

Faculty of Science Course Syllabus (Section A)
Department of Economics, Winter 2025
Economic Growth in Historical Perspective – Econ 3310

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Instructor: Talan B. İşcan (he/his), tiscan@dal.ca
Office Hours: Tuesday, Thursday 10:00–11:30 (or by appointment), Economics B23
Lectures: Tuesday, Thursday 14:35–15:55, Mona Campbell 2107
Marker Rodolfo del Aguila Andrade, rodolfo.del.aguila@dal.ca

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Dalhousie University acknowledges that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People and pays respect to the Indigenous knowledges held by the Mi'kmaq People, and to the wisdom of their Elders past and present. The Mi'kmaq People signed Peace and Friendship Treaties with the Crown, and section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 recognizes and affirms Aboriginal and Treaty rights. We are all Treaty people.

Dalhousie University also acknowledges the histories, contributions, and legacies of African Nova Scotians, who have been here for over 400 years.

Description

This course examines the sources of long-run economic growth and development in a historical perspective. Topics covered include invention, innovation, culture, legal institutions governing access to resources, demography, fertility, mortality, and alternative modes of production.

Prerequisites

ECON 2200.03 (or ECON 2210.03 or ECON 2220.03) and ECON 2201.03 with minimum grades of C.

Course exclusion

None.

Learning objectives

This course presents a discussion of economic growth from prehistoric to modern times. It is impossible to have a single theme for such a broad coverage. So, the main objective of this course is to learn those tools that are necessary for generative reasoning related to economic and social change, rather than to present a long list of facts. A context-based, term-long research project allows each student to dig deeper into those topics that are of personal interest. By the end of the course, students are expected to be equipped with the set of critical questions to approach the next “growth” challenge, even when the tools to address those challenges will be different from the past ones.

Required course materials

- *Prosperity without Growth: Foundations for the Economy of Tomorrow*. Tim Jackson. 2nd edition. Routledge.
- *Economic Growth*. David Weil. 4th edition (earlier editions are perfectly acceptable). Routledge.
- Lecture notes posted on the course Brightspace page.

There will be required readings and assignments on a weekly basis.

Attendance and engagement

Attendance and participation in class discussions are requirements. You may not find the topic or the discussion interesting or engaging. Although, as an instructor, I will do my best to make the topic relevant and meaningful, each student has different thresholds for engagement. If you do not find the topic sufficiently challenging (“boring”) or find it overly complex, you should be able to articulate your thoughts and communicate them to the Instructor during the lecture. A class is not simply a platform for the instructor to spew “knowledge” – it is a shared space for collective engagement.

Policy on electronic devices and writing tools

Use of a mobile phone (cellphone) or a laptop computer is not permitted during lectures and exams: they should be turned off and stowed away during class time. You may use a tablet for note taking purposes by permission. Personal use of an electronic device eliminates even the possibility of meaningful interaction and collective engagement, distracting the instructor, who is leading the discussion, and those around the user, as well as the user who drifts in and out of the discussion. Note taking by a pen or pencil, by contrast, improves concentration, and is reflective and contemplative. Always bring a pencil or pen, and a notebook or loose leaves to class. We will regularly be writing our reflections about the topics we cover and turning them in.

Assessment

There will be regular in-class essays (“reflections”), assignments, a midterm exam (February 13) and a final exam (TBD), which will cover all the material from the lectures, assignments, and required readings. Assignments will be posted on the course web page. Reflections and assignments account for 50 percent of the final grade, the midterm and the final exam each is 25 percent of the final grade. (I will not distribute practice exams).

Conversion of numerical grades to Final Letter Grades follows the Dalhousie Common Grade Scale.

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Letter</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Letter</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Letter</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Letter</u>
90–100	A+	75–79.9	B+	62–64.9	C+	50–54.9	D
85–89.9	A	70–74.9	B	58–61.9	C	< 50	F
80–84.9	A–	65–69.9	B–	55–57.9	C–		

To pass the course, *at least* a D letter grade average on the exams is required.

Requirements

Lectures will include data and material that are not included in the required readings. At the same time, not all required readings will be covered in the lectures.

There is a significant research component to this course. Your understanding of and competency over the material will be evaluated based on your knowledge, comprehension, application, and analysis of the material learned in this course (exams), and as reflected in your research (assignments). These include:

1. Application of knowledge to situations that are different from those presented in class, ability to abstract key aspects of a complex social and economic environment, and ability to recognize common threads in specific and novel contexts.
2. Collecting, comparing, and evaluating information and data: This includes library or Internet searches of books, major economics journals, and databases, beyond those referenced in the assignments and the course syllabus.
3. Critical thinking and appraising whether what appears to be evidence for a certain approach is really so; evaluating the quality of an argument; disentangling cause from effect; and identifying the shortcomings and pitfalls of a particular argument in relevant contexts.
4. Effective communication, writing concise essays, and making a clear point.

Your total mark in your assignments will depend on the writing style, structure and logic, as well as content (research and analysis). None of these elements will shine unless you are engaged with your topic.

Policies

Plagiarism. All assignments must reflect your individual effort and work. While discussions with your peers is encouraged, collaboration in the final write-up of your assignments is not permitted. You cannot use sources without citing them. Violations of this policy will be considered an academic integrity offence.

Large language models (AI). It is strongly recommended that you do not use AI for your assignments. AI does not teach you how to conceptualize, research, and write about a topic. It is perfectly normal to make mistakes while learning—in fact, we learn much more from our *own* mistakes, which we remember. AI also makes mistakes, but those are of no use to you. You will not remember your chosen AI's mistakes, missing a huge learning opportunity. Moreover, AI is primarily about an output, whereas learning is about the process. We generally have no idea how and why AI produces the output it does. We do not need to know how an internal combustion engine works to drive a car, but still need to know how a steering wheel works. With AI you will only have a start button and no sense of direction.

Cancellations. In the event of a cancelled class due to weather, illness or a power outage, all the course content for that class will be automatically postponed to the next scheduled one.

In-class essays. Attendance and reflections are important components of learning in this course. I will drop the lowest mark on your reflections, allowing for an unforeseen event, illness, or emergency. Please try to communicate with me ahead of a lecture if you will miss a session in which there will be an in-class essay.

Late assignments. Late assignments will be marked down by 10 percent per day up to a total penalty of 50 percent.

Make-up exam. There will be no make-up exam, and the final exam will be re-weighted.

University Policies and Statements. Syllabus Part B, available on the course web page (under syllabus) forms part of this syllabus.

Student Resources and Support. Syllabus Part C, available on the course web page (under syllabus) contains information on student resources for advising, student health and wellness, safety, and academic support services and forms part of this syllabus.

Content

1. What Is This All About?
2. What Is Growing?
3. Where Is It Growing?
4. Which Indicators Correlate With Income?
5. Why Is It Growing?
6. How Is It Growing?
7. Who Is Growing?
8. Are There Limits?
9. Future of Growth?

In class essays

These essay will encourage you to reflect on the topic under discussion. Since it is impossible to schedule them ahead of time with precision, the references below are to the lecture presentations.

Reflections

- 1 Slide 15
- 2 Slide 28
- 3 Slide 58
- 4 Slide 77
- 5 Slide 114
- 6 Slide 129
- 7 Slide 138
- 8 Slide 165
- 9 Slide 189
- 10 Slide 318
- 11 Slide 383