5	93	18.8	13.9	33	9.8	4.6
NYU	153	8.5	4.4	53	9.7	5.2	37	9.8	5.9	39	7.9	5.8	52	15.4	7.3
Northwestern	135	7.5	3.9	94	17.2	9.2	36	9.5	5.7	33	6.7	4.9	50	14.8	7.0
Princeton	166	9.2	4.8	54	9.9	5.3	24	6.3	3.8	39	7.9	5.8	34	10.1	4.8
Stanford	245	13.6	7.1	75	13.7	7.3	42	11.1	6.7	62	12.5	9.3	33	9.8	4.6
UC, Berkeley	230	12.7	6.6	47	8.6	4.6	28	7.4	4.4	65	13.1	9.7	33	9.8	4.6
UPenn	162	9.0	4.7	48	8.8	4.7	38	10.1	6.0	26	5.3	3.9	46	13.6	6.5
Yale	134	7.4	3.9	88	16.1	8.6	23	6.1	3.7	33	6.7	4.9	22	6.5	3.1
UCL	53	2.9	1.5	39	7.1	3.8	15	4.0	2.4	11	2.2	1.6	32	9.5	4.5
University combination:															
Harvard/MIT	597	33.0	17.2	122	22.3	11.9	94	24.9	14.9	225	45.5	33.7	53	15.7	7.5
Total (Top Afil.)	1,807	100.0	52.0	546	100.0	53.4	378	100.0	60.0	495	100.0	74.2	337	100.0	47.5
Total (Non-Top Afil.)	1,667	n/a	48.0	476	n/a	46.6	252	n/a	40.0	172	n/a	25.8	373	n/a	52.5
Total (Top and Non-Top)	3,474	n/a	n/a	1,022	n/a	n/a	630	n/a	n/a	667	n/a	n/a	710	n/a	n/a

Source: Elsevier, Scopus.com.

Note: This table reports three columns for each T5 journal. The left-most columns report the number of articles that were affiliated to each university. The middle columns present the percentage of articles published in the journal that were affiliated to the university out of all articles affiliated to the listed top universities. The right-most columns present the percentage of articles published in the journal that were affiliated to the university out of all articles published in the journal. An author is defined as being affiliated with a university during a given year if he/she listed the university as an affiliation in any publication that was made during that specific year. An article is defined as being affiliated with a university during a specific year if at least one author was affiliated to the university during the year.

Academic Incest



Table 1 Dispersion index of economics program faculty	
MIT	0.23
Harvard	0.27
Stanford	0.31
Princeton	0.37
Yale	0.44
Chicago	0.50

Table 2 Percentage of faculty who came from that program	
Harvard	0.26
MIT	0.23
Stanford	0.22
Chicago	0.18
Princeton	0.17
Yale	0.09

Table 3 Professors coming from either Harvard or MIT	
Harvard	61%
MIT	55%
Stanford	38%
Princeton	34%
Yale	30%
Chicago	15%

"Table 1 provides...a measure of the intellectual diversity in some top programs [using] the ratio of the number of different programs from which professors come to the total number of professors in the department. The higher the dispersion index number the wider the gene pool of graduates of that program.

Thus, if there were 10 professors at a program, and they came from 10 different programs, the dispersion index would be 1. If, however, they all came from the same school, the dispersion index would be 0.1.

MIT and Harvard have...the smallest gene pool of the programs listed. Chicago has the largest, which is still only 0.5...professors at these top programs come from a relatively small group of programs, [and] the most inbreeding occurs at MIT and Harvard and the least at Chicago." (p.157)

Academic Incest



Table 1 Dispersion index of economics program faculty	
MIT	0.23
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Princeton	0.37
Yale	0.44
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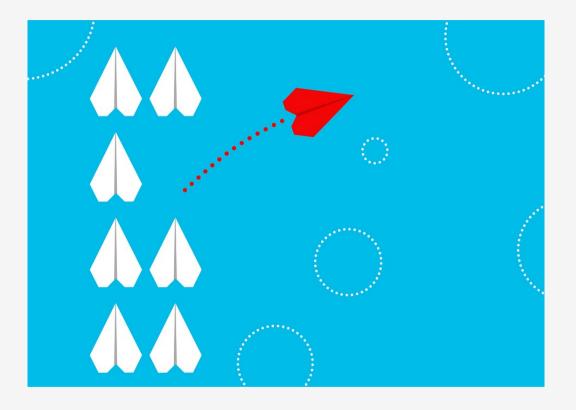
Table 2	Percentage of faculty who came from that program	
Harvard		0.26
MIT		0.23
Stanford		0.22
Chicago		0.18
Princeton	1	0.17
Yale		0.09

Table 3 Professors coming from either Harvard or MIT	
Harvard	61%
MIT	55%
Stanford	38%
Princeton	34%
Yale	30%
Chicago	15%

"Because in the past they have hired so many of each other's graduates they can be seen as at bestfirst cousins, and more...The mainstream profession seems to be following the path of the Spanish Habsburgs and not controlling inbreeding of close intellectual relative," (pp.158-159).



- "Mainstream": whatever current fashions the top 5 are following
- "Mainline": work in the tradition of Adam Smith



Boettke, Peter J, Alexander Fink, and Daniel J Smith, 2012, "The Impact of Nobel Prize Winners in Economics: Mainline vs. Mainstream," American Journal of Economics and Sociology 71(5):1219-



"We understand mainline economists to work in the tradition of Adam Smith. They start with the postulate that shortsighted, cognitively limited /hi[individuals pursue their own self-interest]. They focus their scholarly efforts on studying how these individuals, acting in their own self-interest, create complex social arrangements under the division of labor that align individual interest with the social interest. Thus, they tend to rely on invisible-hand theorizing to analyze how individuals coordinate individual plans in an orderly decentralized fashion...Accordingly, mainline economists, tend to view economics primarily as the science of exchange." (p.1220)

Boettke, Peter J, Alexander Fink, and Daniel J Smith, 2012, "The Impact of Nobel Prize Winners in Economics: Mainline vs. Mainstream," American Journal of Economics and Sociology 71(5):1219-



In contrast, we understand mainstream economists to tend to follow the scientific trends of their days and, at times, to be taken far afield from the mainline of economics by the pursuit of current fashions...[We have argued that] in the 1930s, mainstream economics moved away from the advancement of the propositions explored by mainline economists. Instead of viewing economics primarily as the science of exchange, economics became a science of choice...modeling the choice of cognitively perfect individuals in ideal situations, leaving no room for institutional analysis and operative mechanisms to explain how markest work given behavioral deviations from the hypothesized ideal man...opening the door to the use of economics as a tool of social control..." (pp.1220-1221).

Boettke, Peter J, Alexander Fink, and Daniel J Smith, 2012, "The Impact of Nobel Prize Winners in Economics: Mainline vs. Mainstream," American Journal of Economics and Sociology 71(5):1219-



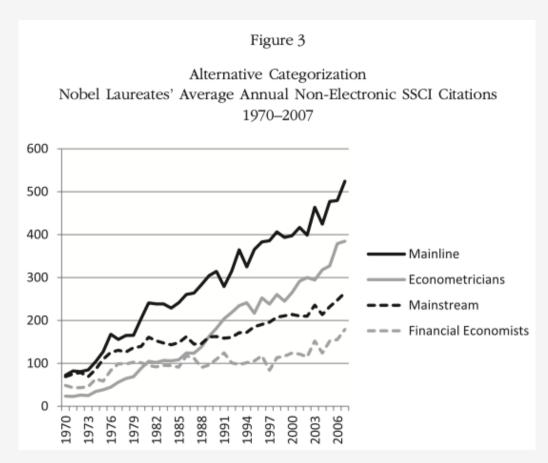
"Nobel Laureates working in the mainline of economics have had a more enduring impact on the social science profession than those working in the mainstream of economics. Our conjecture is that while mainstream economists engage in fashionable scholarly pursuits, these pursuits over the long run tend to have relatively weak enduring influence on the economics profession," (pp.1220-1221).

Table 1
Classification of Mainline and Mainstream Nobel Laureates

Mainline	Mainstream					
Becker	Akerlof	Kahneman	Mirrlees	Simon		
Buchanan	Allais	Kantorovich	Modigliani	Solow		
Coase	Arrow	Klein	Mundell	Spence		
Friedman	Aumann	Koopmans	Myerson	Stiglitz		
Hayek	Debreu	Krugman	Myrdal	Stone		
Kydland	Engle	Kuznets	Nash	Tinbergen		
Lucas	Fogel	Leontief	Ohlin	Tobin		
North	Frisch	Lewis	Phelps	Vickrey		
Ostrom	Granger	Markowitz	Samuelson			
Prescott	Haavelmo	Maskin	Scholes			
Schelling	Harsanyi	Meade	Schultz			
Smith	Heckman	McFadden	Selten			
Stigler	Hicks	Merton	Sen			
Williamson	Hurwicz	Miller	Sharpe			



"Individually, mainline Nobel Laureates were cited more often than mainstream Laureates. In terms of electronic and nonelectronic SSCI citations mainline Nobel Prize winners are more successful in maintaining an enduring impact on the social science profession than mainstream Nobel Prize winners," (pp.1228).





About This Course

Logistics: Hybrid Course



- hybrid: more synchronous material than asynchronous material
- I will always be teaching remotely
 - A classroom is available to you
 - I may make occasional visits to campus if you need something in person (TBD)
- Office hours: Tu/Th 3:30-5:00 PM on Zoom
 - Zoom link in Blackboard's LIVE CLASS SESSIONS link
 - □Slack channels

Logistics: Hybrid Course



- We will have **synchronous** sessions Mon/Wed 2:00-3:15 PM on **Zoom**
- Lecture videos will be posted on **Blackboard** via Panopto for students unable to join synchronously
 - If you were present, you do not need to watch the video (again)!
 - You are not required to attend synchronously, but it will help you
- All graded assignments are asynchronous

Learning Goals



By the end of this course, you will:

- Identify key economic writers and their contributions to economic thought
- Discuss the influence and value of different writers and their contributions
- Identify and distinguish the major schools of economic thought: Classical, Marxist, Neoclassical, Austrian, Keynesian, Monetarist, New Classical
- Place theories and ideas studied within the context of the time
- Better comprehend the origins and context of orthodox economic theory today
- Explore critiques of orthodox economic theory from various heterodox schools of thought and understand contested areas
- Reflect on the nature of economics as a discipline
- Understand the origins of key economic concepts and models
- Trace the evolution of major ideas through time, via your own writing

Assignments



	Assignment	Percent
n	Participation (Average)	35%
1	Term Paper	35%
2	Short Papers	20%
n	Tournament Votes	10%

Online Discussions



- My compromise between in-person discussions & asynchronous needs
- Weekly discussion board on topics (lectures & readings)
- Starting this week

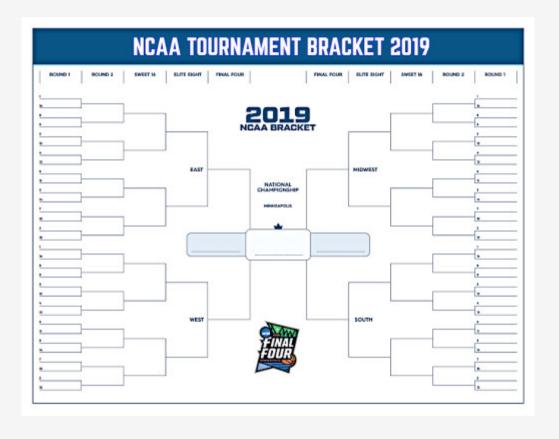
Term Paper



- Trace an idea through economic history
- Scaffolded drafts of sections due after we finish a major era
- I'm writing my own HET research paper, so I'm with you

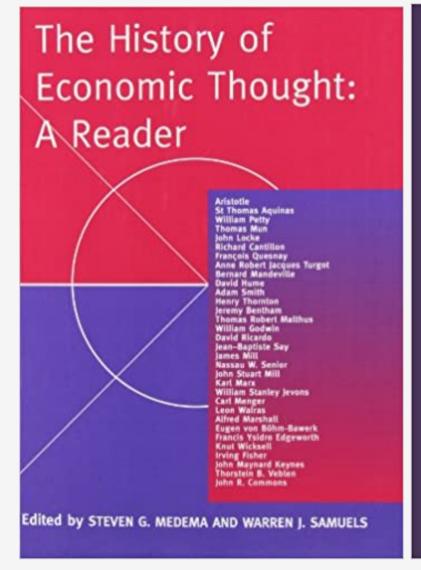
The Most Interesting Economist in History Tournament

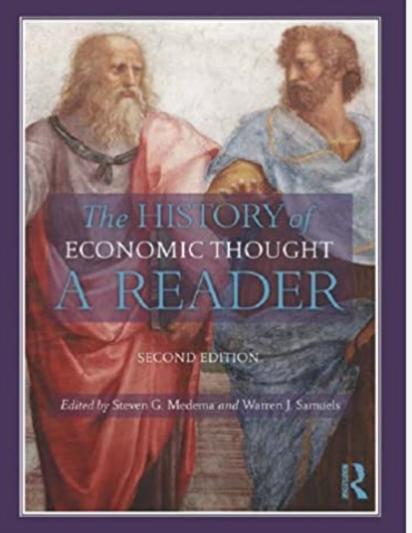




Primary Sources

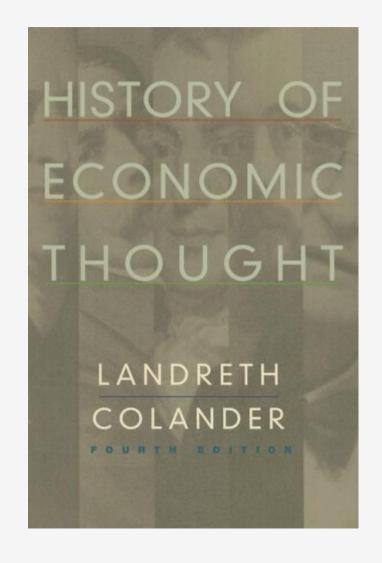


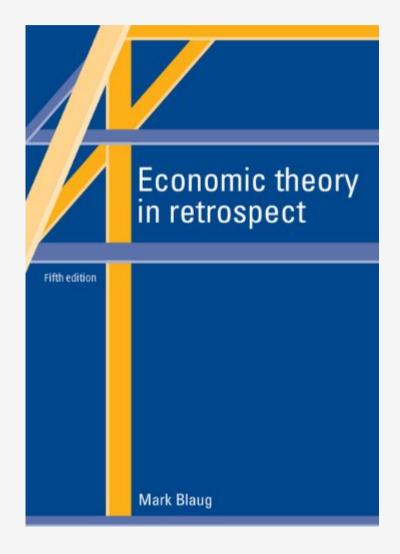




Secondary Sources



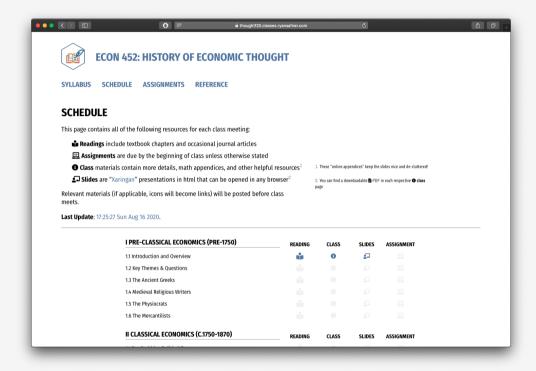




Course Website





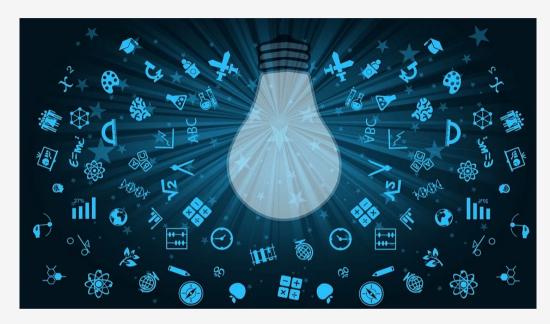


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Tips for Success, Or: How to College



- Take notes. On paper. Really.
- Read the readings and join the conversation!
- Ask questions, come to office hours.
 Don't struggle in silence, you are not alone!
- You are learning how to learn
- See the <u>reference page</u> for more



Roadmap for the Semester



Overview & Pre-Classical (Pre-1750)

What is Economics?

Greek, Christian &

Muslim Writers

Physiocracy

Mercantilism



Classical Economics (c.1750-1870)

The Invisible Hand

Steady State &

Economic distribution

Land, Rent, & Population

Marxist Economics



Neoclassical Economics (c.1870-1930)

Marginalist Revolution

Marshallian Supply & Demand, Theory of Firm

Marginal Productivity

Welfare Economics

Theory



Criticisms & Extensions

Capital Theory

Institutional Economics

Socialist Calculation
Debate

Mathematization & Econometrics



Mid-20th Century & Macroeconomics

Keynesian Revolution

New Classical School

Monetarism

Public Choice, New Institutional Economics