

FYS 525, Wars, Plagues, and, Revolutions: How Economies Respond to Crisis

Fall 2023

Bates College

Paul Shea

Class Times: MW, 9:30-10:50 AM. Fridays are set aside to make up any missed classes.

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Course Website: www.paulshea.com. This site includes lecture notes, class announcements, readings, and assignments. Note that the class website is unrelated to Lyceum.

TA/WCAT: Mauro Kalaora. The WCAT is a fellow student available to help you with writing assignments. He will email students weekly with his availability and with details on how to arrange an appointment.

Course Description: This seminar is for new students at Bates. Although the content focuses on economic responses to different types of crises, its main objectives are to introduce students to different aspects of a college education, and to develop their writing and communication skills. Students will be exposed to different genres of writing including scientific writing, fiction, and biography, as well as relevant films. The course goals are as follows:

1. To improve students writing ability. We will focus on writing with clarity, learning different writing conventions, crafting written arguments, and conducting research.
2. To better understand the practicalities of a college education. This class is a vehicle to discuss topics such as how to choose an academic major or course of study, course selection, different professional paths, etc. In addition to teaching the course, I will serve as your pre-major advisor and am available to discuss any challenges or questions that you have while adapting to Bates.

3. To learn some basic economic concepts. This course is not intended to replace an Introductory economics course. We will, however, consider some core economics concepts such as supply & demand, trade offs, scarcity, etc.

4. To better understand the economic response to rare events such as wars, plagues, and, revolutions. In some cases, economic change may be the collective result of (often millions) of individual decision makers. In others, economic change may be driven by a small number of policy makers.

Prerequisites: None.

Reading Materials: Students should acquire the following texts which we will use extensively:

Scheidel, Walter. 2018 *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton, NJ. Princeton University Press. ([link](#))

Bullock, R., Brody, M., and F. Weinberg. 2021. *The Little Seagull Handbook*. Fourth Edition. W. Norton & Company. ([link](#))

Older editions of the latter text are fine.

Assignments: Your grade consists of the following:

i) Periodic short writing assignments. These will dominate the first half of the class although there will be a few in the second half as well. In most cases, students will be given feedback on their first submission and given an opportunity to re-submit before receiving a final grade. Collectively, these comprise 60% of your grade.

ii) A term project in three pieces. The first is a proposal and annotated bibliography (10%), the second is a rough draft (15%), and the third is a final paper (15%). Details will be provided in the first three weeks of class.

iii) Class participation. Although attendance will not be taken, students are expected to attend most meetings, and be prepared to participate. Participation includes both offering useful comments and participating in class discussions, and engaging in class exercises such as mutual editing. Free expression is a core value of this class. All students are welcome to share their views on all topics but are expected to do so in a professional, respectful manner.

Most students' participation will be judged satisfactory and will not impact their final grade. Students who are exceptionally weak or exceptionally strong in this regard, however, may have their final grades adjusted by up to a full letter grade.

Academic Dishonesty: Students caught plagiarizing work may have their assignment or course grades lowered. Serious cases potentially justifying suspension or expulsion may be referred to the Student Conduct Committee.

For all assignments, students are expected to:

1. Form and craft their own arguments.
2. Use their own words in completing the assignment.
3. Provide proper citations or references when quoting or borrowing another person's ideas.
4. Make their own edits in response to feedback.

The following are examples of academic dishonesty.

1. Submitting another's work as your own. This includes, for example, hiring someone to write a paper for you, buying one from a repository, or using an existing paper.
2. Submitting your own work from another class without my permission. This is self-plagiarism.
3. Using another person's words without a quotation and a citation, or their ideas without attribution.

The following are not examples of academic dishonesty.

1. Having another person edit your work and yourself incorporating their feedback into the project.
2. Adopting the arguments of others with proper attribution.
3. Expanding on another person's work with proper credit and attribution.

Plagiarism is a confusing topic. There are grey areas. A goal of this class is to teach students how to avoid it. If you have questions, just ask. If you feel like you may have blundered, let me know. I am not looking to punish students for accidental mistakes and I will typically give students chances to correct such errors without penalty.

ChatGPT and Other AI. I am still finding my way with how best to use AI in class. I see it as having tremendous potential that students can use to clarify their writing, help organize their arguments, find new sources, etc. To simply ban it would be a regressive policy akin to banning spellcheckers or forbidding classmates from editing each others' work.

AI does, however, pose risks that could jeopardize the goals of the class. A student using AI to generate a paper, without actively engaging with it, is clearly a case of intentional plagiarism. Furthermore, extensive use of AI can undermine the process of forming and developing arguments, editing and clarifying their writing, etc. My policy will thus be twofold. First, to preserve flexibility, I will provide specific instructions regarding AI for each assignment. Second, I expect that these guidelines will satisfy the following:

1. Before students use AI, they must draft an outline of their basic arguments, support for these arguments, and provide an initial set of sources. In most cases, I will ask students to submit an initial draft without using AI in any way.
2. Before submitting a final version (the one that will be graded), students may use AI to receive editing suggestions, additional sources, or feedback. Students may actively incorporate this feedback into their final workproduct. By "active," students must evaluate any AI suggestions and

themselves decide whether to incorporate them. In contrast, you may not simply instruct AI to re-write your project and then submit it without close examination.

3. Students shall include a footnote in the title page/section describing if and how they used AI. If a student's comments break the rules, my presumption will be that it is an honest mistake and I will offer them a chance to rectify their mistake without penalty. A dishonest statement is, however, a form of plagiarism.

4. Students are encouraged to reach out if they are uncertain about the use of AI. This is a new technology for faculty and students and it will take some time for us to collectively decide how to best use it.

Students with Disabilities: If you have a documented disability and need an accommodation, please make arrangements with me during the first week of the term. Please request that the Dean of Students; office send me a letter verifying your disability. Note that I am not qualified to diagnose a disability. You must therefore always go through the College.

Tentative Topics and Materials

1. The Black Death.

Reading: Scheidel, Walter. 2018 *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton, NJ. Princeton University Press. Chapter 10. ([link](#))

Reading: Alfani, G. and T. Murphy. 2017. “Plague and Lethal Epidemics in the Pre-Industrial World.” *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 77(1), 314-343. ([link](#))

2. The Russian Revolution and Collectivization

Reading: Figes, O. 2017. *Revolutionary Russia, 1891-1991: A History*. Metropolitan Books. Chapters 7-10. ([link](#))

Reading: Allen, R. 2001. “The Rise and Decline of the Soviet Economy.” *Canadian Journal of Economics*, Vol. 34(4): 859-881. ([link](#))

Optional Reading: Livi-Bacci, M. 1993. “On the Human Costs of Collectivization in the Soviet Union.” *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 19(4): 743-766. ([link](#))

Reading: Optional Reading: Scheidel, Walter. 2018 *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton, NJ. Princeton University Press. Chapter 7. ([link](#))

Optional Film: *In the Turmoil of the Russian Revolution*. directed by Linda Belkadi. 2016. Amazon Prime. ([link](#))

Optional Reading: Nove, A. 1993. *An Economic History of the USSR: 1917-1991, 3rd Edition*. Penguin. ([link](#))

3. The Columbian Exchange.

Reading: Scheidel, Walter. 2018 *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton, NJ. Princeton University Press. Chapter 11. ([link](#))

Reading: Dunn, N. and N. Qian. 2010. “The Columbian Exchange: A History of Disease, Food, and Ideas.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 24(2): 168;183. ([link](#))

Optional Reading: Silva, C. 2008. “Miraculous Plagues: Epidemiology on New England’s Colonial Landscape.” *Early American Literature*, Vol. 43 (2): 249-275 ([link](#))

Optional Film: Diamond, J. 2005. *Guns, Germs and Steel*, Episode 2. National Geographic. ([link](#))

Optional Reading: Diamond, J. 1997. *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. W. Norton & Company. ([link](#))

4. Wartime Economies during WWII

Reading: Scheidel, Walter. 2018 *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton, NJ. Princeton University Press. Chapter 5. ([link](#))

Photo Essay: March 8, 2018. “These Photos Captured What Happened When the United States Started to Ration Shoes During WWII.” *Smithsonian Magazine*. ([link](#))

Reading: Higgs, R. 20029. “The Two-Price System: U.S. Rationing During World War II.” *Foundation for Economic Education*. ([link](#))

Optional Reading: Golden, C. 1990. “The Role of World War II in the Rise of Women’s Employment.” *American Economic Review*, Vol. 81(4): 741-756. ([link](#))

5. The Rise and Fall of the Mongolian Empire.

Reading: Weatherford, J. 2005. *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World*. Crown. ([link](#))

Reading: Findlay, R., and M. Lundahl. 2016. “The First Globalization Episode: The Creation of the Mongol Empire, or the Economics of Chinggis Khan.” *The Economics of the Frontier*, pp 173-221. ([link](#))

Optional Reading: Jones, D. 2023. *Powers and Thrones: A New History of the Middle Ages*. Penguin. Chapter 9. ([link](#))

noindent 6. Japan’s “Economic Miracle”

Reading: Crawford, R. 1998. “Reinterpreting the Japanese Economic Miracle.” *Harvard Business Review*, (January-February): 179-184. ([link](#))

Reading: Dantzner, D. 2001. “Explaining the Japanese economic miracle.” *Japan and the World Economy*, Vol. 13(3): 303-319. ([link](#))

Reading: Scheidel, Walter. 2018 *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton, NJ. Princeton University Press. Chapter 4. ([link](#))

Optional Reading: Dower, J. 1999. *Embracing Defeat*. W. W. Norton & Company. ([link](#))

7. The Great Depression and Dustbowl

Video: Burns, Ken. 2012. *The Dust Bowl: A Film By Ken Burns*. PBS ([link](#))

Reading: Arguello, T. April 8, 2021. “The Dust Bowl: How Ecological and Agricultural Change Worsened the Great Depression.” *The Archive*. (([link](#))).

Reading: Friedman, M. and A. Schwartz. 1965. *The Great Contraction, 1929-1933*. Princeton University Press. ([link](#))

Optional Reading: Egan, T. 2006. *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl*. Mariner Books. ([link](#))

Optional Novel: Hannah, Kristin. 2021. *The Four Winds: A Novel*. St. Martin’s Press. ([link](#))

8. The Irish Potato Famine.

Reading: O'Rourke, K. 1994. "The Economic Impact of the Famine in the Short and Long Run." *American Economic Review: Papers and Proceedings*, Vol. 84(2): 309-313. ([link](#))

Reading: Curtis, Hannah. 1847. "Hannah Curtis to John Curtis, April 21, 1847," letter; from the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, *Irish Immigration Primary Sources*. ([link](#))

Film (Grissly): *The Hunger: The Story of the Irish Famine*. directed by Ruan Magan. 2020. RTE ([link to part 1](#)) ([link to part 2](#))

Optional Reading: Woodham, Smith, C. 1992. *The Great Hunger: Ireland: 1845-1849*. Penguin Group. ([link](#))

Optional Novel: Lynch, P. 2017. *Grace: A Novel*. Little, Brown and Company. ([link](#))