The purpose of this course is to introduce students to topics in international economic history, and serve as a complement of ECON7400 that emphasizes topics related to the US economy. The course will cover from the transition from feudalism to capitalism to the differences between the current and the late 19th century globalization processes. The course is not chronologically organized. The topics covered emphasize unresolved controversial issues in international economic history, e.g. whether there was an Industrial Revolution, the critique of Eurocentric interpretations of History, and the revival of cultural and geographical explanations for relative backwardness.

Evaluation consists of two in-class exams, and a term paper on a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor. The weights are: first in-class exam 30%, second in-class exam 30%, and term paper 40%. A study guide with possible exam questions will be distributed before each exam. Office hours will be announced in class, and I will be available in my office for informal discussions. If you need to schedule an appointment or discuss some special need e-mail me at vernengo@economics.utah.edu. The book by Rondo Cameron and Larry Neal, A Concise Economic History of the World: From Paleolithic Times to the Present will be used as a general reference, but we will rely mostly on original articles.

1. The Transition to Capitalism
The ‘transition debate’ between Marxist historians was fundamentally about the nature of feudalism as a mode of production and the causes of its collapse, with one group emphasizing the agrarian and the other the mercantilist origins of capitalism. The ‘Brenner debate’ is a spin-off of the former one that started with a critique of the dominant demographic interpretation of pre-industrial Europe.


2. The Industrial Revolution
Conventional wisdom portrays the Industrial Revolution as a major break with the past, one in which income per capita growth and technological progress increased markedly. The so-called Crafts-Harley view challenges conventional wisdom and suggests that growth has been overestimated, and the Industrial Revolution was a relatively smooth transition.


3. The Factory System and Hierarchic Relations
Conventional wisdom suggests that the factory emerged because of new kinds of technology. With the invention of large industrial machines, the argument goes, it became necessary to move out of the small cottages and workshops and into large warehouses. Marglin argued that the real reason why the factory system emerged was because it gave bosses more control.


4. The West and the Rest
There has been a heated controversy on the timing of the so-called ‘Great Divergence.’ Some authors claim that, against conventional wisdom, living standards in Western Europe and China were similar as recently as 1800. Their conclusion is that an excessive Eurocentric view of the world has distorted understanding of economic development in the rest of the world.


5. The Origins of Relative Backwardness
There has been a revival of cultural and geographical explanations for relative backwardness. In contradistinction, some authors emphasize the role of institutions in explaining diverging growth performance.


6. Finance and Hegemonic Power
Gerschenkron famously pointed out the importance of the banking sector (and the State) for late comers. New research emphasizes the importance of public debt in the development of sophisticated financial markets.


6. The Gold Standard and Globalization
How did the classical Gold Standard worked? Did it promote a symmetric and smooth adjustment of the balance of payments in the center and periphery? Did the gold standard facilitate access by peripheral countries to foreign capital from the core countries? These are some of the questions that are studied in this section.


7. The German Hyperinflation
There are two interpretations of the German hyperinflation. Some authors emphasize the role of reparations, foreign exchange devaluations and distributive conflict, while others emphasize fiscal imbalances and monetization of public debt.


8. The Gold Standard and the Depression
Conventional explanations of the Depression emphasized domestic causes – Friedman’s great contraction versus Temin’s consumption decline. More recently the international causes of the depression, associated with the functioning of the Gold Standard, have received more attention.


9. The Rise and Fall of the Golden Age
The quarter century following post-World War II reconstruction was a period of unprecedented prosperity and expansion for the world economy. The particular conditions for the Golden Age and its collapse are analyzed.


10. Is Globalization Today Different?
Some authors suggest that there is a parallel between current globalization trends and the half century of international economic integration before the First World War. Others remain skeptical emphasizing that the first period was not one of trade liberalization, nor one of reduced expectations about the role of the State.