

Blog Title:

Incorporating Colonialism Topic into Economic History Teaching

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The project aims to develop the curriculum of Economic History to give students a global perspective. From the past tutorial discussions, we found many students show a keen interest in what happened in developing regions in economic growth and development. While we had introduced two new lectures on Chinese economic history in the course, there needs to be more (lecture or reading) material on the economies of other parts of the world, especially developing regions. Colonialism is a significant theme in economic history, and we believe teaching this topic will help our students understand global economic and political issues and benefit their employability in the long run. Therefore, we designed a new topic on colonialism and slavery.

When implementing the project, we designed a new lecture, “Colonialism and Economic Development”, and added it to the existing course syllabus. Using Africa and Asia as case studies, we showed the impact of slavery in Africa and demonstrated how colonialism shaped economic development in Africa and Southeast Asia. With the teaching assistance work offered by our GTA, Anna Maria Kohnke, we designed a new reading list on this topic. To develop students’ understanding of the topic, we added new questions for tutorial debates and designed essay questions for summative assessment.

The output of this project has been very successful. We successfully fostered and nurtured an environment where students can feel more comfortable discussing these issues within the field of economics and considering their role in understanding economic phenomena. It also helped students to develop linkages with colonialism, slavery, and global inequalities within the existing topics. After the lecture, some students emailed me saying they felt motivated to study and learn more about Africa and Southeast Asia in the future. They also said that although the history of colonialism is upsetting, it was informative to learn it from an academic perspective. Given positive student learning outcomes, we have permanently added the topic to the existing syllabus.