

## Introduction

Writing about his experiences in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), the novelist George Orwell noted that: "[w]hen you are taking part in events like these you are, I suppose, in a small way, making history, and you ought by rights to feel like an historical character. But you never do, because at such times the physical details always outweigh everything else... What I was chiefly thinking about was not the rights and wrongs of this internecine scrap, but simply the discomfort and boredom of sitting day and night on that intolerable roof, and the hunger which was growing worse and worse." *Homage to Catalonia* (1938).

We have lived through several historic events recently, i.e. the financial crash of 2008 and the current pandemic, but, as Orwell suggests, living through revolutionary events does not always give one a useful viewpoint from which to judge events. We tend to focus in on the details of everyday living as opposed to the broader sweep of events. The role of economic history is to offer a bit of perspective amidst a period of change such as ours. Distance can better allow one to draw accurate conclusions with respect to the importance or unimportance of given economic, political or social events. In a tragic way, the difficulties we face today in responding to the current pandemic relate in no small part to the fact that we have forgotten the history of pandemics and the fragility of life over the last century.

This course attempts to achieve that end by focusing specifically on European economic history. No attempt is made to provide a detailed in-depth year by year treatment of events. Rather our focus shall be on a limited number of specific significant episodes. These episodes have been chosen, in large part, due to their role in shaping the modern world, and the light they can shed on present issues of concern.

Historical understanding is a critical competence for our society and a fundamental component of a liberal arts education at DePaul University. Competency in understanding the past enables one to achieve learning outcomes that demonstrate a successful development and application of historical knowledge, historical skills, and historical thinking. Employing a mix of primary and secondary sources, we shall endeavor to place historical events in their larger social and political contexts as well as working to improve your skill in developing and critically evaluating arguments.

## On the adjustments made for Spring 2021

This semester will be challenging one—but, perhaps, there is light at the end of the tunnel. American society has been bombarded by new information. The volume of data regarding the coronavirus alone is daunting. Among the sources that one would expect to be unbiased, authoritative and consistently updated regarding COVID-19 is the Coronavirus Resource Center found at the [health.harvard.edu](https://www.health.harvard.edu) website.

In the pandemic of 1918-20 death came much more often to a considerably younger and healthier population than in the current episode. Patient zero in the U.S., for

example, was an Army cook named Albert Gitchell who was 28 at the time (and born in Chicago) and was in excellent health at the time. It became apparent fairly early in the current pandemic that mortality rates were highest among the elderly, particularly those aged 65 and above. By the middle of March, 2021 just 1,764 individuals aged 18-29 have died from COVID-19 in the U.S. while more than 400,000 aged 65 and above have passed away. Unusually, this disease can be carried and transmitted by those without symptoms. Wearing a mask, washing your hands and limiting personal contacts then in this pandemic is not about the health of the college-aged. It is instead about the young and old both acting to limit the spread of the disease to the most vulnerable. If a college student gets sick, they most often recover; that is less likely for the elderly.

In this crowded hour, keep in mind the statement of President John F. Kennedy made in his 1961 inaugural address: ‘And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country’.

### Calendar

I will be asking students to voluntarily email me to let me know what city and time zone they believe that they will most often be locating in during the ten week term. This will help me organize the process of keeping in contact with students at convenient times. In Winter 2021, students in one class were in times zones 9 hours apart. Please **do not provide** a specific address.

In terms of course material, students will be asked to follow along with the readings which are arranged in the outline below based on the sequence of topics we will consider in this course. Information from the instructor will be provided in different forms, but primarily via a series of narrated MS PowerPoints.

A self-standing discussion topic devoted solely to COVID-19 will be established for stories, questions and as a source of support. The discussions regarding COVID-19 will not be graded and will not count toward the final course grade. Please post responsibly in this arena, relying as appropriate on verifiable authoritative sources.

This class is an online hybrid class. I shall be loading material that corresponds to what would typically be covered in a standard week by midnight Saturday night of each week. This is the material to be digested/learning/studied. Homework will also be posted on or about that time. Review the material at your own pace, but one of the lessons of the past year has been the utility of imposing some type of schedule, e.g. reading/viewing material for the week on Sunday-Tuesday at some fairly regular time. The deadline for loading homework posts is midnight (CDT) on Friday evening of each week.

### Testing

There will be two take-home exams in this class, a midterm and a final. The midterm exam, given during the fifth week will account for 40 percent of the final grade. The final exam will account for 40 percent. Students will have 24 hours to complete each of these exams. Each exam will be placed on D2L one hour after the beginning of the weekly designated time slot for this class during the relevant weeks (fifth and final exam week) and due 24 hours later on Wednesday.

The remaining 20% percent of the final course grade will be made of scores based on a series of written homework posts. Each post will earn a maximum of four points (A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1 and F = 0). So, if a student posts five homework responses over the course of the term and receives an A on each, they have garnered the maximum value of 20 points for this segment of the course grade. If completed successfully this material should accumulate to 6-12 pages of text. More than five opportunities will exist over the course of the term, so a grade can potentially be improved by continuing to post beyond five times. The maximum possible score, though, is twenty points.

As the average grade typically finishes at 75 percent or higher in upper division economics classes, the standard ten point grading scale will be relied upon in making final course grade decisions, i.e. 100-90 = A, 89-80 = B and so on. Borderline final grade decisions will be based on homework scores over the course of the term and performance on the final exam.

### Reading List and Outline

[Primary sources are labeled PS; all other sources are considered secondary sources. All of the materials listed below are available free of charge through the DePaul library or directly through the internet. The Polanyi text is the principal text for the class, but it must be admitted that this original work, published in 1944, is a difficult read. As a result, it has been complemented by shorter more accessible work wherever possible.]

Presentation 1: Pre-market economies

**[Reading:**

- a) Karl Polanyi. *The Great Transformation*. Boston, Beacon Press, 1944. Chapters 3-4.
- b) Bruce A. McDaniel. "The Crisis in Social and Institutional Integration." *The Social Science Journal*, v. 38 n. 2 (2001). One need read only pages 263-268].

Presentation 2: Long-run and short-run factors.

Mercantilism and colonization

**[Reading:**

- a) [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gMYo07DESRs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gMYo07DESRs)
- b) links 16<sup>th</sup> century mercantilism with contemporary populism, Donald Trump and economic policy: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_GrjO-oRQ5M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_GrjO-oRQ5M)

Presentation 3: The Industrial Revolution in England and the Continent

A. Industrialization

**[Reading:**

- a) Access a BBC documentary by the economic historian Jeremy Black, University of Exeter. It provides a good introduction to the start of the industrialization process and why it developed first in England: [youtube.com/watch?v=GYln\\_S2PVYA](http://youtube.com/watch?v=GYln_S2PVYA)].
- b) Ted Talk: "Will Automation Take Away All Our Jobs" at [ted.com/talks/david\\_autor\\_will\\_automation\\_take\\_away\\_all\\_our\\_jobs?language=en](http://ted.com/talks/david_autor_will_automation_take_away_all_our_jobs?language=en)
- c) Polanyi *TGT*, Parts 1 and 2;

- d) follow this link to the text of the British Factory Act of 1833:  
[lps.org/manila/tbayne/FactoryAct.doc](https://www.britishtitles.org/manila/tbayne/FactoryAct.doc). PS
- e) [www.ted.com/talks/steven\\_johnson\\_how\\_the\\_ghost\\_map\\_helped\\_end\\_a\\_killer\\_disease?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/steven_johnson_how_the_ghost_map_helped_end_a_killer_disease?language=en)

#### Presentation 4: The Interwar Period

##### A. The Rise and Fall of the Gold Standard

**[Reading:**

- a) [econlib.org/library/Enc/GoldStandard.html](https://econlib.org/library/Enc/GoldStandard.html)  
b) Polanyi *TGT*, Part 2.

##### B. Manias, Panics, Pandemics and Crashes

**[Reading:**

- a) [europepmc.org/backend/ptpmcrender.fcgi?accid=PMC3450197&blobtype=pdf](https://europepmc.org/backend/ptpmcrender.fcgi?accid=PMC3450197&blobtype=pdf)  
b) [www.discovermagazine.com/health/10-misconceptions-about-the-1918-flu-the-greatest-pandemic-in-history?](https://www.discovermagazine.com/health/10-misconceptions-about-the-1918-flu-the-greatest-pandemic-in-history?)

##### C. The Rise of Socialism and Communist Planning

###### 1a. The development of central planning in the Soviet Union

**[Reading:**

- a) DiNoto, Michael. Centrally Planned Economies: The Soviets at Peace, the United States at War. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*. 53 (4). October 1994.  
b) [washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2017/11/07/lessons-from-a-century-of-communism/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.61c77f28af50](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2017/11/07/lessons-from-a-century-of-communism/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.61c77f28af50)

###### 1b. The Collapse of Communism

**[Reading:**

- a) see excerpts from *Summer Meditations*, Vaclav Havel at: <https://www.raymondjames.com/neunuebelbarrantes/pdfs/vaclav-havel.pdf>. PS. On disturbing the peace award 2018: <https://www.vhlf.org/news/acceptance-speech-for-the-2018-annual-disturbing-the-peace-literary-prize-for-a-courageous-writer-at-risk/>. PS.  
b) <https://www.cfr.org/event/twenty-fifth-anniversary-german-unification>  
c) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4RjJKxsamQ>

###### 2. Red Vienna. Partial PPT to D2L

**[Reading:**

- a) Bill Murray. "Living in Vienna, 1890-1939." *History Today*, May 1996, pp. 50-55  
b) [wien.gv.at/english/history/commemoration/housing.html](https://wien.gv.at/english/history/commemoration/housing.html)  
c) <https://www.britannica.com/place/Austria/First-Republic-and-the-Anschluss#ref33379>

d) Julius Tandler. Public Welfare in Vienna. *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 1929 September 5(9).] PS

D. Fascism in Germany. PPT to D2L

**[Reading:**

- a) <http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/Fascism.html>
- b) Katrin Bennhold. "A Swastika in the Steeple Sets Off a Village Feud." *NYTimes* September 3, 2018.
- c) Sean Coghlan. The Scientists Who Escaped the Nazis. BBC News: <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-23261289>]

Presentation 5: The rise of the European Union

A. Early Integration Efforts

**[Reading:** Rely on the information provided by the EU itself on the website of the EU, [www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu). Under 'About the EU' read the section devoted to the history of the institution. PS

B. Enlargement Arguments: Turkey

**[Reading:**

- a) Omer Taspinar, "Turkey's Fading Dreams of Europe." *Current History* March 2007, 106 (698).
- b) M.H. Yavuz, Mujeeb R. Khan. Turkey and Europe: Will East Meet West?" November 2004, *Current History* 103 (676): p. 389].

C. The Common Agricultural Policy

**[Reading:**

- a) Robert Paarlberg. "GMO foods and crops: Africa's choice." *New Biotechnology*. 27(5) November 2010. The following pieces illustrate some of the difficulties associated with acquiring truthful information about GMOs. Find them at: [http://www.nytimes.com/201/01/05/us/on-hawaii-a-lonely-quest-for-facts-about-gmos.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/201/01/05/us/on-hawaii-a-lonely-quest-for-facts-about-gmos.html?_r=0).
- b) David H. Freedman on September 1, 2013. "The Truth About Genetically Modified Foods." *Scientific American*.
- c) <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/23/well/eat/are-gmo-foods-safe.html?org=1364&lvl=100&ite=1465&lea=141802&ctr=0&par=1&trk>]

D. Immigration. PPT to D2L

**[Reading:** Roger Cohen. "In France, Defending Laicite With Tough Love". *NYTimes* January 2, 2021.

Given the contemporaneous and evolving character of this issue, additional readings will be announced as we reach the discussion of this topic]