

**ECON 1214 – Economic History of Diversity and Inclusion**  
**Syllabus**  
**Spring 2022**  
**Assistant Professor Melinda C. Miller**  
[millermc@vt.edu](mailto:millermc@vt.edu)

**Class Meetings**

Tues./Thurs. from 5:00 to 6:15 P.M. in Pamplin 1008 (or on zoom in special circumstances).

**Course Website**

Canvas

**Teaching Assistant**

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**Description**

*Economic analysis of topics concerning diversity and inclusion. Emphasis on Virginia and surrounding states. Introduction to the basic principles of economic analysis and economic history, with a special emphasis on models of institutional change, economic growth, discrimination, inequality, migration, and indigenous economic systems. Impact of institutions, environment, and technological change on labor markets, asset markets, and standard of living. Consideration of the role of data in understanding diversity and related ethical issues*

Virginia and the surrounding states encapsulate a great degree of human diversity across both time and space. The evolution of both traditional economic factors (e.g., technology, resource endowments, factor prices) and institutions (e.g., Federal and state laws, cultural norms) have influenced not only the movements of people into and out of this geographic space, but also the options and constraints that shape a person's life choices and standard of living. The goal of this course is to highlight how economic factors have impacted residents of the area. Each course topic centers on the life history of a specific person. These individuals serve as an organizing framework and a lens through which to consider the systematic role of economic and institutional factors in facilitating the inclusion (or exclusion) of people into the community's economic and social life. Using the methodology of economic history, this course will also emphasize the connection between the past and the present and explore how inequality in wealth, income, legal protections, and access to public services in the past have lasting impacts on the distribution of income and opportunity today.

**Course Objectives**

1. Analyze how economic development and technological change impacted the standard of living for people of diverse backgrounds across time and space, with a particular emphasis on the indigenous population, enslaved people, and others who experience discrimination within the labor market.
2. Apply the tools of economics to understand the evolution of institutions and their impact on economic development and inequality
3. Explain how individual life histories can illuminate the constraints that economic factors place on everyday life

4. Explain how the evolution of institutions and prices contributed to migration into and out of the geographic region

**Pre-requisites**

None.

**Office Hours**

I will hold regularly scheduled virtual office hours via Zoom. Time is TBA. I am also available by appointment either on zoom or in person.

**Course Communication**

My primary means of sending you messages will be via Canvas announcements. If you haven't yet, please change your Canvas settings to be notified when announcements are posted.

**Textbook**

Course readings will be drawn from books, articles, and other sources. No textbook is required.

**Attendance**

You are expected to attend class regularly. Economic history is a field that benefits from discussion. Further, because we do not have a textbook, making up missed material may be difficult.

**Grading**

Your course grade will be based on the following:

Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%
Final Exam	25%
Reading Responses	15%
Project	15%
In-Class Activities	5%
Total	100%

For some evaluated material, you will be able to consult with your classmates and others. For other material, you should not discuss your work with others. The assignment prompts will make this clear. All work must be submitted in the manner specified in the assignment.

Exam 1 will be in class on Tuesday, February 22.

Exam 2 will be in class on Thursday, April 14.

The Final Exam will be due on May 7 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

*Project:* While we will discuss and learn about several topics during the semester, there are many interesting and important ones that are not covered on the syllabus. For this project, each group will select one topic that interests them and lead the class in an exploration of your topic.

More information about this project, including guidelines for your class discussion, expectations for a written paper, and topic selection procedures, will be distributed.

*Reading Responses:* For this class, we will read journal articles, book excerpts, and newspaper articles instead of a textbook. We will read ten articles in total. Because critical reading of diverse sources is a skill that must be practiced, I will provide a reading guide to assist you in identifying key aspects of each article and to prepare you for class discussion of the article. For five of these readings, you should prepare your type written guide and submit it via Canvas by the start of class on the day we will discuss the reading. Each submitted response need not be longer than one page. You should use your own words for the responses and not simply copy and paste the article. While you may discuss the reading with your classmates, each response should be your own individual work. These responses will be graded as credit/no credit. If you read the article, make a genuine effort to understand it, and fully respond to the guide in your own words, you will receive full credit.

*Exams 1 and 2:* The exams will draw coverage from assigned readings, class lectures, and class discussions.

*Final Exam:* The final will also draw its coverage from assigned readings, class lectures, and class discussions.

We will also do occasional in-class exercise. The in-class exercises will be graded on effort, not correctness.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students with accommodations from SSD should give me their accommodation form during the first week of the semester. For students with test taking accommodations, we will discuss how to best implement your accommodation within the context of an online course. Please use your accommodation if you have one – once you take an exam there is no remedy for a poor grade. If you have a non-test-related accommodation, we'll come up with a plan as early in the semester as possible.

### **Class Conduct**

The philosophy of University Policies for Student Life states, “To support the educational mission of the university, to create an environment where all students have the same opportunity to succeed academically and to promote health and safety, Virginia Tech has established policies that set minimum standards for student behavior.” All students of Virginia Tech are required to adhere to the Student Conduct Code as stated in the University Policies for Student Life ([www.judicial.vt.edu/upsl.php](http://www.judicial.vt.edu/upsl.php)).

Please be respectful and aware of your environment during class Zoom meetings or other communications. Be aware that your classmates and I may be able to see and hear you during a Zoom meeting. Be respectful to your classmates during all interactions.

Students are expected to arrive to class on time.

We will occasionally use laptops in class during in-class exercise or while discussing papers. Otherwise, no cell phones or computers may be used during class. You may not check email, Facebook, sports scores, stock market prices, etc., etc., during class. Why no computers?

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/for-better-learning-in-college-lectures-lay-down-the-laptop-and-pick-up-a-pen/amp/>

You are responsible for information relayed during class meetings—including course material, deadlines, assignments, etc., This holds even if you are not in class.

### **Masks**

Masks are required to be worn properly during in all designated public areas. This includes our classroom. Masks will also be required for indoor, in-person office hours.

### **Eating and drinking**

Eating and drinking are not allowed in class. If you find it necessary to sip water, do so in a safe and quick manner.

### **Honor Policy**

The Undergraduate Honor Code pledge that each member of the university community agrees to abide by states:

“As a Hokie, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.”

Students enrolled in this course are responsible for abiding by the Honor Code. A student who has doubts about how the Honor Code applies to any assignment is responsible for obtaining specific guidance from the course instructor before submitting the assignment for evaluation. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the University community from the requirements and expectations of the Honor Code.

Academic integrity expectations are the same for online classes as they are for in person classes.

Do not use class material aggregation sites such as Chegg, CourseHero, and GroupMe.

For additional information about the Honor Code, please visit: <https://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>

All assignments submitted shall be considered “graded work” and all aspects of your coursework are covered by the Honor Code. All projects and homework assignments are to be completed individually unless otherwise specified.

Commission of any of the following acts shall constitute academic misconduct. This listing is not, however, exclusive of other acts that may reasonably be said to constitute academic misconduct. Clarification is provided for each definition with some examples of prohibited behaviors in the Undergraduate Honor Code Manual located at <https://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>

- **CHEATING:** Cheating includes the intentional use of unauthorized materials, information, notes, study aids or other devices or materials in any academic exercise, or attempts thereof.
- **PLAGIARISM:** Plagiarism includes the copying of the language, structure, programming, computer code, ideas, and/or thoughts of another and passing off the same as one's own original work, or attempts thereof.
- **FALSIFICATION:** Falsification includes the statement of any untruth, either verbally or in writing, with respect to any element of one's academic work, or attempts thereof.
- **FABRICATION:** Fabrication includes making up data and results, and recording or reporting them, or submitting fabricated documents, or attempts thereof.
- **MULTIPLE SUBMISSION:** Multiple submission involves the submission for credit – without authorization from the instructor receiving the work – of substantial portions of any work (including oral reports) previously submitted for credit at any academic institution or attempts thereof.
- **COMPLICITY:** Complicity includes intentionally helping another to engage in an act of academic misconduct, or attempts thereof.
- **VIOLATION OF UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE, DEPARTMENTAL, PROGRAM, COURSE, OR FACULTY RULES:** The violation of any University, College, Departmental, Program, Course, or Faculty Rules relating to academic matters that may lead to an unfair academic advantage by the student violating the rule(s).

If you have questions or are unclear about what constitutes academic misconduct on an assignment, please speak with me. I take the honor code very seriously in this course. The normal sanction I will recommend for a violation of the Honor Code is an F\* sanction as your final course grade. The F represents failure in the course. The “\*” is intended to identify a student who has failed to uphold the values of academic integrity at Virginia Tech. A student who receives a sanction of F\* as their final course grade shall have it documented on their transcript with the notation “FAILURE DUE TO ACADEMIC HONOR CODE VIOLATION.” You would be required to complete an education program administered by the Honor System in order to have the “\*” and notation “FAILURE DUE TO ACADEMIC HONOR CODE VIOLATION” removed from your transcript. The “F” however would be permanently on your transcript.”

Specific information about this course:

**Reading Responses:** You may discuss readings with your classmates, but I expect every student to write their responses individually. You need to phrase ideas in your own words. Do not simply copy and paste the article.

**Exams:** Exams are closed book, readings, notes, and internet. You should not discuss your exam with anyone else while you are taking it. This includes Prof. Miller. We will only answer procedural questions during the exam period.

Group Project: Each group will submit one project. It is expected that every student contribute to their group, treat group members respectfully, and follow internally set deadlines. While you may discuss the project with other groups, you cannot actively collaborate with other groups.

### **Honor Code Pledge for Assignments**

The Virginia Tech honor code pledge for assignments is as follows:

*“I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on this assignment.”*

The pledge is to be written out on all graded assignments at the university and signed by the student. The honor pledge represents both an expression of the student’s support of the honor code and a commitment to uphold the academic standards at Virginia Tech.

### **Honor Policy Educational Resources**

#### Academic Integrity Success Module

This module covers necessary information regarding Academic Integrity at Virginia Tech that students will need throughout their time as a student. This information includes our policies and the importance of academic integrity at Virginia Tech: <https://canvas.vt.edu/enroll/CE7YK9>.

#### Understanding the Code

Understanding the Code will be offered asynchronously through Canvas. This is a limited time offering, and is designed by the Undergraduate Honor Council Delegates. It is a self- enrollment course through Canvas. In this module, Honor Council Delegates, who are students working with the Office of Undergraduate Academic Integrity, discuss what constitutes a violation of the Honor Code and ways in which students can avoid violations of the Undergraduate Honor Code. Specific examples will be utilized to assist students in better understanding the University’s expectations. It may be found at this link: <https://canvas.vt.edu/enroll/GALMPM>. UTC will be available from January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022 – January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

### **Missed Work**

If you have an extended or serious illness, a death in your family, or other significant personal difficulty that will prevent you from attending class, or prevent you from meeting your assignment deadlines, or cause you to miss exams, please let me know right away. Please also notify the Dean of Students Office ([dos.vt.edu](https://dos.vt.edu)) of your issue. They will secure your personal verification and private documentation. The Dean of Students will also notify, via your Academic Dean, all of your course instructors of your situation with a date range for your 'verified absence.' This endorsement from the Dean of Students helps an instructor extend accommodations to you with less concern for unfairness toward your classmates. Of course, you should also understand that there are practical limits on academic accommodations and that some

situations are severe enough to warrant other forms of academic relief such as course withdrawal.

If you will miss an exam or other due date because of an excused absence, you must inform me in advance and as soon as possible. In general, missed work cannot be made up. Instead, other course work will be reweighted. If you miss an exam with prior permission, that exam's share of the course grade will be applied to the final exam. Appropriate documentation must be provided for all excused absences.

If an exam, paper, or any other due date is missed without prior permission, I reserve the right to award automatic zero.

### **Discussing a Score or Grade**

Within one week of an assignment or examination being returned to the class, you must ask by email to meet with me to discuss your score or grade and explain what exactly you wish to discuss. The entire assignment or test will be subject to review. There is no guarantee that re-grading will lead to a higher grade and may lead to a lower score.

## **Class Plan**

### *1: What is Economic History?*

- What are the basic principles of economic analysis?
- What is economic history?
- How do economic historians view the world?

### *2: The First 10,000 Years (or so) of Virginia's Economic History*

- What did indigenous economic systems look like?
- How did technological change influence the standard of living in a pre-industrial society?
- How did indigenous institutions adapt to environmental change?

### *3: The Collision of Two Economic Systems*

- Why did Europeans migrate (and then colonize) to the Americas?
- Why did American and European economies evolve differently pre-1492?
- How did European colonization impact the standard of living for peoples in the Americas, including the indigenous population, European settlers, and enslaved Africans?

### *4: Slavery and Antebellum Discrimination*

- Why was enslaved labor used on colonial America?
- How did technological change influence the prevalence of enslaved labor?
- How did the institution of slavery affect economic development and inequality in the North and South?

### *5: The Civil War, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow*

- How did the end of slavery impact the South's economic system?
- How did emancipation affect the standard of living for previously enslaved people?
- How and why did the racial wealth and income gap evolve during the century following the Civil War?

### *6: Migration, Both Internal and External*

- Why do people decide to migrate?
- How can migration impact living standards and social networks? How does the model of migration explain the Age of Mass Migration?
- How does migration influence the standard of living for different groups?

### *7: Women in (and out of) the Labor Force*

- How did institutions influence women's engagement in the labor force?
- How did technological change and urbanization impact women's labor supply?



8. *Incarceration*

- Who is incarcerated and why?
- How do public finance and institutions interact to affect the incarceration rate?

9. *Racial Wealth Gap*

- How has inequality evolved over time?
- What are the welfare and economic effects on inequality?

10. *Class Projects*