Economic History Comprehensive Exam · April 24, 2015
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You have three hours to complete the exam. Please answer three of the six essay questions. Answers should be typed and sent by email to Christina Romero by 5:00pm (cromero@econ.ucla.edu).

1. The goal of the Unified Growth Theory is to provide a unified framework that can explain the transition from a Malthusian economy to modern growth. What are the key assumptions needed for this framework? Are these assumptions supported by the empirical literature we reviewed? Given the empirical evidence, are there important assumptions that we should question, or that require further empirical support?

2. The World Health Organization reports that, today, 38 percent of the world's population lacks access to clean water. Does evidence from history support the claim that investing in infrastructure for water sanitation would be socially beneficial in developing countries today? What concerns might arise in applying results from the historical US context to a contemporary developing country setting? Are there any steps that researchers could take to maximize external validity?

3. In class, we discussed several papers that use population or urbanization rates as outcome variables reflecting improvements in technology or productivity for time periods in which more direct measures are unavailable (e.g, Nunn & Qian (2011), Acemoglu et al. (2005), Dittmar (2011)). What is the intuition behind this approach? What potential concerns might we have in evaluating this approach?

4. In his 2009 book *Lords of Finance*, Liaquat Ahamed suggests that the Great Depression was "the direct result of a series of misjudgements by economic policymakers… by an measure the most dramatic series of collective blunders ever made by financial officials." To what extent does the evidence support this view?

5. Development economists are interested in how technology diffuses from developed to developing countries and how this affects productivity in developing economies. Two of the papers discussed in class, Clark (1987) and Saxenhouse & Wright (2010), provide evidence on the diffusion of technology and subsequent productivity patterns in one industry, cotton textiles, in the late 19th and early 20th century. What are the main lessons that we can learn from the patterns that these authors have documented? Are these findings relevant for the modern debate over technology diffusion? What features of the setting these authors consider are most important for our ability to generalize from their results?

6. According to best available data/methods, has intergenerational mobility increased or decreased in the United States over time? Some theories suggest that a society's degree of social mobility will influence political outcomes and public goods provision. Outline a viable strategy to test this hypothesis using historical data.