

## Teaching Evaluation Summary (2008-2009 Autumn)

## Comment Summary

Instructor: Abramitzky, Ran  
Subject: ECON  
Catalog & Section: 227, 1

Course Title: EUROP ECON HISTORY  
Enrollment: 12 Responses: 10  
(Declined: 0)

### 1. Please comment on the individual instructors with regard to effectiveness and attitude toward students:

#### Strengths

- - reading one paper per class \*carefully\* is much better than skimming 4! - combination of big picture and zooming in was excellent - class serves as a starting point for own research
- best thing about the course was the "close up" on the gaps between an idea, a research idea, and a paper
- Great class overall. Ran clearly cares a lot about teaching, history, and economics. Really well done.
- Most important thing, especially given this is the first course in the second year, and students have to transition toward their own research, was to lend confidence to their fledgling research ideas. You really start thinking 'yes, I believe I can do it', and no matter how silly the research idea is, it's the space to think about it he gave that made the most difference. Plus, his enthusiasm is contagious :D
- excellent moderator of classroom discussion. great effort to make this class valuable for all participants.
- really loved this course!
- Great attitude toward students.
- Very approachable after class.
- Very good. Very available and willing to help and engage. Very accommodating and encouraging to push students to do best and most relevant work for them. Instructor has a pronounced interest in his students and in doing the best possible job teaching the course, even though his teaching is already at a high level.

#### Suggestions for Improvement

- I very much enjoyed this class, so these comments should be understood that context. I felt that the class topics did not relate well to each other. At the end of the quarter, I learned something about applied micro, have a better sense of a few historical episodes, have a better handle on research (all important ends!), but I don't really have a core body of knowledge that I can take away. Most lectures felt disjoint. Perhaps having a final exam and changing the structure of the course a bit would help encourage us to synthesize the material better.
- It would be nice to get personal feedback on our presentations and presentation skills - maybe an e-mail after one presented.

### 2. Please comment on the strengths and weaknesses, if any, of the textbook(s) and reading(s). What materials were most and least valuable? Why?

#### Strengths

- Picked 'seminal' papers that set out general idea of both content and
- good selection of papers and topics.
- The idea of just having to read one paper per class and then actually discussing it at length might seem natural, but apparently it's not that common and that's too bad - with one paper per class that I know will actually be discussed, I have much more motivation to read the paper and I know I'll get much more out of it. Also, the presentations were a very valuable experience.
- The readings exposed me to various interesting and coherent topics. Enjoyable!
- Good balance of the general and the specific overall.

#### Suggestions for Improvement

- So the class lecture set the theoretical/empirical background for the class discussing the topic, issues, and key papers. The assigned paper was based on that, but we had to read it BEFORE the class... it would be helpful if somehow (and I don't know how workable this is) the background could be provided before reading the paper, so that we know where the paper lies wrt a theoretical background.. but I dunno how this would work logistically, it would probably make more sense for students to go do the background research on their own?
- maybe choose fewer topics overall, but instead read several papers on same topic and highlight conceptual and methodological differences
- I found the anthropological reading boring and didn't feel I benefited from it. I'm not sure whether this would have been the case for any anthropological reading, but here it was particularly problematic that I didn't understand the statistical methods discussed.

### **3. Please comment on assignments and exams (difficulty, length, frequency, usefulness, and their success at testing conceptual understanding rather than recall):**

#### **Strengths**

- Presentation-based learning extremely useful for building up both academic skills, research skills and presentation skills.. all worked well together.. plus the wide range of topics meant there was something that appealed to everyone.
- Having to prepare the short presentations for each class is really useful.
- The research proposal presentation is a great opportunity.

#### **Suggestions for Improvement**

- Feedback for the research proposal after having set it up and it's ready for presentation is really only in the public forum (unless some other mean of conversation is initiated by the student). This means that if a student really wants to hear what you think of their idea, they have to initialize a meeting with you themselves. Maybe you can have it more embedded in the course to meet personally with the student (even for just 5 minutes) after the presentation.

### **4. Do you have any additional comments on the course over-all?**

#### **Strengths**

- This is the most interesting course I've taken at Stanford so far.
- Awesome course; best part was its flexibility in design (broadly European) and it gave a headstart into thinking about second year/history papers.. not just topic-wise, but approach-wise.
- Great course.

#### **Suggestions for Improvement**

- It was great that you also took into account whether the course overlaps in terms of scheduling with other second year courses during the quarter - Many profs don't do that and it's important.