



### 1. General Information

Course Subject	ECON
Course Number	2273
Course Title	Economic History of China
Academic Years	2024-2025
Grading Method	Letter

### 2. Instructors

Professor Ma, Chicheng  
Office: Room 932 / F K.K. Leung Building  
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Subclasses: 1A

### 4. Course Description

Course Description	The course examines Chinese economic development from a comparative historical perspective. Particular attention will be paid to the deep roots of China's missing industrialisation in the Ming-Qing period and the economic rise thereafter. To this end, the course will compare China to the West in culture, institutions, human capital, and other fundamental forces of development, and will employ historical data and econometrics to examine the economic impacts of these forces. In addition to broadening students' intellectual horizons in comparative economic history, the course also cultivates students' senses and skills of quantitative history studies and the pertaining effective communications.
Prerequisites	ECON1210: Introductory Microeconomics
Free Elective	Yes

### 6. Faculty Learning Goals

- Goal 1: Acquisition and internalization of knowledge of the programme discipline
- Goal 2: Application and integration of knowledge
- Goal 3: Inculcating professionalism
- Goal 4: Developing global outlook
- Goal 5: Mastering communication skills
- Goal 6: Cultivating leadership

### 7. Course Learning Outcomes

7. Course Learning Outcomes						
Course Teaching and Learning Activities	Aligned Faculty Learning Goals					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
CLO1. Knowledge of China's economic history in a comparative perspective	✓	✓		✓		
CLO2. Application of economic approach to understand the important issues in China's long-term development	✓	✓	✓			
CLO3. Ability to complete independent studies and communicate through written texts in a coherent fashion	✓	✓	✓		✓	
CLO4. Skills of effective communication and discussion in class	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
CLO5. Skills of presenting academic works and responding to questions				✓	✓	✓

8. Course Teaching and Learning Activities		
Course Teaching and Learning Activities #	Expected Study Hours	Study Load (% of study)
T&L1. Lecture with class discussion	36	30
T&L2. Pre-class reading and self-study	36	30
T&L3. Assignments, term paper and presentation	36	30
T&L4. Consultation	12	10
	Total: 120	Total: 100

9. Assessment Methods			
Assessment Methods	Description	Weight %	Aligned Course Learning Outcomes
A1. Class Participation	Attendance and in-class discussion led by the instructor	20%	1,2,3,4
A2. Assignments	Submission of two study notes.	20%	1,2,3,4
A3. Presentation of review reports	Present an assigned article and lead discussion in class(group work)	20%	1,2,3,4,5
A4. Term project and presentation	Group research project; submission of a short essay and present it in class.	40%	1,2,3,4,5

10. Course Grade Descriptors	
A+,A,A-	Excellent. Strong evidence of superb ability to fulfill the intended learning outcomes of the course at all levels of learning: describe, apply, evaluate, synthesis, presentation and communication.
B+,B,B-	Good. Strong evidence of the ability to fulfill the intended learning outcomes of the course at all levels of learning: describe, apply, evaluate, synthesis, presentation and communication.
C+,C,C-	Pass. Evidence of adequate ability to fulfill the intended learning outcomes of the course at

## 10. Course Grade Descriptors

	low levels of learning such as describe and apply but not at high levels of learning such as evaluate, synthesis, and presentation.
D+,D	Poorly Pass. Evidence of basic familiarity with the subject.
F	Fail. Little evidence of basic familiarity with the subject.

## 11. Course Content and Tentative Teaching Schedule

Topic/ Session	Date	Content
1		The Needham Puzzle 1.1 The Great Divergence between China and the West1.2 Deep reasons behind the Divergence1.3 Overview of the topics in this course
2		Confucianism 2.1 Culture, religion, and development2.2 Protestantism and the rise of Europe2.3 Economics of Confucianism in China
3		The Imperial Examinations 3.1 The intellectual origin of European growth 3.2 The 'ladder of success' in imperial China 3.3 Literati and the allocation of talent
4		Autarky 4.1 Atlantic trade and the rise of Europe 4.2 The autarkic principle in late imperial China 4.3 Columbian Exchange and China
5		Guest Lecture:Big data and its application in economic history studies
6		Modernisation 5.1 The economic impacts of the Treaty Ports 5.2 Western influence: Christianity, knowledge, and institutions 5.3 Self-strengthening: Chinese responses to the West
7		The Long Shadow of History 6.1 The paradox of the long-term persistence 6.2 The economic legacy of Confucianism 6.3 Long live Keju: the persistence of human capital
		Student Presentations of Term Projects

## 12. Required/Recommended Readings & Online Materials

### Reading

*There is no assigned textbook. Reading materials are based entirely on journal articles and book chapters. Materials marked with an asterisk (\*) are compulsory, and preferably to be read before attending class. The specific pages and chapters of the readings are clearly indicated in the syllabus. Skip the technical (econometric) details with which you are not familiar; focus on the story and economic rationale.*

#### **Lecture 1. The Needham Puzzle**

- [1] Brandt, Loren, Debin Ma, and Thomas G. Rawski. 2014. "From Divergence to Convergence: Reevaluating the History behind China's Economic Boom." *Journal of Economic Literature*, 52 (1). (Focus on pp. 45-52, 59-63 & 79-112).
- [2] Elvin, Mark. 1984. "Why China Failed to Create an Endogenous Industrial Capitalism: A Critique of Max Weber's Explanation." *Theory and Society*, 13(3).
- [3] Landes, David S. 2006. "Why Europe and the West? Why Not China?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 20(2).
- [4] Lin, Justin Y. 2008. "The Needham Puzzle, the Weber question, and China's Miracle: Long-term Performance since the Sung Dynasty." *China Economic Journal*, 1(1).

#### **Lecture 2. Confucianism**

- [1] \* Becker, Sascha O., and Ludger Woessmann. 2009. "Was Weber Wrong? A Human Capital Theory of Protestant Economic History." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 124(2).
- [2] Chen, Zhiwu, Chicheng Ma, and Andrew Sinclair. 2022. "Banking on the Confucian Clan: Why China Developed Financial Markets So Late?" *The Economic Journal*, 132 (644).
- [3] \* Greif, Avner, and Guido Tabellini. 2017. "The Clan and the Corporation: Sustaining Cooperation in China and Europe." *Journal of Comparative Economics*, 45.
- [4] Kung, James K-S, and Chicheng Ma. 2014. "Can Cultural Norms Reduce Conflicts? Confucianism and Peasant Rebellions in Qing China." *Journal of Development Economics*, 111.
- [5] Liang, Ming-Yih. 2010. "Confucianism and the East Asian Miracle." *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics*, 2(3).
- [6] \* Weber, Max. 1922. *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*. Free Press. (Chapters 4-6).

#### **Lecture 3. The Imperial Examination**

- [1] \* Bai, Ying. 2019. "Farewell to Confucianism: The Modernizing Effect of Dismantling China's Imperial Examination System." *Journal of Development Economics*, 141.
- [2] \* Baumol, William J., 1990. "Entrepreneurship: Productive, Unproductive, and Destructive." *Journal of Political Economy*, 98.
- [3] Lin, Justin Y. 1995. "The Needham Puzzle: Why the Industrial Revolution Did Not Originate in China." *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 43(2).
- [4] Ma, Chicheng. 2021. "Knowledge Diffusion and Intellectual Change: When Chinese Literati Met European Jesuits." *Journal of Economic History*, 81 (4).
- [5] \* Mokyr, Joel. 2005. "The Intellectual Origins of Modern Economic Growth." *Journal of Economic History*, 65(2).
- [6] Squicciarini, Mara P., and Nico Voigtländer. 2015. "Human Capital and Industrialization: Evidence from the Age of Enlightenment." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 130(4).
- [7] Yuchtman, Noam. 2017. "Teaching to the Tests: An Economic Analysis of Traditional

## 12. Required/Recommended Readings & Online Materials

[1] Hashimura, Naomichi. 2011. "Reaching to the Roots: An Economic Analysis of Traditional and Modern Education in Late Imperial and Republican China." *Explorations in Economic History*, 63.

### Lecture 4. Trade and Autarky

[1] \* Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson. 2005. "The Rise of Europe: Atlantic Trade, Institutional Change, and Economic Growth." *American Economic Review*, 95(2).

[2] Chen, Shuo, and James K. Kung. 2016. "Of Maize and Men: The Effect of a New World Crop on Population and Economic Growth in China." *Journal of Economic Growth*, 21(1).

[3] Findlay, Ronald, and Kevin H. O'Rourke. 2007. *Power and Plenty: Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millennium*. Princeton University Press. (Chapter 4).

[4] Kung, James K., and Chicheng Ma. 2014. "Autarky and the Rise of Piracy in Ming China." *Journal of Economic History*, 74(2).

[5] \* Nunn, Nathan, and Nancy Qian. 2010. "The Columbian Exchange: A History of Disease, Food, and Ideas." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 24(2).

### Lecture 5. Modernization

[1] \* Bai, Ying, and James K. Kung. 2015. "Diffusing Knowledge while Spreading God's Message: Protestantism and Economic Prosperity in China, 1840-1920." *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 13(4).

[2] \* Jia, Ruixue. 2014. "The Legacies of Forced Freedom: China's Treaty Ports." *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 96(4).

[3] La Porta, Rafael, Florencio Lopez-de-Silanes, and Andrei Shleifer. 2008. "The Economic Consequences of Legal Origins." *Journal of Economic Literature*. 46 (2).

[4] Lin, Chen, Chicheng Ma, Yuchen Sun and Yuchen Xu. 2021. "The Telegraph and Modern Banking Development, 1881-1936." *Journal of Financial Economics*, 141 (2).

[5] Spence, Jonathan. 1990. *The Search for Modern China*. WW Norton & Company. (Chapters 7, 9, and 11).

### Lecture 6. The Long Shadow of History

[1] Becker, Sascha O., Katrin Boeckh, Christa Hainz, and Ludger Woessmann. 2011. "The Empire is Dead, Long Live the Empire! Long-Run Persistence of Trust and Corruption in the Bureaucracy." *The Economic Journal*, 126(590).

[2] \* Chen, Ting, James Kung, and Chicheng Ma. 2020. "Long Live Keju! The Persistent Effects of China's Imperial Examination System." *The Economic Journal*, 130 (631).

[3] \* Nunn, Nathan. 2009. "The Importance of History for Economic Development." *Annual Review of Economics*, 1(1).

[4] \* Nunn, Nathan, and Leonard Wantchekon. 2011. "The Slave Trade and the Origins of Mistrust in Africa." *American Economic Review*, 101(7).

[5] Spolaore, Enrico, and Romain Wacziarg. 2013. "How Deep Are the Roots of Economic Development?" *Journal of Economic Literature*, 51(2).

## 13. Means / Processes for Student feedback on Course

✓	Conducting mid-term survey in addition to SETL around the end of the semester
✓	Online response via Moodle site
✓	Others
	email communications

## 14. Course Policy

The University Regulations on academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced! Please check the University Statement on plagiarism on the web: <http://www.hku.hk/plagiarism/>

Academic dishonesty is behavior in which a deliberately fraudulent misrepresentation is employed in an attempt to gain undeserved intellectual credit, either for oneself or for another. It includes, but is not necessarily limited to, the following type of case:

**Plagiarism** - The representation of someone else's ideas as if they are one's own. Where the arguments, data, designs, etc., of someone else are being used in a paper, report, oral presentation, or similar academic project, this fact must be made explicitly clear by citing the appropriate references. The references must fully indicate the extent to which any parts of the project are not one's own work. Paraphrasing of someone else's ideas is still using someone else's ideas, and must be acknowledged.

**Unauthorized Collaboration on Out-of-Class Projects** - The representation of work as solely one's own when in fact it is the result of a joint effort. Where a candidate for a degree or other award uses the work of another person or persons without due acknowledgement:

- The relevant Board of Examiners may impose a penalty in relation to the seriousness of the offence;
- The relevant Board of Examiners may report the candidate to the Senate, where there is prima facie evidence of an intention to deceive and where sanctions beyond those in (1) might be invoked.