

Economic History Comprehensive Exam  
April 25, 2014  
UCLA Department of Economics  
Profs. Dora Costa and W. Walker Hanlon

This exam is open book and open notes. You cannot email/message/text during the exam.

You have four hours to complete the exam. Please answer three of the six essay questions, giving well-reasoned arguments based on the readings. Answers should be typed and sent by email to Jessica Perez ([jessica@econ.ucla.edu](mailto:jessica@econ.ucla.edu)). Please retain a copy of your answers.

1. The Industrial Revolution was characterized by a "wave of gadgets" that swept over England, raising productivity in some sectors of the economy. However, evidence provided by Robert Allen suggests that wages for the average worker didn't exhibit a substantial increase, even in the short run, until the middle of the 19th century. At the same time, the population of England grew rapidly during this period. How should we reconcile these patterns of productivity growth, stagnant real wages, and rising population?
2. Describe the changes in industry occurring the Second Industrial Revolution (roughly 1870-1914 but continuing) and discuss the implications of these changes for the labor force, particularly women's labor force participation.
3. The demographic transition was a key element in the transition to a modern economy. There are a wide range of theories for this transition. Briefly describe the main hypothesis for what drove this transition. What are the key empirical challenges in assessing the relative importance of these various channels? What type of information would we need in order to make a convincing statement about the key channels that generated the demographic transition?
4. Discuss the health transition and how it happened in the United States. What types of empirical evidence do we have on the health of past population and the determinants of that health? How, if at all, are improvements in health, related to economic growth and productivity?
5. Many authors have argued that geographic features played an important role in determining a location's potential for economic growth. In their paper "Reversal of Fortune: Geography and Institutions in the Making of the Modern World Income Distribution," Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson show evidence that those colonies which were wealthiest in 1500 are now relatively poor. What conclusions do they draw from this evidence? Do they provide a convincing refutation of the role of geography in determining a location's potential for economic growth through channels other than persistent institutional structures? Why or why not?
6. Could the Great Depression happen again? Be sure to discuss different theories of the Great Depression in answering this question.