

About the Term Paper

Drafted January 19, 2015: check again in mid-March or early-April for updates

TERM PAPER: USING HISTORY IN CONTEMPORARY DEBATES (100 POINTS POSSIBLE)

DUE DATE: THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 11:10 A.M.

BY BCOURSES/ASSIGNMENTS TAB

AND HARD COPY BROUGHT TO LECTURE

Overview

For this assignment, you will write an essay in which you evaluate an historical analogy for its ability to provide insight into a present-day issue. The briefest version of the assignment is this: Identify a contemporary issue; identify and discuss the economic history research on an apparently relevant historical episode; assert whether the economic history forms a proper historical analogy to the contemporary issue; construct an argument that supports your assertion.

You want to demonstrate that you are learning economic history (so stick to the subjects we've studied). You want to demonstrate that you understand the idea of arguing by historical analogy. You want to demonstrate that you have learned how to identify critical assumptions in an argument, and that you understand the role of those assumptions in determining conclusions. You want to conduct independent research, follow the paper specifications, write well, and properly cite your sources.

Contemporary Issue

Your paper should start with a summary of some published news article or opinion piece addressing a contemporary issue: what is the issue, what is the author's argument, what assumptions does the author invoke in the analysis?

Your contemporary issue may be international, but the historical analogy must be from topics in U.S. economic history covered in Econ 113. Any exception must be approved by Prof. Olney before Spring Break. No exceptions allowed after Spring Break.

Start early by keeping your eyes open for news articles or opinion pieces that can be your starting point for your paper. You want your contemporary issue to have a "what caused" or "why is" type question to it. If your starting article is just a "what is" question – for example, what is the demographic mix of the population today versus the demographic mix in 1900 – you'll get nowhere. Instead, you want a contemporary article that contains an argument. For example, this article about high school graduation rates starts from a description of "what is" but then offers a theory about how job opportunities may explain the pattern of high school graduation rates. That's an argument: something causes something else. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/22/graduation-rate-record-high-school-students_n_2522128.html

Offering and Analyzing the Historical Analogy

Then you should identify an historical episode that a reasonable person would think sheds light on your contemporary issue: what is the historical episode or event, why does it appear at first blush to be relevant? This is a brief part of your paper but an important part of your planning.

The rest of the paper is where you should focus your energy: discussing the arguments of the economic historians and evaluating whether the episode forms an apt historical analogy.

First, based on the work of economic historians, what do we know about this historical episode or event? Here is where you want to offer and critique the arguments made by scholars. What assumptions do their conclusions rest on? Are those assumptions reasonable? Relevant?

Then evaluate whether the historical episode or event is a relevant historical analogy that helps us understand the contemporary issue. What aspects of the historical event make the history a better (or worse) analogy for the

contemporary issue? Your analysis should be grounded in the published academic literature on the historical event and will be based on the applicability of the assumptions in the historical analysis to the contemporary issue. It doesn't matter whether you are arguing that the historical analysis is relevant (because the assumptions are also satisfied in the analysis of the contemporary issue) or that the historical analysis is not relevant (because the assumptions are not satisfied in the analysis of the contemporary issue). Is there additional evidence you might want in order to be confident your historical event is (or is not) the proper analogy?

End with a concluding paragraph that summarizes your paper. The last paragraph should not be the same as the first paragraph. Concluding paragraphs often point to further research that could shed light on an issue.

Sources: How Many and Locating

A good paper will include independent research. You should use at least three additional published peer-reviewed academic articles beyond what is in the reader that address your historical episode.

You will need to use online databases. To do that, you must have the proxy server installed if you are not using a UCB IP address. <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/using-the-libraries/proxy-server> Once you have installed the proxy server, you will have at-home access to every library database.

There are several websites you can use to locate articles for this paper. You need an article with an argument about a contemporary issue. There are several possible sources. This library page gives you a list of all the online news sources at <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/ERF/servlet/ERFmain?cmd=searchResType&resTypeId=17>. (Note that anything that says "UCB Access only" can now be accessed by you at home, because you have installed the proxy server!) There are lots of options there! If you just want plain vanilla, go to "Proquest Newspapers" and you will have online access to the New York Times, Wall St Journal, and LA Times.

For the economic history literature, you can start from the textbook: At the end of each chapter you'll find a list of articles and books on that chapter's topics. In addition, each reader article contains a list of references which you can also exploit. To find other academic peer-reviewed articles, there are several databases you can use. Check the "about research" links on the [course website](#). The three most useful databases will likely be:

JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org> They have a great search engine, and also browsing ability. The downside is that they don't have the most current issues of any journal (by agreement). The Journal of Economic History has a "5 year rolling window" which means that the last 5 years of JEH are not in jstor.

EconLit: <http://search.proquest.com/econlit/advanced?accountid=14496> Be sure that your search is not too broad ("education") and not too narrow ("California high school graduation rates 1900"). Click "Peer-reviewed" to limit your search. It is *the* source for academic economics articles.

Journal of Economic History: <http://oskicat.berkeley.edu/record=b10275366~S58> and then click on the link to the online source. This link gets you to the more recent issues that are not contained in jstor.

Citing sources

Citing sources is how we give credit to someone for their ideas. It's the academic equivalent of saying "Oh, thanks for the compliment for that photo I posted on Instagram, but I didn't take the photo, so-and-so did." We put word-for-word expressions of good ideas in quotation marks and then include a footnote to the original source. We give credit to the original thinker when we paraphrase his or her ideas. We don't just change a word or two and think that makes it our idea, just as cropping a photo doesn't make it our art.

Economists use Chicago style. Check <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/how-to-find/cite-sources>. You can use embedded references (Olney, 1998, p. 232) or footnotes in the body of your paper. You must attach a bibliography (works cited) page, which does not count in your page limit or word count.

What's the Dividing Line between "History" and "Contemporary"?

History is anything before about 1975. Contemporary is anything after 2000. (The years 1975-2000 are some sort of black hole of knowledge.)

Grading Rubric

The rubric for the paper is on the course website. It lists the various tasks you must accomplish in your paper. <http://emlab.berkeley.edu/~olney/spring15/econ113/grading-term-paper.pdf>. Be sure to print it out and use it as you plan your paper.

Specifications

Term papers should be 2,000-2,500 words with 1" margins on all sides, pages numbered, double-spaced, 11-12 pt font. (FYI: One page double-spaced with 12 pt font is usually about 250 words.) The paper must be in .doc, .docx, or .pdf format. Other formats are not accepted. Put a title, your name, your GSI's name, the date, your section number, and the word count on the cover page. The cover page, works cited page, contents of any tables, and the headings should be excluded from the word count.

The paper is due Thursday, April 16, 11:10.00 a.m. via bCourses and in lecture. Submit electronically to bCourses at the assignments tab. You are responsible for ensuring you have attached your paper properly and completed the bCourses submission process. Submissions will be evaluated by the TurnItIn software (see [course website](#)). Bring a hard copy to lecture and submit it to your GSI before lecture begins on April 16. For the hard copy submitted in lecture: Print out the first 2 pages of the article about the contemporary issue and attach that to the back of your paper. If the article is less than 2 pages, just print out the entire article.

Late penalty: Late papers lose 10 points for every day (or partial day) they are late. Submit 0-24 hours late, and you lose 10 points; submit 24-48 hours late, you lose 20 points; and so on.

Questions

Questions? Post them to Piazza so that everyone can benefit from the interchange.