

Faculty of Science Course Syllabus
Department of Economics, Winter 2026
Economic Growth in Historical Perspective – Econ 3310



Dalhousie University operates in the unceded territories of the Mi'kmaw, Wolastoqey, and Peskotomuhkati Peoples. These sovereign nations hold inherent rights as the original peoples of these lands, and we each carry collective obligations under the Peace and Friendship Treaties. Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, recognizes and affirms Aboriginal and Treaty rights in Canada.

We recognize that African Nova Scotians are a distinct people whose histories, legacies, and contributions have enriched the part of Mi'kma'ki known as Nova Scotia for over 400 years.

Instructor: Talan B. İşcan, tiscan@dal.ca
Office Hours: Thursday 10:30–12:00, Economics B23
Lectures: In-person. Tuesday, Thursday 14:35–15:55, McCain 2016

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 a set of critical questions and ideas to approach the next “growth” challenge, even when the tools to address those challenges will be different from the past ones.

Required course materials

- ‡ Lecture presentations and notes (Brightspace).
- ‡ *Prosperity without Growth: Foundations for the Economy of Tomorrow*. Tim Jackson. 2nd edition. Routledge.
- ★ *Economic Growth*. David Weil. 4th edition (earlier editions are acceptable). Routledge.

(‡ means required; ★ means recommended)

There may be additional required readings and materials made available during the semester, depending on the level of interest and background preparation.

Assessment

There will be in-class reflections that are meant to infuse intentionality and purpose to the lectures. There will be assignments to develop ideas using a specific context. Assignments will be posted on the course web page and will be submitted through the Brightspace page. Exams will be used to reinforce learning and give everyone ample opportunity to test their understanding of the core economic concepts and principles. The final exam will be cumulative. (I will not distribute practice exams).

- In-class reflections: 20% of final grade
- Assignments (6): 20% of final grade
- Exam 1, in class: 12 February, 20% of final grade
- Exam 2, in class: 17 March, 20% of final grade
- Final exam, TBD: 20% of final grade

The 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

Attendance to lectures and participation in lecture discussions are 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.

Assignments will have a significant research component. Research requires engagement. 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).

Your total mark in your assignments will depend on the writing style, structure and logic, as well as content (research and analysis).

Policies

In addition to the University Policies and Statements on Academic Integrity the following policies will be enforced.

Electronic devices. Only accessibility related not-taking devices are permitted. Mobile phones and laptop computers will have to be turned off and stowed away during class time.

Large language models. Research and writing are important cognitive processes that should not be delegated to others and machines during a university education. While it is practically impossible for me to prevent you from using large language models (LLM, e.g., ChatGPT) in your assignments, I ask you not to use them when writing your assignments. Search engines allow you to dismantle their embedded software by using the tag “-AI” at the end of your keyword search. These searches often give you wrong answers. More importantly, LLM teach you how to unthink.

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 or paraphrase sources without citing them. Violations of this policy will be considered an academic integrity offence. I reserve the right to use plagiarism software.

Cancellations. In the case of a cancelled class due to illness or university closure, all the course content, including a scheduled midterm exam, for that class will be automatically postponed to the next scheduled one. University closures will not affect assignment due dates.

In-class reflections. For marking purposes there is allowance for one missed reflection without advance notice, and one with advance notice. You can submit in-class submissions, and I would be happy to read and comment on them.

Late assignments. Late assignments will be marked down by 10 percent per day up to a total penalty of 50 percent. I will continue to accept late assignments until the final exam date.

Make-up exam. Inform the instructor in advance if you will be missing a midterm exam due to illness. The weight of a missed midterm exam will be reallocated to the other two exams. If you miss the final exam due to illness or a significant circumstance extraneous to this course, there will be a make-up exam.

Other. University Policies and Statements are available on the course Brightspace site (under syllabus) and form part of this syllabus.

Student Resources and Support

There are many resources and supports on campus, including but not limited to the Writing Centre at the Killam Library. A list of these resources are available on the course Brightspace site (under syllabus) and form part of this syllabus.

Learning outcomes

1. Studying long, global history to appreciate how to engage with humanity's past experiences, including its failures and achievements as a springboard to think about our own future.
2. Understanding core economic themes such as income, income per capita, capital accumulation, economic growth, economic stability and economic crisis and collapse that affect a society's overall well-being and prosperity.
3. Situating these core economic concepts within a broad social context drawing on anthropological, sociological and, philosophical perspectives and evidence.
4. Application of core economic concepts to situations that are different from those presented in class, and ability to identify key aspects of social and economic change.
5. 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 when appropriate; and identifying the strengths, shortcomings, and pitfalls of a particular argument in relevant contexts.
6. Effective communication, writing concise essays, and making a clear point.

Content

1. Introduction
2. What for?
3. What is GDP for?
4. How to produce GDP?
5. How did we get here?
6. Who is "we"?
7. Where do we go from here?