

1) European economic growth over the long run (6 hours)

When did north-western Europe become rich? Why? Since the turn of the millennium, studies of real wages and historical national accounting have given rise to a new consensus on the timing and causes of the “little divergence” between north-western (England and the Netherlands) and the rest of Europe (Allen 2001; Pamuk 2007; Broadberry 2021). In this view, north-western Europe forged ahead during the early modern era, before the industrial revolution, but its rise was rooted in the Middle Ages. After the Black Death (1348), the argument goes, only north-western European countries escaped from the Malthusian trap, whereby population growth regularly pushed down living standards, because only their markets developed sufficiently for Smithian growth to effectively counter Malthusian forces. However, developments in the recent literature question the representativeness of real wages and propose a different narrative arguing that a general process of economic growth, albeit at different rates, characterized early modern Europe,

References – Topic 1

1a) Little divergence

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1b) Representativeness of real wages

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2) Infrastructure and growth in Europe 1840-2010 (3 hours)

New data sources are being used in the study of transport history. Historians are now digitizing maps, registers of shipwrecks, and railway timetables, among others. These new sources create opportunities but also challenges. This module will focus mostly on the development of European infrastructures (mostly railways) over the long run. If time permits, we will have a focus on Italy.

References – Topic 2

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3) The Italian regional divide: recent developments (3 hours)

In 1988, Gianni Toniolo, in his study on the economic history of liberal Italy, noted that, apart from Vera Zamagni's research on regional imbalances in 1911, economic historians had produced little quantitative evidence to analyze the extent of regional disparities in Italy. Since then, a significant body of literature has emerged, particularly in the field of quantitative economic history. The quantitative literature on the regional divide in Italy initially focused on the post-unification period, with studies becoming increasingly geographically disaggregated (regions, provinces, districts). Subsequently, it produced estimates of the regional divide in the decades and centuries preceding the unification of the country (1861). In this part of the course, we will explore selected recent quantitative research on the origins and evolution of regional disparities in Italy, examining key contributions and methodologies used in the field.

References – Topic 3

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