THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG  
Faculty of Business and Economics  
ECON2273 Economic History of China

GENERAL INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Chicheng Ma  
Email: macc@hku.hk  
Office: 932 K.K.Leung
Meeting time:
Office hour:

Teaching Assistant:
Email:
Office hour:

Pre-requisites: ECON1210 Introductory microeconomics
Course Website: HKU Moodle

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course introduces economic history and its persistent impact on contemporary development in the context of China. Particular attention will be paid to explain the missing industrialisation and modern growth in imperial China and the historical roots of China’s recent economic rise. To this end, the course will compare China to the West in terms of culture, institutions, technology, and human capital, and will employ historical data and Cliometrics to examine the fundamental determinants of economic development in the long run. In addition to broaden students’ intellectual horizon in economic history, the course is aimed to cultivate sense and skills of empirical studies from a historical perspective.

COURSE CONTENT AND TENTATIVE TEACHING SCHEDULE

**Lecture 1. The Needham Puzzle** (1 week)  
1.1 The Great Divergence between China and the West  
1.2 Deep reasons behind the Divergence  
1.3 Overview of the topics in this course

**Lecture 2. Confucianism** (2 weeks)  
2.1 Culture, religion, and development  
2.2 Protestantism and the rise of Europe  
2.3 Economics of Confucianism in China

**Lecture 3. The Imperial Examinations** (2 weeks)  
3.1 The intellectual origin of European growth  
3.2 Examination as the ‘ladder of success’ in imperial China  
3.3 Literati and the misallocation of talent

**Lecture 4. Trade and Autarky** (1 week)  
4.1 Atlantic trade and the rise of Europe  
4.2 The autarkic principle in late imperial China
4.3 Columbian Exchange in China

Lecture 5. Modernization (2 weeks)
5.1 The Treaty Ports
5.2 Western influence: Christianity, knowledge, and institutions
5.3 Self-strengthening: Chinese responses to the West

Lecture 6. The Long Shadow of History (1 week)
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 (2 weeks)

REQUIRED/RECOMMENDED READINGS & ONLINE MATERIALS

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 if you are not familiar with that.

Lecture 1. The Needham Puzzle


Lecture 2. Confucianism


Lecture 3. The Imperial Examination


Lecture 4. Trade and Autarky


Lecture 5. Modernization


Lecture 6. The Long Shadow of History


### TEACHING ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Teaching and Learning Activities</th>
<th>Expected hours</th>
<th>Study Load (% of study)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Lecture with class discussion</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Pre-class reading and self-study</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Assignments, term paper and presentation</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Consultation</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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**Assessment Methods**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Aligned CLO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>CLO 1/2/3/4</td>
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<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>CLO 1/2/3/4/5</td>
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<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>CLO 1/2/3/4</td>
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**STANDARDS FOR ASSESSMENT**

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, and synthesis.

**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, and synthesis.

**C+, C, C-** - Pass. Evidence of adequate ability to fulfill the intended learning outcomes of the course at low levels of learning such as describe and apply but not at high levels of learning such as evaluate and synthesis.

**D+, D** - Poorly Pass. Evidence of basic familiarity with the subject.

**F** - Fail. Little evidence of basic familiarity with the subject.
Assessment Rubrics for Each Assessment

1. Assignments: 1) pertinence, clarity, and reasoning, 2) the depth of analysis, 3) originality/novelty of your own comments/critiques/extension (for review work), and 4) writing and layout. See the instruction of each assignment for details.

2. Term paper: 1) the originality, pertinence, and clarity of the topic, 2) the clarity of framework and reasoning, 3) the suitability/reliability of data/materials and research methods, 4) the depth of analysis, and 5) writing and layout. See the instruction of term paper for details.

3. Presentation: all rubrics of term paper apply to the presentation. In addition, the grading of presentation is based on 1) the performance in the lecture and Q&A, and 2) the quality/layout of the PPT slides. See the instruction of presentation for details.

MEANS/PROCESSES FOR STUDENT FEEDBACK ON COURSE

- Conducting SETL around the end of the semester
- Online response via Moodle site
- Others: email communications

FACULTY GOALS

FLG1: Acquisition and internalization of knowledge of the programme discipline
FLG2: Application and integration of knowledge
FLG3: Inculcating professionalism
FLG4: Developing global outlook
FLG5: Mastering communication skills
FLG6: Cultivating leadership

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)</th>
<th>Aligned Faculty Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLO1 Knowledge of China’s economic history in a comparative perspective</td>
<td>FLG 1/2/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLO2 Application of economic approach to understand the important issues in China’s long-term development</td>
<td>FLG 1/2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLO3 Developing historical and global outlook in understanding China</td>
<td>FLG 1/2/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLO4 Sense and skills for studying academic issues in a coherent fashion</td>
<td>FLG 1/2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLO5 Communication and presentation skills</td>
<td>FLG 4/5/6</td>
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COURSE POLICY (e.g. plagiarism, academic honesty, attendance, etc.)

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:

  1. The relevant Board of Examiners may impose a penalty in relation to the seriousness of the offence;
  2. 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.