

Proposal for an AALAC Faculty Workshop

Economic History of States and Societies

Workshop liaison:

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Organizers

Kara Dimitruk, Swarthmore College

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Amanda Gregg, Middlebury College

Steven Nafziger, Williams College

Confirmed Attendees

Jenny Bourne, Carleton College

Johannes Norling, Mt. Holyoke

Meredith Paker, Grinnell College

Ahmad Shameel, Rhodes College

David Weiman, Barnard College

Other Potential Attendees

Belinda Archibong, Barnard College

Jessica Bean, Denison University

Alan Dye, Barnard College

Dustin Frye, Vassar College

Jessica Hennessey, Furman University

Eric Hilt, Wellesley College

Martin Saavedra, Oberlin College

Susie Schwarz, Swarthmore College

James Siodla, Colby College

Anand Swamy, Williams College

In addition, we will be soliciting interest from other historically minded social scientists at AALAC-affiliated schools who are interested in the workshop agenda but do not necessarily self-identify as “economic historians.”

➔ Approximately 25 total attendees (9 listed here + 16 others invited via a call)

Dates: Spring/Summer 2023 (date to ensure maximum participation)

Workshop description

The interactions of states and societies have wide-ranging consequences, including the enactment of particular policies, the provision of public goods like education, the level of inequality, and even economic prosperity. Recent works like Acemoglu and Robinson's *The Narrow Corridor: States, Societies, and Liberty* (2019) and Piketty's *History of Equality* (2022) emphasize these distinctions. Indeed, the new preface of Acemoglu and Robinson's book uses the tensions between states and societies during the COVID-19 pandemic to illustrate their broader argument that we must understand these interactions between political and socio-economic factors to formulate appropriate policies to achieve inclusive economic development.

Research in economic history, which sits “at the busy intersection of history and the social sciences, where economists, political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, demographers, and historians come and go”¹, provides valuable tools to address these core issues because it allows for long-run, quantitative, comparative, and deep perspectives into key economic phenomena. At the same time, the growing field of historical political economy adopts a similar tool-kit in exploring political issues in the past. While grounded in similar conceptual and empirical approaches, economic history and historical political economy also share an emphasis on contextualization through humanistic and interdisciplinary approaches to studying the past.

A central goal of this workshop is to allow these sub-disciplines to speak to each other through the presentation of new work, keynote talks, and informal conversations between practitioners. In this way, we hope to explore how liberal arts settings are particularly well-suited for the research and teaching of historical approaches to pressing economic and political issues. For example, historical political economy can help us understand the role of systems of coerced labor, such as slavery or serfdom, in economic and political development, an important topic of public and academic interest.

We propose a workshop to take place at Swarthmore, or, alternatively, Middlebury College in Summer 2023. The initiative has three main goals:

- (1) Advance research within and across disciplines by bringing together scholars from economic history, political science, and history.
- (2) Discuss interdisciplinary approaches and tools for teaching by hosting panels on curriculum, lesson plans, and working with students in research.
- (3) Provide a foundation for follow-up activities, collaborations, mentoring, and resources to advance research and teaching.

The workshop will provide valuable opportunities for presenting research, fostering mentorship relationships, and building cross-disciplinary connections among the junior and senior faculty attendees from economics, history, and political science departments of AALAC institutions. To further this last goal, we intend to invite one or two keynote speakers, such as Scott Gehlbach from the University of Chicago, who have successfully navigated such scholarly boundaries in their own work. We aim to include at least one keynote from an LAC faculty member, such as Anand Swamy (Williams) who is an expert on colonialism and economic development in India.

¹ Economic historian Joel Mokyr.

The workshop will also allow us to exchange best practices for integrating research into our teaching. To this end, we will include panels on incorporating students in research, broader curriculum development, and lesson plans/teaching approaches in historical political economy and economic history. For example, some faculty have used archives and special collections at their institutions in economic history courses. Others successfully incorporate novel materials and assignments that require students to grapple with issues of diversity, religion, ethnicity, race, gender, and class in historical economic or political settings. The workshop will provide an opportunity to share these efforts with the group. Panels will also discuss new, possibly co-taught, courses at our respective institution that meet standards for different interdisciplinary majors or curriculum requirements (e.g., Global Studies, etc.)

Some participants have held workshops in the past, which have been successful in providing a foundation for collaboration and mentorship as well as teaching resources for scholars at LACs. We will survey participants for feedback on workshop and make a report available for participants and AALAC. In addition to requiring all participants submit a 1-page synopsis of research and teaching in historical political economy, we will collect teaching documents, such as sample syllabi and lesson plans, and share with the group (e.g., via shared Google Drive).

Proposed schedule

Friday

7:00	Opening dinner
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Saturday

8:30-9:00	Continental breakfast + welcome
9:00-10:00	Paper 1
10:00-10:15	Coffee break
10:15-11:15	Paper 2
11:15-11:30	Coffee break
11:30-12:30	Incorporating undergraduates into research in the historical social sciences
12:30-1:30	Lunch
1:30-2:30	Paper 3
2:30-2:45	Coffee break
2:45-3:45	Paper 4
3:45-4:00	Coffee break
4:00-5:00	Paper 5
5:00-6:00	Panel on economic history / historical political economy – curriculum development
7:00	Dinner + keynote speaker

Sunday

8:30-9:30	Breakfast and informal, moderated teaching discussion - lesson plans
9:30-10:30	Paper 6
10:30-10:45	Coffee break
10:45-11:45	Paper 7
11:45 -	Lunch and departures

Research sessions

We will send out a call for papers for this workshop in the early fall of 2022, targeting likely participants at AALAC member schools in several disciplines. The primary contacts and workshop leaders will select the final set of papers, each of which will be circulated well in advance of the workshop. Each paper presenter will have 20 minutes to present, followed by a discussant for 10 minutes and open comments and questions for 30 minutes. To best enable discussion, we will require that each attendee commit to reading all papers ahead of time.

Sessions to integrate research and teaching

The first roundtable will include presentations by workshop attendees who are actively engaged in historical research at the intersection of economics and political science and how they've incorporated undergraduates in research.

The second panel will include three workshop participants who have been directly engaged in efforts to innovate in the teaching of topics in economic history or historical political economy at their respective institutions.

A moderated discussion during breakfast on Sunday will focus on within-classroom practices to incorporate interdisciplinary approaches to teaching social science history.

The main conference dinner on Saturday will include a short talk by a prominent scholar working on economic history and/or historical political economy, both in terms of research or their experiences in the classroom.