

Contemporary Economic History

Code: 102315
ECTS Credits: 6

2025/2026

| Degree | Type | Year |
|--|------|------|
| Business Administration and Management | OT | 4 |
| Economics | OB | 3 |

Contact

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Teachers

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Teaching groups languages

You can view this information at the [end](#) of this document.

Prerequisites

World Economic History (*Historia Económica Mundial*) Micro I, II and Macro I must have been passed

To be registered in Macro II.

Objectives and Contextualisation

Together with Labour History and History of Economic Thought, this course focuses on economic history. The course is normally taken during the third year (6 ECTS credits): it is compulsory for students enrolled in Economics (*Economía*) and elective for those in Business and Enterprise (*Administración i Dirección de Empresas*). The course goes more in depth into the analysis of the role played by time and path dependency in economic decisions and results by adopting a historical perspective. The lectures also connect economic history to present-day economic issues such as the recent financial crisis, to provide students with capabilities and knowledge that are highly valuable in today's job market.

The lecture will be mainly focused on the history of the financial sector and its link with the economy, and it is organized as follows:

1. 1870 - 1914: an era of (a) fixed exchange rates, no inflation and liberal economic policies, as well as (b) formation of new systems.

2. 1914 - 1958: a phase of (a) transition in the exchange-rate system and national economic policies, as well as (b) monetary and financial instability.
3. 1958 - 2020, further divided into:
 1. 1958 - 1973: a period of (a) fixed exchange rates, Keynesian economic policies and (b) change in the financial sector.
 2. 1973 - 2020: a period of (a) flexible exchange rates, neoliberal economic policies and (b) growing financial instability

Competences

Business Administration and Management

- Capacity for adapting to changing environments.
- Capacity for independent learning in the future, gaining more profound knowledge of previous areas or learning new topics.
- Contextualise economic problems in historical terms.
- Demonstrate initiative and work individually when the situation requires it.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the interrelationships between different economies, the role of national and international economies, their evolution and the consequences that may be produced for the company.
- Identify the economic agents that make up an economy, understanding how they have been interrelated to date, how they are currently interrelated and forecast futures according to new circumstances and their influence on a specific company.
- Organise the work in terms of good time management, organisation and planning.
- Select and generate the information necessary for each problem, analyse it and take decisions based on that information.
- Students must have and understand knowledge of an area of study built on the basis of general secondary education, and while it relies on some advanced textbooks it also includes some aspects coming from the forefront of its field of study.

Economics

- Capacity for adapting to changing environments.
- Capacity for independent learning in the future, gaining more profound knowledge of previous areas or learning new topics.
- Contextualise economic problems in historical terms.
- Demonstrate initiative and work individually when the situation requires it.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the interrelationships between different economies, the role of national and international economies, their evolution and the consequences that may be produced for the company.
- Identify the economic agents that make up an economy, understanding how they have been interrelated to date, how they are currently interrelated and forecast futures according to new circumstances and their influence on a specific company.
- Organise the work in terms of good time management, organisation and planning.
- Select and generate the information necessary for each problem, analyse it and take decisions based on that information.
- Show motivation for carrying out quality work and sensitivity to the consequences for the environment and society.
- Students must be capable of applying their knowledge to their work or vocation in a professional way and they should have building arguments and problem resolution skills within their area of study.
- Students must be capable of collecting and interpreting relevant data (usually within their area of study) in order to make statements that reflect social, scientific or ethical relevant issues.
- Students must be capable of communicating information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
- Students must develop the necessary learning skills in order to undertake further training with a high degree of autonomy.
- Students must have and understand knowledge of an area of study built on the basis of general secondary education, and while it relies on some advanced textbooks it also includes some aspects coming from the forefront of its field of study.
- Value ethical commitment in professional practice.

Learning Outcomes

1. Apply, with historical perspective, new experiences of industrialisation to developing countries.
2. Assess ethical commitment in professional activity.
3. Capacity to adapt to changing environments.
4. Capacity to continue future learning independently, acquiring further knowledge and exploring new areas of knowledge.
5. Demonstrate initiative and work independently when required.
6. Demonstrate motivation regarding the quality of the work performed and sensitivity regarding the consequences on the environment and society.
7. Identify the problems of economic agents on the basis of different historic experiences.
8. Organise work, in terms of good time management and organisation and planning.
9. Perform an integrated analysis of the physical, financial, and migratory flows of the economy, on the basis of different historical experiences.
10. Relate finance and policy, in the different phases of contemporary economic growth.
11. Relate finances and policy, in the different phases of contemporary economic growth.
12. Select and generate the information needed for each problem, analyse it and make decisions based on this information.
13. Students must be capable of applying their knowledge to their work or vocation in a professional way and they should have building arguments and problem resolution skills within their area of study.
14. Students must be capable of collecting and interpreting relevant data (usually within their area of study) in order to make statements that reflect social, scientific or ethical relevant issues.
15. Students must be capable of communicating information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
16. Students must develop the necessary learning skills in order to undertake further training with a high degree of autonomy.
17. Students must have and understand knowledge of an area of study built on the basis of general secondary education, and while it relies on some advanced textbooks it also includes some aspects coming from the forefront of its field of study.
18. Summarise the different experiences of economic development, on a regional, national and international scale.

Content

Introduction

1. Change, time and uncertainty: economics and economic history
2. Physical and financial capital flows, and their role in economic activity
3. Time and phases: the problems with periodization
4. Skills to be acquired during the course
5. References and the bibliography

First part

Liberal economic policies and economic growth under the hegemony of the British financial system, 1870 - 1914

Topic 1

The strengthening of international economic ties and the formation of a new multilateral payment system

- 1.1 Population, resources and the expansion of world markets: savings and investments as strategic variables
- 1.2 The international financial flows and relations: the balance of payments and the role of Britain

1.3 The rise of the Gold Standard and fixed exchange rates: the British pound, key currency

1.4 The first experiments with monetary unions and national economic and monetary policy

Topic 2

The formation of the contemporary financial system

2.1 The national banking systems: risk and instability

2.2 Central banks and banking firms: concentration in the sector and two models (Great Britain and Germany)

2.3 The exception: United States, a decentralized system

2.4 The expansion of the "city" of London as the first financial centre in the world

Topic 3

The classic Gold Standard and fixed exchange rates: theory vs. reality

3.1 The theory of adjustments based on prices: from classical economists to the Cunliffe Report

3.2 The assumptions of the theory: contradictory evidence and new features of analysis

3.3 The Gold Standard in developed countries, colonies and developing economies: Great Britain, India and Argentina

3.4 The growing imbalances and the instability of the system

Second part

From liberal policy to Keynesianism (1914 - 1958): the instability of the international financial system and the role of the United States

Topic 4

The financial and social heritage of WWI

4.1 War, society and finance: the crisis of liberal policies and new imbalances

4.2 Post-war policies and growing imbalances

4.3 From instability to stability under the hegemony of the United States: the new exchange rate system based on the Gold Exchange Standard

4.4 The crisis of the nineteenth-century economic model: the Great Depression and the collapse of the international financial system

Topic 5

WWII and the rise of Keynesian economic policies

5.1 The end of the "laissez faire" and new social and economic policies during the war

5.2 The Bretton Woods conference and the rise of a new international financial system: conflicts and agreements

5.3 The economic and political heritage of the war

5.4 The collapse of Bretton Woods, the World Trade Organization and the "key currency plan": the Marshall Plan and its complementary institutions

Third Part

From Keynesianism to the crisis of Neoliberalism (1958 - 2022): from fixed to flexible exchange rates and the rising importance of supranational finance

Topic 6

The new International Monetary System and the Gold Exchange Standard based on the US dollar

6.1 Economic growth, financial stability and the welfare state until 1971: a unique phase?

6.2 First problems with the Gold Exchange Standard (\$): the US balance of payment and the Eurodollar market, rising inflation and the crisis of the British pound

6.3 From the crisis of Bretton Woods to generalized crises: stagflation and flexible exchange rates

6.4 New financial products and operations: the future market and financial "sanctuaries"

Topic 7

New financial equilibriums and Neoliberal policies

7.1 The rise of Neoliberal policies and the return to austerity

7.2 Expansion and weaknesses of the new financial system in the 1980s: foreign debt crises

7.3 The fall of the welfare state

7.4 The precarious economic, social and financial equilibriums of the 21th century

7.5. From the 2008 crisis to the climate crisis and COVID-19.

Activities and Methodology

| Title | Hours | ECTS | Learning Outcomes |
|--------------------|-------|------|--|
| Type: Directed | | | |
| Lectures | 32.5 | 1.3 | 9, 3, 7, 10, 11, 18, 1 |
| Practical sessions | 12 | 0.48 | 4, 5, 6, 8, 12, 2 |
| Type: Supervised | | | |
| Office hours | 10.5 | 0.42 | 9, 3, 7, 6, 8, 11, 10, 12, 2 |
| Type: Autonomous | | | |
| Exercises | 45 | 1.8 | 9, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 10, 12, 18, 1 |
| Study | 45 | 1.8 | 9, 4, 5, 7, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 18, 1, 2 |

The lecture will be organized in three main blocks, the first of 4 weeks and two of about 5 each following. Different methodologies will be used:

1. 1. *Lecture (face-to-face)*

The teacher will present the main topics, as well as the historical and international context, in class. Each topic will be covered through about 3 lectures

1. 2. *Practical sessions (face-to-face)*

The aim of these sessions is to develop skills that are complementary to the knowledge and capabilities gained through the lectures. The students will work on assignments, problems and questions based on the topics discussed in class. There will be approximately one practical session per week. The students will be asked to search for information and to draft brief essays independently or within a group.

1. 3. *Individual and team work*

The activities presented above should be complemented by independent work carried out by the students alone and / or in groups, to elaborate more on the information provided in class and strengthen their understanding of the topics presented during the lectures

1. 4. *Office hours*

Office hours should be used to clarify specific points and to tackle problems with the understanding of each given topic. Office hours will be fixed during the first week

1. 5. *Campus Virtual*

The online campus platform (*Campus Virtual*) will stand as a precious tool in order to communicate between the lecturer and the students, as well as to coordinate for distributing materials and handing in essays / answers etc.

Formative activities

1. Lectures

1. Lecture by the teacher
2. Practical sessions
3. Office Hours
 1. Office hours
 2. Independent work
 1. Lectures and study
 2. Work based on practical exercises and research questions.

"The proposed teaching methodology may undergo some modifications according to the restrictions imposed by the health authorities on on-campus courses".

Annotation: Within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

Assessment

Continous Assessment Activities

| Title | Weighting | Hours | ECTS | Learning Outcomes |
|------------|-----------|-------|------|---|
| Exam | 35 | 2 | 0.08 | 9, 3, 4, 5, 7, 6, 8, 11, 10, 12, 18, 1, 2 |
| Final Exam | 40 | 2 | 0.08 | 9, 3, 4, 5, 7, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 18, 1, 2 |

| | | | | |
|---|----|---|------|-------------------------------------|
| Following up assesment and other evaluable activities | 25 | 1 | 0.04 | 9, 7, 17, 16, 15, 13, 14, 10, 11, 1 |
|---|----|---|------|-------------------------------------|

There will be a following up assesment and other evaluable activities worth 25% of the final course mark (60% written exercises prepared at home and 40% work in the classroom), a mid-term exam worth 35% and a final exam worth 40% of the total. The assessment methods could suffer modifications depending on the restrictions to face-to-face activities imposed by the Sanitary Authorities.

"The proposed assessment may be subject to change depending on the attendance restrictions imposed by the health authorities."

The student will receive the qualification of 'No evaluable' if he/she does not take the final exam.

"Aquesta assignatura/mòdul no preveu el sistema d'avaluació única."

"This subject/module does not offer the option for comprehensive evaluation."

Calendar of evaluation activities

The dates of the continuous evaluation activities (exercises in the classroom, assignments, ...) will be announced well in advance during the semester. The continuous evaluation activities will not be rescheduled in any case.

The dates of the midterm and final exams are scheduled in the assessment calendar of the Faculty.

"The dates of the midterm and final exams cannot be modified, unless there is an exceptional and duly justified reason why an evaluation activity cannot be carried out. In this case, the degree coordinator will contact both the teaching staff and the affected student, and a new date will be scheduled within the same academic period to make up for the missed evaluation activity." Section 1 of Article 264. Calendar of evaluation activities (Academic Regulations UAB).

Students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, who in accordance with the previous paragraph need to change an evaluation activity date must process the request by filling out an Application for exams' reschedule: [e-Formulari per a la reprogramació de proves](#).

Grade revision process

After all grading activities have ended, students will be informed of the date and way in which the course grades will be published. Students will be also be informed of the procedure, place, date and time of grade revision following University regulations.

Retake Process

"To be eligible to participate in the retake process, it is required for students to have been previously been evaluated for at least two thirds of the total evaluation activities of the subject." Section 2 of Article 261. The recovery (UAB Academic Regulations). Additionally, it is required that the student to have achieved an average grade of the subject greater than or equal to 3.5 and less than 5.

The date of the retake exam will be posted in the calendar of evaluation activities of the Faculty. Students who take this exam and pass, will get a grade of 5 for the subject. If the student does not pass the retake, the grade will remain unchanged, and hence, student will fail the course.

Irregularities in evaluation activities

In spite of other disciplinary measures deemed appropriate, and in accordance with current academic regulations, "in the case that the student makes any irregularity that could lead to a significant variation in the grade of an evaluation activity, it will be graded with a 0. In case of various irregularities occur in the evaluation of the same subject, the final grade of this subject will be 0". Section 11 of Article 266. Results of the evaluation. (UAB Academic Regulations).

Use of artificial intelligence

This subject allows the use of AI technologies exclusively for support tasks such as bibliographic or content-based searches, text correction or translations. The student must clearly (i) identify which parts have been generated using AI technology; (ii) specify the tools used; and (iii) include a critical reflection on how these have influenced the process and final outcome of the activity. Lack of transparency regarding the use of AI in the assessed activity will be considered academic dishonesty; the corresponding grade may be lowered, or the work may even be awarded a zero. In cases of greater infringement, more serious action may be taken.

Bibliography

Main and basic textbook reference

Eichengreen, B. J. (2019): *Globalizing Capital: A History of the International Monetary System*, Third Edition. Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Other references and textbooks

Eichengreen, B. J. (ed.) (2006): *The European economy since 1945: coordinated capitalism and beyond* . Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Flandreau, M. et al. (eds.) (2003): *International financial history in the Twentieth century: system and anarchy*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Wachtel, H. M. (1986): *The money mandarins. The making of a new Supranational Economic Order*. New York, Pantheon Books.

Software

No

Groups and Languages

Please note that this information is provisional until 30 November 2025. You can check it through this [link](#). To consult the language you will need to enter the CODE of the subject.

| Name | Group | Language | Semester | Turn |
|----------------------------|-------|----------|-----------------|---------------|
| (PAUL) Classroom practices | 8 | English | second semester | morning-mixed |
| (PAUL) Classroom practices | 51 | Catalan | second semester | afternoon |
| (PAUL) Classroom practices | 81 | Catalan | second semester | morning-mixed |
| (TE) Theory | 1 | Catalan | second semester | morning-mixed |
| (TE) Theory | 8 | English | second semester | morning-mixed |
| (TE) Theory | 51 | Catalan | second semester | afternoon |
