

History 510:511
Colloquium in Comparative History
Poverty In Global Historical Perspective

Professor Gail D. Triner

Spring 2014

Tuesday; 4:30-7:30

This syllabus dates to the last time I offered the course. Specific readings and some of the details of the assignments may change, but this syllabus is representative of the course's content and structure.

Please note that this syllabus is provisional. We will try to respond to the interests and needs of class members.

Course description

Historians and social scientists have explored "Poverty in Global Historical Perspective" from an incredibly wide range of frameworks; in this course, we will begin to explore some of the most important. To try to give some shape to the "big questions" of the theme, we will organize the semester around the following questions:

1. What is/was "poverty"?
2. What are the geo-historic debates about poverty (Why Europe?; Why North America?)
3. What did poverty mean in specific times and places? And can we discern any commonalities among different times and places we study?
4. How did different kinds of activities contribute to making and/or alleviating poverty?

Obviously, these questions are very broad. They give us the opportunity to focus on subtopics that are of interest to you and that will arise as we read/discuss/debate. Some of the subtopics that may emerge include: the intersection of poverty with questions of ethnicity, gender, state or civil violence, urban/rural divides, etc.; individual vs. social components of poverty; the implications of material well-being, power relations and social construct in studying (and in experiencing) poverty; the institutional foundations of poverty.

While the course has a rigorous reading load, we will also concentrate on your research interests and their intersection with the concepts of poverty. And we will work collaboratively towards an understanding of remaining unaddressed questions of current historical research on poverty.

Readings:

Assigned readings that are not complete books or working papers that may be difficult to find will be available through the Sakai site for the course (in the Resources section, file name = author's last name; designated in the syllabus with ^{SAKAI})

Full books that we will read in common:

- Because we will all be using them, you can get them at the library (if you are lucky); otherwise you probably ought buy them through your favorite bookstore or on-line source. Both are available as e-books (at least, as Kindle books) and hard copy:
- S.M.Beaudoin *Poverty in World History: Themes in World History* (Routledge: 2007)
 - K. Pomeranz *The Great Divergence* (Princeton UP: 2000)

Articles are available through the library article retrieval sources (J-Stor, etc.)

Assignments:

1. **10%** Why Europe?
Circa 5 pages:
 - Why Europe?
 - Why think about “Why Europe”?
 - What do we learn of other regions?Is Why Europe a useful question?
 2. **15%** Poverty in Place X, Time Y
 - a. What is poverty? [How are the lives of the poor different from the lives of the not-poor?
 - b. Who is poor?
 - c. Why are they poor?
 - d. How do the poor & not-poor inter-relate?Circa 5 pages; due 8th week of term [1st class after Spring Break]
 3. **40%** Research proposal: the time, place & theme [all, broadly speaking] of your anticipated dissertation
 - a. What are the poverty-related issues/questions?
 - i. And how do they fit into the overall anticipated dissertation
 - b. How to research them?
 - i. Research questions
 - ii. Bibliography
 1. Primary
 2. Secondary
 - iii. Historiographic paper [more analytic than full bibliography]
 - iv. Research strategy & methods
- OR**
- Syllabus for a high school or undergraduate level 1-semester course in “Poverty in Global Historical Perspective”
- a. Syllabus, with
 - v. Student reading list
 - vi. Titles of sections &/or individual lectures
 - vii. Student assignments
 - b. Brief précis of sections/lectures
 - viii. The ‘take-way line’ of the section/lecture
 - ix. Outline
 - x. Bibliography for the section/lecture
 - c. Assume 15-week semester, 2 class meetings/week; you define & articulate the level of student body
4. **5%** End of semester brief write-up of what you learned from the course:
 - a. Varieties of poverty
 - b. Change over time/place
 - c. What is different from your initial expectations?
 5. **30%** Class participation
 - a. Participation in class discussion and full participation in collaborative projects
 - b. Précis of assigned readings, either individual or collaborative, as the week’s readings. You should submit your précis to the Resources section of Sakai that is dedicated to that week’s work before noon on Monday before class. You should be familiar with your colleagues’ précis when you come to class.

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Week

1

What is poverty? [21 Jan.]

Before 1st class, read S.M. Beaudoin *Poverty in World History: Themes in World History* (Routledge: 2007)

Think of this book of the Cliff-Notes-version of the course; it is very simplistic, but mentions most of the issues that we will think about during the semester.

What do you think poverty is? How does it differ in time & space? What do you expect of the course?

Suggested additional readings:

B. Geremek *Poverty: A History* (Oxford UP: 1994) ^{SAKAI}

T.B.Edsall "Who is Poor?" *New York Times* 14 March 2013 ^{SAKAI}

2

Global comparative poverty: initial differences [28 Jan.]

J. Bolt & J.L van Zanden "The First Update of the Maddison Project; Re-Estimating Growth Before 1820" Maddison Project Working Paper #4 (2013) ^{SAKAI}

J. Coatsworth; Introduction and "Economic and Institutional Trajectories in Nineteenth-Century Latin America" in *Latin America and the World Economy in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Harvard UP: 1998) ^{SAKAI}

J. Williamson Chapters 1-3 and conclusion from *Trade and Poverty: When the Third World Fell Behind* (MIT Press: 2011) ^{SAKAI}

Additional reading:

On measuring and comparing poverty across time and geography: Allen, Robert C. "Poverty Lines in History, Theory, and Current International Practice." In Department of Economics Discussion Paper Series #685. Oxford: University of Oxford, 2013. ^{SAKAI}

The Great Divergence The Pomeranz book set off a new round of scholarship about "Why Europe?" or "Why not [my favorite place]?" that has become an active cottage industry. We will conduct our own research seminar on various aspects of the scholarship. After working with the Pomeranz book, as a group, you will divide into smaller groups to consider alternative interpretations. For the subsequent three weeks, the 3 or 4 members of your group will read one of the important texts in the debate and present a summary for the others. In class, we will discuss each of the works in greater detail, with the aim of developing a better understanding of what they have in common, how they differ, "what we know" and "what we do not know" about divergence. In working collaboratively on this project, I encourage you to supplement your research to find and consider additional materials.

Your group's summary should cover:

- What, in a very small nutshell, is the argument of the work that you are studying?
- What does the author claim to address (either rectify or fill a lacuna) relative to other scholarship?
- How does the author make the argument? (sources, methodology, logical structure)
- What questions does this work raise, but leave unresolved?

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- Does the group have a consensus opinion about whether you “buy into” the argument – or parts of it? Explain.

3 Why Europe? [4 Feb.]

K. Pomeranz *The Great Divergence* (Princeton UP: 2000)

- **Why Europe? Institutions? Environment?** [11 Feb.]
- P. Parthasarathi *Why Europe Grew Rich and Asia Did Not* (Cambridge UP: 2011)
- J-L. Rosenthal and B. Wong *Before and beyond divergence : the politics of economic change in China and Europe* (Harvard UP: 2011)
- P.T. Hoffman “Why was it Europeans Who Conquered the World?” *Journal of Economic History* 7:1 (Sept. 2012)

Meet with me during the week of 11 Feb. to discuss your PlaceX/TimeY study. Bring at least the beginning of a bibliography.

4 Why Europe? Culture? [18 Feb.]

D. Landes *The wealth and poverty of nations : why some are so rich and some so poor* (W.W. Norton: 1999)

A. Gunder Frank *Re-Orient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (U California Press: 1998)

5 Why not “other places”? More Specifically: Why North America & not Latin America? [25 Feb.]

D. Acemoglu et al. “The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation” *American Economic Review* 91:5 (2002) (Do not spend very much time on the part of the article that specifies the empirical model.)

S. Engerman & K. Sokoloff *Economic Development in the Americas since 1500 : Endowments and Institutions*

S. Haber (ed.) *How Latin America Fell Behind: essays on the economic histories of Brazil and Mexico, 1800-1914* (Stanford UP: 1999)

Meet with me during the week of 4 Mar. to discuss your final project ideas. Bring a written statement of your initial ideas and an initial bibliography.

6 Discussion [based on 1st assignment] [4 Mar.]

- Why Europe?
- While thinking about Why Europe? What do we learn of other regions?
- Is ‘Why Europe’ a useful question?

Poverty in PlaceX/timeY Again, we will break into groups to collaborate on considering the questions:

- What did it mean to be poor in place X at time Y?
- How did the non-poor understand poverty?
- How do historians study the circumstance of poverty?

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If these books do not incite sufficient interest, we will work to define other readings that will allow you to understand the personal circumstances of poverty in different places or times.

- S. Rockman, *Scraping by: wage labor, slavery, and survival in early Baltimore* (Johns Hopkins Press: 2009)
- A.A. Sabra, *Poverty and charity in medieval Islam: Mamluk Egypt, 1250-1517* (Cambridge UP: 2000)
- B. Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights: Citizenship and inequality in twentieth-century Rio de Janeiro* (Stanford UP: 2008)

7 **Poverty in X/Y presentations** [11Mar.]

Discussion based on 2nd assignment: What are the common features that we find, with respect to poverty; how does poverty differ among the places & times that we have studied?

8 **Activities & Poverty: Agriculture** [25 Mar.]

- a. Closing the commons
J.M. Neeson *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England, 1700-1820* (Cambridge UP: 1993)
- b. J. Adelman *Frontier development land, labour, and capital on the wheatlands of Argentina and Canada, 1890-1914* (Oxford UP: 1994)
- c. Neo-Europes
A. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge UP: 1986) Introduction and Chapter 4 ^{SAKAI}
E. Melville, *A Plague of Sheep* (Cambridge UP: 1994)

9 **Activities & Poverty: Industry [& commerce]** [1 Apr.]

Common reading on historiography of Industrial Revolution: Mokyr, Joel. *The British industrial revolution : an economic perspective*. 2nd ed. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999.

- a. Making things
Allen, Robert C. *Farm to factory : a reinterpretation of the Soviet industrial revolution*, The Princeton economic history of the Western world. Princeton, NJ ; Oxford, Eng.: Princeton University Press, 2003.
- b. Demographic change [urbanization]
B. Fischer, *et. al. Cities from Scratch* Duke UP 2014
- c. Cultural change
J. de Vries *The Industrious Revolution* (Cambridge UP: 2008)
A. Farnsworth-Alvear *Dulcinea in the Factory: Myths, Morals, Men and Women in Colombia's Industrial Experiment: 1905-1960*

10 **Money & capital** [8 Apr.]

Common reading: Leonhardt NYT on Piketty book; Conclusion from A. Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective, A Book of Essays* (Belknap; Harvard UP: 1962)

- a. Creating wealth & poverty
Lamoreaux, Naomi R. *Insider lending: banks, personal connections, and economic development in industrial New England*. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
L. Neal, *The Rise of Financial Capitalism* (Cambridge UP: 1990)

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b. Creating trust

A. Greif, *Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy: Lessons from Medieval Trade* (Cambridge UP: 2006)

- 11** **20th century: imperialism vs productivity** [15 Apr.]
- 12** **Presentation** [22 Apr.]
- 13** **Presentations; end-of-semester discussion** [29 Apr.]