SELECTED THEMES IN DEBATE IN QUANTITATIVE HISTORY

Choose one of the following topics, and write a 5-8 page double spaced essay.

1. Was Southern Slave Labor More Efficient than Northern free labor?


2. Did Southern slave owners breed slaves for sale?


3. Did higher fertility among US slaves mean better treatment compared to other slaves?


4. How many American Indians were there before 1492?

6. Did the frontier lead to equality?


7. Did the profits from slavery and slaving finance the Industrial Revolution?


8. How many Africans cross the Atlantic?


For those whose interests run more to Modern European History:

1. Were the European empires assembled in the late nineteenth century important for stabilizing European capitalism or not? Can the theories of imperialism be reconciled with the numbers for the movements of goods, capital and labor?

2. After World War I, Germany was saddled with a large bill for reparations. What was Germany’s capacity to pay? Were the obstacles to payment political or economic?


3. The end of the Weimar Republic and the beginning of the Nazi dictatorship was one of the great turning points of twentieth century history. Many argue that economic discontent was crucial to Weimar’s demise. What was the economic room for maneuver for the Brüning government in the decisive years of the onset and spread of the worldwide Depression? Do the numbers show that high wages were an insuperable structural difficulty of the Weimar economy?


4. Accepted wisdom has always stressed the importance of the Marshall Plan for restoring Europe’s prostrate economies after World War II. Might the statistics be read differently to argue that Europe’s own contribution to recovery has been too downplayed?


5. Read one of the articles or books below. Summarize its methodology and conclusions, and compare the author’s findings and method with those of William Brustein’s *The Logic of Evil*, which you have read for this course.
6. Britain’s relative economic decline since 1945 has been much debated by economic historians. From your reading of Roger Middleton’s The British Economy Since 1945 summarize some of the main causes often cited for this phenomenon. Do you think any of the explanations appears conclusive or least more persuasive? Give me reasons and, if possible, some data to support your answer. You might want to consult some of the works below in formulating your answer: