**Course Objectives:** newly acquired knowledge once the course completed should be well identified

Over the last two decades, historical natural experiments have been increasingly employed by general economists in various fields, and by economic historians. For one, natural experiments in history serve as a laboratory for economists to test various economic theories, and to examine the causal impact of public policy interventions, that cannot be observed otherwise in contemporary contexts. For another, natural experiments in history enable economic historians to use state-of-the-art identification methods that are typically advocated by applied microeconomists, in order to understand historical processes in more depth.

This course aims at introducing TSE doctoral students at the DEEQA level to recent conceptual, methodological, and data advances in the field of economic history. Students will be introduced to a selective range of topics in economic history and general economics that employ natural experiments. We will focus on three topics: (1) the historical origins and consequences of culture, (2) religion and economic development, and (3) labor coercion. Each class will be a mixture of lecture and open discussion. Students must read the articles before class in order to have stimulating discussions.
The course is taught jointly by Victor Gay (VG) and Mohamed Saleh (MS). Each will teach 7.5 hours (5 lectures).

The course is part of the doctoral field on “Development, History, and Political Economy.” Students are thus expected to have followed the M2 ETE course on “Development Microeconomics,” and the DEEQA course on “Empirical Methods for Policy Evaluation.” However, the course is open to DEEQA students who have not chosen this field.

**Prerequisites:**

Microeconomic theory and Applied Econometrics.

**Practical information about the sessions:**

Students are expected to attend all classes and participate in class discussions. Using laptops or tablets is allowed for taking notes only.

**Grading system:**

The grade of the course will be based on a research proposal in economic history that can form the nucleus of a DEEQA paper. Students must consult us in order to agree on the topic in advance. Students will be asked to do an oral presentation of the proposal.

**Bibliography/references:**

1. **Introduction: Economics and the Modern Economic Historian (VG)**

Does the past have useful economics? This introduction provides a short overview of the role of economic history for economics. It discusses how economists have traditionally approached economic history (McCloskey, 1976; Arrow, 1985; Solow, 1985), and how they approach it today, especially in their use of natural experiments of history (Abramitzky, 2015; Cantoni and Yuchtman, 2019).


2. The Historical Origins and Consequences of Culture (VG)

Does culture matter for long-run development? How can we explain the wide cultural disparities that characterize the world today? Processes through which culture emerge and change are historical by nature and have deep rooted origins. We will explore three types of explanations that have been highlighted in recent research: the structures of ancestral societies such as the pre-modern division of labor; historical institutions such as the slave trade; and idiosyncratic historical events such as shocks to the sex ratio through wars. We will particularly focus on the empirical strategies that enable to credibly identify cultural effects independent from other factors, especially institutions.

- The Epidemiological Approach to Culture


- Ancestral Roots of Culture


- Historical Experiments of Culture


3. Religion, Social Capital, and Economic Development (MS)
Max Weber’s thesis on Protestantism, the secularization hypothesis, and the recent “economics of religion” literature, and social capital. Is there a causal impact of religious beliefs on economic outcomes or do religious beliefs form endogenously, possibly as an outcome of economic factors? The literature discussed here will be primarily from history, given the nature of the state-of-art of the literature, but will also include papers on the contemporary period. Special attention will be given to the methodological aspects of the empirical literature (data collection challenges and identification strategies).

- Secularization, Pluralism, and Competition


- Religion and Human Capital: A Causal Effect or Self-Selection?


- Social Capital and Cultural Beliefs


4. Labor Coercion (MS)

The Engerman and Sokoloff Hypothesis, the long-term effects of labor coercion, causes of coercion.


Session planning:

See detailed syllabus above.
Distance learning:

Distance learning can be provided when necessary by implementing:

- Interactive virtual classrooms via Zoom
- Recorded lectures (videos)
- Chatrooms: Weekly office hours on Zoom upon request