

Middle East Technical University
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences
Department of Economics
ECON108: Economy, Society and Civilization II

Section 1**Instructor:** Onur Yıldırım (onuryil@metu.edu.tr)**Student Assistant:** TBA**Time and Place:** Monday, 14:40-17:30; FZ16**Recitation Time and Place:** TBA**Office Hours:** Wednesday, 10:00-12:00, A 17
(or by appointment)**Section 2****Instructor:** Aytek Soner Alpan (aalpan@metu.edu.tr)**Student Assistant:** TBA**Time and Place:** Monday, 14:40-17:30; F107**Recitation Time and Place:** TBA**Office Hours:** Monday, 9:40-11:30, A 202
(or by appointment)

Purpose: This course introduces economics students to the fundamental elements of economics from a historical perspective. Each week focuses on a specific topic, tracing its historical development and examining the key theories and debates that have shaped its study over time. Emphasizing the importance of historical context, the course explores how economic concepts are shaped by specific temporal and spatial conditions, encouraging students to recognize that economic structures are not fixed but historically constructed. Through this lens, students will engage with economics as a discipline deeply intertwined with social sciences and the humanities. The primary objective is to foster a broad, interdisciplinary understanding of economic history, equipping students with the analytical tools to critically examine economic phenomena beyond contemporary frameworks. By the end of the semester, students will gain a deeper appreciation of how historical forces have influenced economic thought, policy, and practice.

Procedures: The course will consist of lectures and recitations. Attendance and participation in discussions will be factored into the final grade; therefore, students are strongly encouraged to attend classes regularly and actively contribute. Students will be assessed through response papers, unannounced quizzes, and a final exam:

Section 1

- Quizzes, response papers to assigned readings and films – 40%
- Class and recitation attendance – 10%
- Final exam – 50%

Section 2

- Quizzes, response papers to assigned readings and films – 20%
- Research Paper – 20%
- Class and recitation attendance – 10%
- Final exam – 50%

Optional Book Review and Presentation: Students who wish to deepen their engagement with the course are encouraged to participate in an optional Book Review and Presentation assignment. Participants will choose a title from a book list that will be shared in the third week of the semester and will complete (i) a written book review report, with guidelines and word limit to be announced, and (ii) an in-class presentation during the final three weeks of the course. Students who complete both components will be eligible for a performance-based reward, determined by the overall academic quality of the written report and the presentation. Evaluation will prioritize conceptual clarity, analytical depth, engagement with course themes and readings, critical reflection beyond summary, coherence of organization, and the ability to lead an effective discussion. Exemplary performance will be rewarded with a bonus contribution of up to 10% to the student's final grade.

Response Papers: The response papers will critically engage with the assigned readings, requiring students to summarize key arguments, analyze their significance, and relate them to broader

economic historical themes. Reflection papers will similarly evaluate assigned films and topics.

Quizzes: Unannounced quizzes will be administered periodically during lectures or recitations to assess students' comprehension of the mandatory readings and engagement with the weekly topics.

All written assignments will be graded, commented on, and returned with feedback to support students' learning and writing development.

Readings: The readings are selected from the writings of the most notable scholars in their respective fields.

TOPICS

1. History: What is It Good For?

Mandatory: Fernand Braudel, "History and the Social Sciences: The Longue Durée" from his *On History*, (trans. By S. Matthews) (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 25-54.

Recommended: Jo Guldi & David Armitage, *The History Manifesto* (Cambridge University Press, 2014) [Especially, "Chapter 1: Going forward by looking back: the rise of the *longue durée*" and "Chapter 2: The short past: or, the retreat of the *longue durée*"]

Recommended: Fernand Braudel, *Afterthoughts on Material Civilization and Capitalism*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979).

Film: Andrei Tarkovsky, "The Mirror" (1975)

2. Geography: Is it really the Destiny?

Mandatory: Jared Diamond, "Prologue: Yali's Question," from his *Guns, Germs and Steel, the Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), pp. 13-32.

Recommended: Ian Morris, *Why the West Rules - For Now: The Patterns of History, and What They Reveal About the Future* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010).

Recommended: J Vernon Henderson, Tim Squires, Adam Storeygard, David Weil, The Global Distribution of Economic Activity: Nature, History, and the Role of Trade, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Volume 133, Issue 1, February 2018, Pages 357-406.

Film: Alejandro G. Iñárritu, "The Revenant" (2015)

3. Environment: The Long Story of Human Savagery

Mandatory: John R. McNeill, "Chapter 6: The Industrial Revolution and the Global Environment," in *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), pp. 149-194.

Recommended: Will Steffen et al., "The Trajectory of the Anthropocene: The Great Acceleration," *The Anthropocene Review* 2, no. 1 (2015): 81-98.

Recommended: Jason W. Moore, "Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism," in *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (Verso, 2015), 169-192.

Recommended: Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism, The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

Film: Michael Haneke, *Time of the Wolf* (2003)

4. Population: Is Malthus Alive?

Mandatory: Massimo Livi-Bacci, “Chapter 3: Land, Labor and Population,” in *A Concise History of World Population*, 5th Edition, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 82-113.

Recommended: Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, London, 1789 (1998 Electronic Scholarly Publishing Project).

Recommended: Lydia Polgreen, “Opinion | Something Extraordinary Is Happening All Over the World.” Opinion. *The New York Times*, January 31, 2025.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/31/opinion/trump-migration-world.html>.

Recommended: Gatrell, Peter. “Opinion | Europe, the ‘Dark Continent,’ Is the Stage for Another Great Migration.” Opinion. *The New York Times*, March 14, 2022.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/14/opinion/ukraine-refugees-europe.html>.

Documentary: Ai Weiwei, *Human Flow* (2017)

5. Technology: The West and the Rest

Mandatory: Maarten Prak and Luiten van Zanden, “Introduction: Technology and Human Capital Formation in the East and the West Before the Industrial Revolution” from *Technology, Skills and the Pre-Modern Economy in the East and the West*, (ed.) Maarten Prak and Luiten van Zanden, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2013, pp. 1-22

Recommended: Joel Mokyr et al., “The History of Technological Anxiety and the Future of Economic Growth: Is This Time Different?,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 29, no. 3 (2015): 31–50.

Recommended: Joseph Needham, *Science in Traditional China*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981.

Film: Alex Garland, “*Ex Machina*” (2014)

6. Gender: Between Myths and Realities

Mandatory: Gerda Lerner, “Chapter 11: The Creation of Patriarchy,” and “the Definitions,” from her *The Creation of Patriarchy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, pp. 212-229 and pp. 231-243.

Recommended: Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*, 3rd edition (London: Zed Books, 2014) [Especially “Preface to the critique influence change edition”; “Chapter 2: Social Origins of the Sexual Division of Labour”; “Chapter 3: Colonization and Housewifization”].

Film: Daniel Vigne, *Le retour de Martin Guerre* (1982)

7. Religion: Meet Weber!

Mandatory: Jared Rubin, “Religion and Politics: Why the West Got Rich and the Middle East Did Not,” in *The Routledge Handbook on the Middle East Economy*, ed. Hassan Hakimian, The Routledge Handbook on the Middle East Economy (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), pp. 265–74.

Recommended: Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, (trans.) Talcott Parson, New York: Charles Scribner’s Son, 1958.

Film: Martin Scorsese, *Silence* (2016)

8. Trade and Market: With all their Vices and Virtues

Mandatory: Karl Polanyi, “Societies and Economic Systems,” from his *Primitive, Archaic and Modern Economies: Essays of Karly Polanyi*, (ed.) George Dalton, New York: A Doubleday Anchor Original, 1968, pp. 3-25.

Recommended: Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People without History*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.

Film: Adam McKay, *The Big Short* (2015)

9. State: A Concept too Many!

Mandatory: Frederic C. Lane, “Economic Consequences of Organized Violence” from his *Profits from Power*, State University of New York Press, 1979.

Recommended: S. R. Epstein, *The Rise of States and Markets in Europe, 1300-1750*, London: Routledge, 2000.

Recommended: Thomas W. Gallant, “Brigandage, Piracy, Capitalism, and State-formation: Transnational Crime from a Historical World-Systems Perspective,” in *States and Illegal Practices*, ed. Joshua Heyman and Alan Smart (London: Berg, 1999), pp. 25–61.

Film: Andrey Zvyagintsev, *Leviathan* (2014)

10. Law and Institutions: Sources of “Great Divergence”

Mandatory: Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, “Chapter 15: Understanding Prosperity and Poverty,” from their *Why Nations Fail? The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty*, London: Profile Book, 2013, pp. 428-462.

Recommended: Timur Kuran, *The Long Divergence: How Islamic Law Held Back the Middle East*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011, pp. 25-44.

Film: Gillo Pontecorvo, “The Battle of Algiers” (1966)

11. Agriculture: Food for Thought and also for Eating

Mandatory: Robert C. Allen, “Agricultural Productivity and Rural Incomes in England and the Yangtze Delta, c.1620–c.1820,” *The Economic History Review* 62, no. 3 (2009): 525–50.

Recommended: Giovanni Federico, *Feeding the World: An Economic History of Agriculture, 1800-2000*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Documentary: C. Simón “Alcarràs” (2022)

12. Energy

Mandatory: Vaclav Smil, “Energy in World History,” in *Energy and Civilization: A History* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2017), pp. 385–442.

Recommended: Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe and the Making of the World Economy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Film: Daniel Goldhaber, “How to Blow Up a Pipeline” (2022)

13. Inequality

Mandatory: Thomas Piketty, “The Measurement of Inequality and Its Evolution” from *The Economics of Inequality*, London, Harvard University Press, 1997, pp. 9-30.

Recommended: Branko Milanovic, *Global Inequality: A New Approach for the Age of Globalization* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016).

Film: Bong Joon-ho, “Parasite” (2019)

14. Globalization: Are We All Globalizing?

Mandatory: Branko Milanovic, “Chapter 1: The Rise of the Global Middle Class and Global Plutocrats,” in *Global Inequality: A New Approach for the Age of Globalization* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), pp. 10–45.

Recommended: Kevin H. O’Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and History: The Evolution of a Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, M.A.: The MIT Press, 1999).

Recommended: Ha-Joon Chang, *Kicking Away the Ladder: Development Strategy in Historical Perspective* (London: Anthem Press, 2007).

Film: [Globalization: Winners and losers in world trade DW Documentary](#)

Film: [Globalization: Profits over people DW Documentary](#)