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**∞ Harvard University ∞**  
**Economics 2330: History and Human Capital**  
**Spring 2019** Monday & Wednesday 10:30 to 11:45am, Littauer M-16  
**Professor Claudia Goldin** CGOLDIN@HARVARD.EDU  
**Professor Lawrence F. Katz** LKATZ@HARVARD.EDU  
**TF Benjamin Austin** BENJAMIN.AUSTIN@G.HARVARD.EDU

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### Research Paper

One of the course requirements in Ec2330 is a research paper, about the length of a (concise) journal article (approximately 25 pages *inclusive* of endnotes, references, tables, and figures). The paper can take several forms. Ideally, it should confront an important issue in economic history and human capital, and it should use economic models or frameworks and data to explore it. The paper must use primary sources unless it is primarily theoretical. The paper is due May 18 (the day after the official exam date). If you have comprehensive exams in May, or other extenuating circumstances of an academic nature, you may (with the permission of one of the course faculty) submit the paper *no later than* Friday August 16, 2019.

Choosing the topic is the first task. You may want to write on a subject related to one of your fields of interest in economics. Talk with one of the course faculty or the TF about your paper topic as soon as you have ideas, however vague.

The paper should address a question or an issue having long-run consequences. Meaningful economics seeks both to understand and solve current issues (e.g., the rise of wage and income inequality; the role of immigration in the labor market). Economists use historical data to understand the validity of the assumptions in economics models (e.g., the role of human capital institutions in reducing problems with incomplete contracts). Many historical questions can use data that are recent in origin, as long as the issues are linked to long-term ones (e.g., why do most European countries have higher scores on international exams than the U.S.? why does the U.S. “export” university education?). And there are important questions that concern recent institutional changes that contain historical depth, such as the rise of the for-profit postsecondary school sector. The paper can concern any nation or region, and can be comparative. There are, as well, issues of mainly historical interest (e.g., the public health factors that led to the decline in TB; issues related to slavery and other labor systems).

The paper must be original in the sense that it represents your own ideas. You are responsible for making certain that all materials used in the paper are fully attributed, through quotation and appropriate footnoting. If you are uncertain of the research paper style, consult a book such as *A Manual of Style* (Chicago Press). The paper must also be well written in the sense that it conveys your ideas convincingly and persuades your readers of your thesis. A poorly written paper, no matter what its substantive contribution, will have little impact. Writing well and persuasively is not an art; it results from hard work and considerable rewriting.

You can write on any topic related to the material in the course and you can focus on any period and place. Most important in writing a paper is finding the topic and the question(s). You must begin with a topic, read the secondary literature, then formulate questions (first broad ones and then narrower ones), and only then seek primary sources. Talk with the faculty and TF as soon as you have a topic.