



The Most Interesting Economist in History Using an NCAA-Style Tournament Assignment to Teach the History of Economic Thought

I describe an assignment for a history of economic thought (HET) course, “The Most Interesting Economist in History,” modeled on the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) College Basketball Tournament. Economic thinkers are paired in head-to-head matchups for each era and students vote for those they find to be more “interesting” and must explain the reasoning behind their votes. This assignment promotes active learning and is a more engaging way to juggle complex themes with a large list of thinkers over a semester-long seminar.

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1. Introduction

A history of economic thought (HET) course typically requires upper-level economics majors to wrestle with the weighty questions of our discipline, often amounting to a voluminous amount of reading, writing, and discussion. Instructors commonly assign papers (short and long) for students to write as well as requiring participation in classroom discussions or online discussion boards (Cardoso, 1995; Cohen & Emmett, 2011). A traditional course might cover (to varying degrees of detail) more than 50 thinkers and their written works over a single semester.

To better engage students with these thinkers and have them continuously make comparisons, I developed a new type of assignment: an NCAA-style tournament to determine who is “The Most Interesting Economist in History.”¹ This assignment was especially relevant during the Fall 2020 semester, as during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the NCAA chose to cancel the 2020 March Madness college basketball tournaments (on which this assignment is modeled). The course in which I used this assignment was “ECON 452 — History of Economic Thought”, a required advanced course for all economics majors, and traditionally a small seminar focused on reading, writing, and discussion (taught at a small liberal arts college in the mid-Atlantic area of the United States).² Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the first iteration of the course in fall of 2020 was taught online but synchronously, with lectures delivered on Zoom and required weekly participation in online discussion boards. The second iteration in the fall of 2022 was taught entirely in person.³

Economics education researchers have long lamented the excessive use of “chalk-and-talk” lecturing as the default mode of economics instruction along with its negative consequences for student learning (Becker & Watts, 1996; Becker, 1997; Becker & Watts, 2001; Watts & Becker, 2008). As a result, a number of researchers and educators have focused on the need for “active learning” where students engage with the content through a wide range of skill-building or participatory activities, as opposed to passively receiving information (Salemi, 2002; Freeman et al., 2014). Economics instructors have documented various active learning activities relevant to economics (Harmon & Lambrinos, 2012), focusing on activities such as using the internet for research assignments (Simkins, 1999), as well as online assignments and discussion boards (Vachris, 1999).

A HET course is less common at many colleges and universities today. Cohen and Emmett (2011) show that until the 1960s, HET courses were often a requirement at the university level but became optional in the 1960s. Economists have long ruminated on the lack of attention paid by the profession to its history, both in research and in undergraduate instruction (see e.g. Stigler, 1969; Boulding, 1971; Blaug, 2001; Kurz, 2006). Some economic practitioners view economic theory like mathematics, that the modern tools have incorporated all of the wisdom of the ancients and discarded all of the dead-ends and settled all of the controversies of the past. In the extreme, some like Pigou notoriously find it a waste of time to study the “wrong

¹ This was also deliberately patterned off the popular Dos Equis beer commercials (and internet meme spinoffs) about “the most interesting man in the world.” In fact, this article was previously titled “I Don’t Always Teach the History of Economic Thought...But When I Do, I Prefer a Tournament.” Aside from its onerous length, the title was changed by the author to avoid dated pop culture references.

² In the Fall 2020 semester when I pioneered this assignment, there were 11 students: 6 female and 5 male; 5 seniors and 6 juniors; 8 had economics as their major (or one of a double major), and 3 had Economics as a minor (with Business Administration or Political Science as their major). The second semester, in Fall 2022, there were 10 students: 3 female, 7 male; 7 seniors, 2 juniors, and 1 MBA student; all but the MBA student had economics as at least one of their majors. For both semesters, the course met twice per week for 85 minutes in the early afternoon for 14 weeks. Anecdotally, a majority (but not all) of the students tended to be academically strong, evidenced by their high grades in other Economics courses.

³ I discuss more of this impact below.

theories of dead men”⁴ If nothing else, we still find major works of writers like Smith, Ricardo, and Keynes in the “extended present” (Boulding, 1971), as they remain the subject of active conversation and research.

Teaching a HET course presents unique challenges for the instructor. Cohen and Emmett (2011) outline the major challenges and provide a trove of suggested readings, objectives, and resources to design a HET course. Bethune (1992) provides a survey of five major textbooks for use in a HET class, albeit quite dated. Cardoso (1995) provides the results of a survey of HET instructors, attempting to crudely quantify the similarities and differences between how HET is taught, in terms of readings, themes, content, and requirements. As stated above, a course in HET tends to be heavily focused on frequent reading, discussion, and writing, all surrounding major works and historical controversies of economics. This requires significant investment by both students and instructors. Several instructors have shared innovative classroom setups or assignments in HET by using cluster discussions (Madden, 2010), music (Horn & Horn, 2013), role-playing (Oberhofer, 1999), and Twitter-based assignments (George, 2019).

Below, I describe the logic of the “Most Interesting Economist in History” tournament assignment by first explaining the structure and influence of the NCAA March Madness tournament, on which this assignment is based. I outline some of the necessary choices made in designing the assignment and calibrating it with the parameters of a HET course. I conclude with what I see as the main benefits and logistical challenges of the assignments. The actual assignment prompt used in my course, as well as a sample of actual student responses, are included as Appendix A and Appendix B, respectively.

2. Structure and Logic of the Assignment

The Analogy: NCAA Tournament

The main inspiration for this assignment comes from the NCAA Division I Men’s Basketball Tournament, known colloquially as “March Madness,” due to the tournament of 68 Division I collegiate basketball teams competing in March for the national championship.⁵ March Madness is one of the most lucrative sports and television events — and constitutes the majority of the NCAA’s annual revenues, even though only about 3% of NCAA athletes compete in the tournament (Tracy, 2016). Its current eight-year extended contract with CBS Sports and Turner (owner of the cable channel TBS) to broadcast games through 2032, is worth \$8.8 billion (Tracy, 2016).⁶ The 2018 tournament was estimated to have generated \$1.32 billion in television ad revenue alone, reaching about 100 million people in 180 countries (Ozanian 2019). While it draws less revenue than the NFL postseason (\$1.68 billion), it surpasses the NBA playoffs (\$970 million), MLB playoffs (\$468 million), and NCAA Division 1 college football bowl games (\$382 million) in terms of ad revenue (Ozanian 2019).

The most prominent feature of March Madness is the “bracket” tracking the progress of each team in each round of the tournament. Millions of fans fill out their brackets each year to predict the champion, comparing with friends and coworkers, and numerous officially sponsored contests offer prizes for the most accurate brackets. Sports journalists also frequently compare rank bracket predictions on broadcast TV and print articles as the tournament progresses.

⁴ Recounted in Robbins (1998, 297) and alluded to in Boulding (1971). See Dimand, Dimand, and Forget (2000) for the role of exceptional women in the history of economics.

⁵ Four games are held among eight teams in the “first four” games that determine the 16th seed in each of the four divisions, narrowing the field down to the familiar 64-team tournament bracket.

⁶ Its most recent contract was for 14 years, from 2010—2024, valued at \$10.8 billion, or about \$770 million per year.

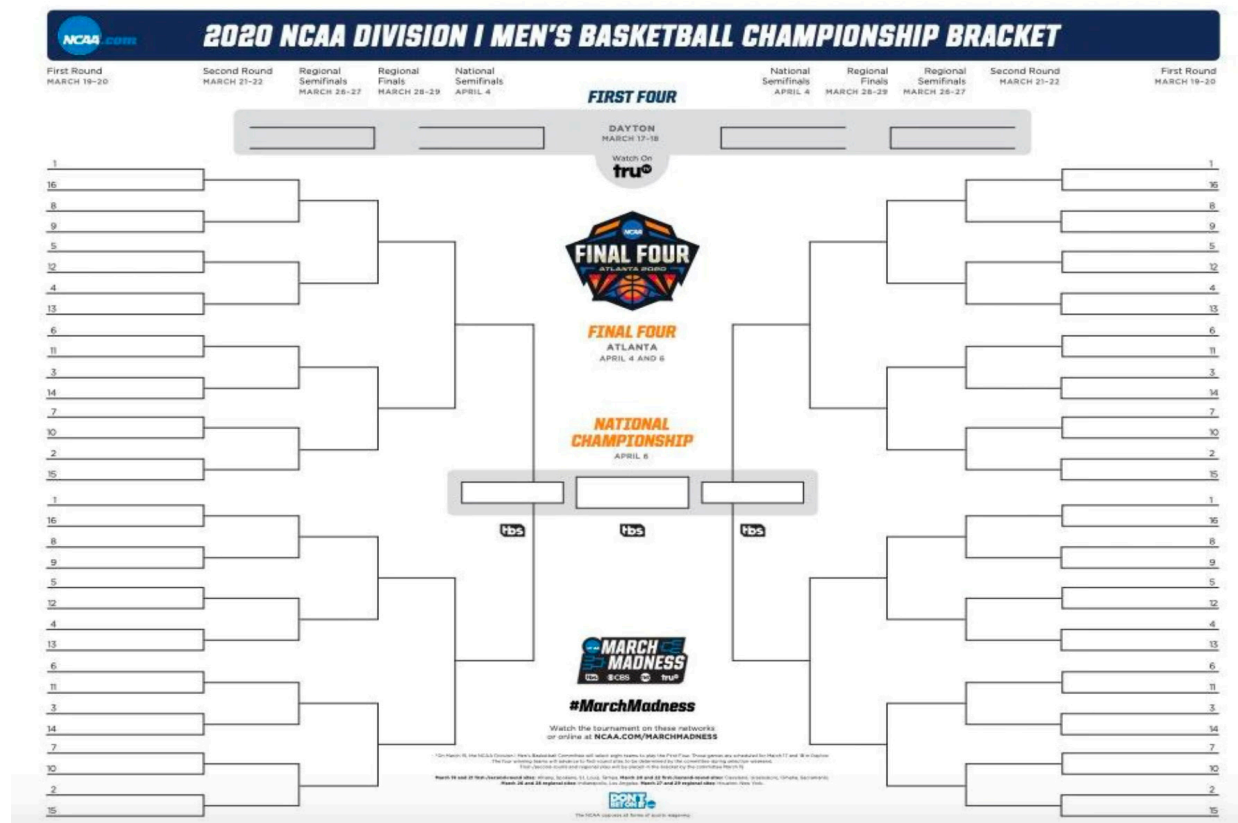
Indeed, the “science” of predicting brackets has been affectionately dubbed “bracketology,” largely due to ESPN basketball analyst Joe Lunardi (Branch 2006). The NCAA describes the tournament:

Those 64 teams are split into four regions of 16 teams each, with each team being ranked 1 through 16. That ranking is the team’s seed.

In order to reward better teams, first-round matchups are determined by pitting the top team in the region against the bottom team (No. 1 vs. No. 16). Then the next highest vs. the next lowest (No. 2 vs. No. 15), and so on. In theory, this means that the 1 seeds have the easiest opening matchup to win in the bracket. (NCAA, 2020)

To organize the tournament, each of the 64 teams is initially placed in one of four “divisions” (North, South, East, and West) to play single-elimination head-to-head matchups through the round of 32, the round of 16 (the Sweet Sixteen), the round of eight (the Elite Eight), the round of four (the Final Four), and the championship game between the two surviving teams. See Figure 1 for the official NCAA (empty) bracket for the 2020 season.

Figure 1. Sample NCAA Basketball Bracket for 2020 Season



The Assignment

To fit the parameters of the assignment to the schedule and pace of the course, I selected eight writers from each division, or 32 writers in total. This maintains an even number, divisible

by four, to follow the NCAA-style tournament. In each division, there will be seven head-to-head matchups—four in the first round, two in the second round, one in the final round—and with each division champion in the final four, three additional head-to-head matchups through the championship. This brings the total number of matchups (and votes required by the students) to 31 over the semester.

I divided the course up into four key “eras” that would ultimately coincide with the four divisions of the tournament bracket: the Pre-Classical, the Classical, the Neoclassical, and the Modern. Each era approximately covers one-quarter of the semester in sequence. Upon finishing the course material (readings, lectures, and discussions) for each era, the division’s initial bracket is released on a discussion board thread, and students are instructed to begin voting in the first round. With eight writers chosen for an era⁷, this yields four head-to-head matchups, so students are required in the first round to provide four votes. When all students have voted, the winners of each matchup proceed to the second round of two head-to-head matchups, I solicit votes from students again, and the winners proceed to the final round of a single head-to-head matchup, determining the winner of a division/era. To minimize overlap and the requirement of students to juggle many names (some of which they have not heard discussed in class for weeks), we proceed with only a single division/era at a time. In the final weeks of the course, when all four winners of each division have been selected, these thinkers (the “Final Four”) proceed to two head-to-head matchups, and the winners of those proceed to the final matchup, to become “The Most Interesting Economist in History.” See Appendix B for an example bracket used in my course.

As the tournament is entitled “The Most Interesting Economist in History,” I assign a prompt to my students in each head-to-head matchup to:

“Vote for whomever you think is more “interesting.” You can define this however you like: creative, original, weird, memorable, controversial, influential...it’s up to you!”

This criterion yields a lot of interesting votes and discussions, perhaps more than strictly requiring students to vote on a more “objective” criterion like influence or originality if that were possible.

To further encourage learning and critical thinking, I occasionally require students to *explain* their votes publicly in a few sentences (per head-to-head matchup) and grade these explanations as part of the tournament assignment. This forces students to think more rigorously to defend their choices using themes and content knowledge from their undergraduate experience with economics, rather than voting haphazardly merely to complete a required assignment.

There is a notable tradeoff between having students grapple with their thoughts in writing and simply creating too much “busy work” with graded explanations. With 32 writers and 31 head-to-head matchups over the semester, requiring (and grading) 31 paragraphs worth of explanations from students is akin to the length of a term paper per student. The optimum solution may be to randomize: I alerted students at the beginning of the semester that for any round of any division, I *might* ask students to explain their votes publicly, or I might not. In practice, I required only one round worth of explanations per division, often in earlier rounds (where there are more names to juggle), but this provides ample room for the instructor’s discretion. See Appendix A for the prompt, and the next section for more discussion of grading; see Appendix B for examples of student explanations of their votes, both insightful and amusing.

⁷ See the next section for a discussion about selecting and seeding writers.

Arranging the Competitors

Just as it is unavoidable in a single semester course in HET that not all writers can be read or discussed, it is equally unavoidable that not all writers can be included in the tournament.⁸ The writers chosen in the tournament will depend on the textbooks used, the scope of content that the course covers,⁹ and various other writers that students discuss in or out of class. My course primarily utilized Medema and Samuels (2013) as primary sources and Landreth and Colander (2002) for helpful commentary, to serve as the textbooks for the course.¹⁰

In principle, a bracket can be designed to accommodate any number of thinkers and divisions (or one can forgo the entire concept of divisions, featuring a single tournament across all eras of history). Online tools such as [BracketHQ](#) permit all permutations of brackets of at least four teams (here, individual thinkers) up to 32 (in the free version). At the very least, I strongly suggest keeping with brackets containing a number of teams that are powers of 2 (2,4,8,16,32), to create consistent “head-to-head” matchups between two writers without privileging any particular writer in the bracket.

Additionally, this requires a bit of work for the instructor to arrange the first-round matchups. As in the real NCAA tournament, a common strategy is to establish “seeds” for the thinkers in such a way that prevents two higher seeds from being matched up in early rounds. For example, it is a poor strategy to allow two intellectual heavyweights such as Adam Smith and David Ricardo to be matched up for a vote right away, better to match both Smith and Ricardo with a lesser-known writer such as Robert Torrens or Henry Thornton in the initial round.

As I emphasize to my students, these four divisions are a useful fiction created solely for the benefit of an orderly tournament, rather than a neat historical sequence of clearly defined stages. The final Modern era in particular, at least in my course, covers a hodgepodge of orthodox and heterodox themes and developments, amalgamating Keynes’ *General Theory*, Samuelson’s formalist methods, the socialist calculation debate, and Veblen’s critiques. Furthermore, as this is the era that is covered last, during crunch time of the final weeks of the semester, much of the mid-20th century developments that a consensus of economists would consider important are necessarily cut for time.

Table 1 lists the brackets (with seeds) that I used, with the caveat that I chose the particular seeds using the online BracketHQ tool¹¹ to allocate matchups to solve the problem mentioned above, *not* because I subjectively believe these are the proper rankings of the thinkers. It is more for illustration of keeping heavyweights apart than the instructor’s personal opinion. This is also important to emphasize to students to not sway their choices. Table 2 suggests other authors applicable to each era except for the modern era.¹²

⁸ A key portion of the assignment is to describe several writers—whether discussed in the course or not—that students wish had been featured in the tournament. This is discussed below.

⁹ Or, more accurately, how far in time the instructor can cover as the semester wraps up. The writings of John Maynard Keynes seem to be a common endpoint for most courses to target.

¹⁰ For full disclosure, I also suggested Blaug (1996) as an advanced source for interested students and also utilized Robbins (1998) to prep my lectures.

¹¹ <https://brackethq.com>

¹² The Modern era is too close to contemporary work in economics such that it becomes dependent on the instructor’s own attitudes and biases about modern economics, unlike prior eras where there is relatively greater consensus. Additionally, my Modern era is an amalgamation of various heterodox and orthodox traditions in the 20th Century.

Table 1. Writers Used for Tournament, by Division and Seed

Seed	Pre-Classical	Classical	Neoclassical	Modern
1.	Aristotle	Adam Smith	Alfred Marshall	John Maynard Keynes
2.	A.R.J. Turgot	David Ricardo	William S. Jevons	Paul Samuelson
3.	Thomas Aquinas	Karl Marx	Carl Menger	Milton Friedman
4.	Richard Cantillon	Thomas Malthus	Eugen von Bohm-Bawerk	F.A. Hayek
5.	William Petty	David Hume	Irving Fisher	Thorstein Veblen
6.	Francois Quesnay	John Stuart Mill	Leon Walras	John Hicks
7.	John Locke	Henry Thornton	Vilfredo Pareto	Ludwig von Mises
8.	Bernard Mandeville	Jean-Baptiste Say	John Bates Clark	Oskar Lange

Table 2. Some Suggested Other Writers

Pre-Classical Era	Classical Era	Neoclassical Era
Plato	Robert Torrens	Francis Y. Edgeworth
Guan Zhong	Edward West	Friedrich von Wieser
Xenophon	Nassau Senior	Frank Knight
Hesiod	Jeremy Bentham	Knut Wicksell
Ibn Khaldun	Friedrich List	Wesley Clair Mitchell
Thomas Mun	Gustav von Schmoller	John R. Commons
Thomas Hobbes	A.A. Cournot	Joan Robinson
David Hume	J.H. Von Thunen	Lionel Robbins
	H.H. Gossen	
	Jules Dupuit	

One natural issue that a tournament raises, consistent with how HET is commonly taught and discussed more broadly, is the lack of representation of women and people of color. Some textbooks do pay some attention to non-Western economic thought and include several famous female thinkers.¹³ However, in a tournament such as this, where it is difficult enough to select eight white male writers of each era that had a lasting impact, it may further highlight the under-representation problem. Our discipline continues to grapple with the problematic history of our field along with contemporary demographic imbalances and professional culture. As such, I can only encourage instructors to comment on this and make it a topic of discussion for students. Clever or politically engaged students are already likely to point out this problem upon some reflection about which writers are covered during the semester and in textbooks.

Once the tournament has been completed, one final graded post that I require of

¹³ Again, see Dimand, Dimand, and Forget (2000) as well as Marginal Revolution University's Women in Economics video series (<https://learn.mru.org/women-economics-series/>) for helpful material highlighting female contributions to economics.

students is for them to each provide several writers—whether discussed in the course or not—that students wish had been featured in the tournament, but were not, and why. This provides a venue for students to discuss the lack of representation of women and people of color, and my students have suggested several thinkers that they had read about in other courses, such as Elinor Ostrom, Mary Paley Marshall, Joan Robinson, and others.¹⁴ See Appendix B for some example student comments.

Grading

As a HET course often features participation or discussion as a graded component of the course, this assignment may easily be graded along similar lines, as a special required case of participation/discussion grade. Whether the course (or at least, the discussion component) is online or in-person, the tournament assignment can be assessed and graded similarly, or submitted and graded as would a small writing assignment — by submission on a learning management system, by email, or in-person on paper.

I graded my assignments as I stated in the syllabus and the discussion board threads: Your grade for each round of votes that requires explanations will be a maximum of five points, and you will be graded on your reasoning for your votes. Your average grade for your explanations across all of the rounds (out of 100%) will constitute 10% of your final course grade.

Benefits of the Assignment

This assignment furthers achievement of common learning outcomes of a HET course — having students identify, as well as critically assess and compare key economic writers and their contributions to economic thought. By placing these comparisons in a tournament format and requiring students to explain their votes, not only helps students *recall* a variety of economic writers and their major contributions but also requires students to make subjective comparisons of writers and demonstrate their reasoning. This requires students to understand and internalize the key ideas, contributions, and influence that each writer had (even if students may not fully understand how each theory may work) and exercise their judgment in making comparisons between authors based on various metrics of influence.

Without such an assignment, other ways to assess whether students have recalled and assessed the merits of various historical writers in economics include exams, discussions, and writing assignments. While discussions and writing assignments are useful in and of their own right, by requiring students to construct arguments (Greenlaw, 2003; Simpson & Carroll, 2006), it is unlikely that writing assignments or discussions will cover 30-50 writers over the semester, which the tournament assignment can. This assignment should be viewed as a complement, not a substitute, to other more writing-focused assignments (short and long). A HET course might have written exams, but often ones that are essay-based and theme-focused, rather than questions that require rote memorization of names, sequences, and contributions of various writers. This assignment certainly provides a better way for students to remember a long list of names of economic writers and their contributions by making relative comparisons on various margins of interest, rather than memorization for its own sake (or for the sake of performing well on an exam).

3. Concluding Thoughts & Suggestions

This assignment can serve as a focal point and signpost for both students and instructors

¹⁴ One reviewer helpfully suggested that students could give presentations of economists that were not discussed or included in the tournament assignment.

over the semester, as it brings dozens of disparate writers into a coherent framework for continuous recall and comparison. Particularly when the tournament is divided into stages that line up with eras of writers discussed, it naturally helps to divide the course into chronological segments.¹⁵

All assignments come with an opportunity cost — both grades and time can only be allocated across a handful of assignments over a semester. As discussed above, a HET course typically involves a large degree of reading, writing, and discussion. Table 3 lists the assignments and grading breakdown in my syllabus:

Table 3. Grading Distribution Across Assignments

Frequency	Assignment	Weight
-	Weekly participation (average)	35%
1	Term paper	35%
2	Short Papers	20%
-	Tournament Votes	10%

As such, even with the tournament, there was still significant reading, writing, and discussion required. The term paper — where students critically trace the history of an idea of interest to them — was the capstone for the course. I envisaged the tournament primarily as a fun and engaging way to help them recall and compare all of the thinkers to better their writing assignments and class discussions. At least in my case, were it not for the tournament, I would have more or less evenly distributed the 10% of course grade weights to other papers.

As most instructors use a learning management system such as Blackboard, Sakai, or Canvas, this assignment can easily be set up in the system's discussion board feature. The instructor can post tournament rounds as threads, where students can post their votes (and explanations, as occasionally required) as a reply in the thread. This not only makes votes public (which has important benefits as described in the next section), but also enables the instructor to track who voted and see who has not yet voted, both for grading purposes and for whipping votes to proceed to the next round in a timely fashion.¹⁶

I noted no major differences in engagement or interest when teaching this course entirely online (synchronous biweekly lectures but asynchronous weekly discussion board requirements) in the fall of 2020 compared with a full in-person version in the fall of 2022. The biweekly class meetings in both semesters were virtually identical: a blend of instructor lectures with structured student discussions. I decided early on in the 2022 semester to maintain the required discussion board component used in Fall 2020 (as opposed to entirely in-class discussion), allowing the students to post substantial comments at their leisure during each week. Their weekly participation grades would be a combination of their in-class comments

¹⁵ However, instructors should emphasize that while different eras did indeed feature different themes, methodologies, and interests, there rarely are clean breaks between periods. Marshall's epigram on his famous *Principles of Economics* textbook is instructive: "nature makes no leaps."

¹⁶ I learned this the hard way. If holding votes not as a thread on a discussion forum, such as on a survey-collection site like SurveyMonkey or Google Forms, be sure to require students to submit their names with their votes to track who has voted and who has not!

along with their discussion board posts.¹⁷

Finally, as a major visible framework for the course, I highly suggest the votes and explanations for the votes are held publicly — either in person or posted on an online discussion board for all students to see. This allows students to see how their classmates rank the writers and the varied reasons. As a side benefit, it also allows classmates to “campaign” or “lobby” their classmates to vote for a particular writer they feel strongly about. This facilitates a more memorable experience for both students and instructors.

¹⁷ My rationale for this was to optimize the tradeoff between higher quality in-person conversation against the need to lecture long enough to sufficiently cover the vast range of content. Additionally, this method allows the quieter students in class the ability to remain engaged and earn good grades for their online contributions.

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Appendix A

The Assignment

Below I reproduce the assignment prompts verbatim that I gave my students over the semester. Comments for the purposes of this paper are inserted in brackets.

Assignment Brief

Since we all missed out on the NCAA Basketball Tournament last spring, I have set up a tournament for “the most interesting economist in history.” Each era of economic thought (Pre-Classical, Classical, Neoclassical, and Modern) will have its own “division”, in which we will vote for the champion of each era (out of up to eight thinkers), who will then go head to head against the champions of other divisions for the title.

Once we complete an era, we will hold the votes in head-to-head matchups between economists. Your assignment is to write a short explanation behind your vote (one-three sentences) between each pair. This will allow you to remember and place each thinker in the context of the history of economic thought.

Your grade for each round of votes that requires explanations will be a maximum of five points, and you will be graded on your reasoning for your votes. Your average grade for your explanations across all of the rounds (out of 100%) will constitute 10% of your final course grade.

Discussion Board Thread for each Division

[Note, the following is meant to be a thread on a discussion forum. Each era features a forum with a thread for each round of the tournament that students will post replies in, as well as a thread allowing students to make predictions before the first round completes. As it can be re-posted with slight variations for each round/division, I indicate the modifications in brackets.]

The bracket for the **[Era]** division is set! Naturally, to balance the bracket, I had to leave out several thinkers that we discussed or move some from this era into other eras/divisions. This will be inevitable.

Here is the bracket if you want to fill out your own for predictions (post below) for bonus points, true NCAA style: **[link to bracket website]**

We will now begin the first round of head-to-head voting. Please vote by replying in the thread below.

Vote for whomever you think is more “interesting.” You can define this however you like: creative, original, weird, memorable, controversial, influential...it’s up to you!

For this round, you **[do not/need to]** post your explanations.

To avoid swaying the outcome, I will not be voting. There are 11 of us, so we should not need any tie-breakers (in that possibility, I would vote!). Please vote ASAP, once we get 11 votes in, we will proceed to the next round and I will update you.

Your grade for each round of votes that requires explanations will be a maximum of five points, and you will be graded on your reasoning for your votes. Your average grade for your explanations across all of the rounds (out of 100%) will constitute 10% of your final course grade.

Thanks, and have fun!

Who'd We Leave Out? [Final Discussion Board Thread at End of Tournament]

One necessary limitation of this tournament is that I have to limit the contestants to eight per division. Even though we can only focus on so many economists in this course (and are leaving out lots of interesting writers), I still have to limit the tournament to a small subset. There were a good number of writers we mentioned, read, or discussed, but did not make it into the tournament.

I would like each of you, as part of your grade for the tournament, to list at least two (up to you if you want to do more) writers that did not make the tournament that you found interesting (again, defined however you want!) that we could/should have included in the tournament, with your explanation of why you found them interesting. I will also open this up to interesting writers that we did not get to talk about in class that you may have otherwise heard of!

As a reminder, here is the full bracket (we started with): **[See Appendix C]**
If you can believe it, we've covered 32 different writers in the tournament!

Appendix B

Selected Sample Vote Explanations from Students

Below are verbatim excerpts from the Blackboard discussion board where students explain, for a grade, their votes in various rounds. Excerpts are chosen primarily to showcase the variety and quality of student responses. Each paragraph is an excerpt from an individual student. All excerpts of student work were obtained with the permission of the students and approved by the college's Institutional Review Board.

Matchup Vote Explanations

"I choose [Richard] Cantillon [vs. Bernard Mandeville] because his astuteness in analyzing, predicting, and profiting from the Mississippi company's financial catastrophe has helped us learn about speculation. Of course, he is a significant influence on modern economics (Cantillon effects). Finally, I think he showed us a clear example that economics is not about morality."

"My first vote goes to [Bernard] Mandeville [vs. Richard Cantillon]. I think that his questioning of human morals and the proposal that humans are always self-interested and brutal towards others is very controversial, yet arguably true. Are we only motivated by what benefits us?"

"While I believe Mandeville's Fable of the Bees is one of the more interesting pieces of economic literature we've read so far this semester (it's why I voted for him in the first round), I believe the mystery behind Cantillon's life and beliefs makes his writing far more interesting; he's like an economic dark horse. I feel the fact that Cantillon contributed so much to the early field of economics and yet so little is known about him makes him interesting."

"Jean Baptiste Say inadvertently sparked one of the biggest debates in economic history, so I think he's more interesting than Adam Smith (who isn't nearly as interesting by nature of being the classic economist)."

"John Stuart Mill is also a super influential feminist who listened to the women in his life and genuinely wanted to make their lives better, and I wrote my first paper on him so I'm partial [over Karl Marx]"

"Thomas Malthus over David Hume because the Malthusian Population Doctrine is so interesting. I don't think it was completely accurate, and Malthus didn't really foresee how the Industrial Revolution would change everything eventually, but it is an interesting essay in the first edition, and the following editions were a heroic effort at empiricism and econometrics given the tools and information available at the time. I think Hume is a brilliant philosopher, but if I'm to judge him based on his economic contributions I think Malthus was more interesting personally, especially when you take into account his contrarian take on the corn laws."

"John Bates Clark [vs. Alfred Marshall]—he's the first big name in US economics, and for economists who work in the US, the medal awarded in his name is considered a bigger deal than the Nobel prize in economics (which is technically a memorial prize, but you know what I mean). I am also voting for him in part because I've done a lot of research into Alfred Marshall, and he was kinda the worst/is making my second short paper a pain. Why would someone who encouraged the woman he ended up marrying, and

advocated for her having a position as a lecturer at every university he worked, decide (ten years later) that women should not be able to get degrees? She was a professor of political economy (the same thing he taught men) for women for thirty years...It's complicated."

"Carl Menger—he was probably my favorite neoclassicist to learn about, and he also had the best beard."

"My fourth choice is Vilfredo Pareto. While his concept of "Pareto improvements" and equilibrium are very interesting and have many different applications in the field, it's his controversial views on eugenics that make him most interesting to me. Not that I agree with any of his views [towards Italian fascism late in his life] (they are abhorrent), I just find it fascinating that I've read so much of Pareto in several economics classes and had no idea that he held beliefs such as this."

"While [Oskar] Lange's work on the concept of market socialism was influential for several socialistic economies in Eastern Europe, I have to vote for [John Maynard] Keynes as his General Theory is far more interesting. The idea that an economist can write a badly written and difficult to understand thesis and still be considered one of the most influential macroeconomists in history is astounding to me. I would vote for him for the simple fact that people often quote him without even reading him, that's influence."

"This is definitely the hardest decision on the ballot so far. [Paul] Samuelson's work to help establish economics as a modern mathematical science is monumental. I've been fascinated and interested in the analytical side of economics ever since I took Econometrics, so his work helped me find that passion. [Ludwig von] Mises, on the other hand, has forced me to change my mind on several aspects of socialism which I used to (and still somewhat do) staunchly defend. If I'm forced to make a choice, I think I'd have to go with Mises as I still read him for different perspectives while I don't read Samuelson nearly as much."

Thread On Who We Left Out

"I think Mary Paley Marshall would have been an interesting economist to study. I believe we briefly talked about her in class. She was the wife of Alfred Marshall, and helped to write their book "The Economics of Industry." But beyond that, Mary was also one of the first five women to ever been accepted to study economics at the Cambridge University. She also became the first ever female economics lecturer at the university. Those are pretty big accomplishments, I'd say!"

"I think that Thomas Mun would be a good addition to the Pre-Classical division. He really set the stage for the mercantilists of the era and influenced the idea of having a balance of trade greatly. I also think he was very hypocritical, which is pretty interesting. I say this because he was a wealthy merchant and the director of the East India Company, which outsourced resources from India resulting in an outflow of money. This contradicted the mercantilist ideals of importing as little as possible in order to maintain a positive balance of trade. It was very controversial at the time for him to be doing this."

"While I don't think he was as influential as many of the other economists of the Classical Era, I think Henry George's theory of Georgism is very interesting when considered in relation to the other arguments over property rights during the time. Before George's "competitive common ownership" concept, the debate over private or

communal property was a zero-sum game in which all aspects of property had to be in control entirely by the State or private individuals. Giving the most unproductive but still lucrative aspect of property over to the State so that they can use the rents to generate social welfare was clever. It supported competition by not interfering with capitalists and workers allowed for the State to release the tax pressure on poorer individuals, potentially helping to ameliorate Western society's problem with wealth distribution. George's work would even go on to influence Walras's theory of 'synthetic socialism', at least in part."

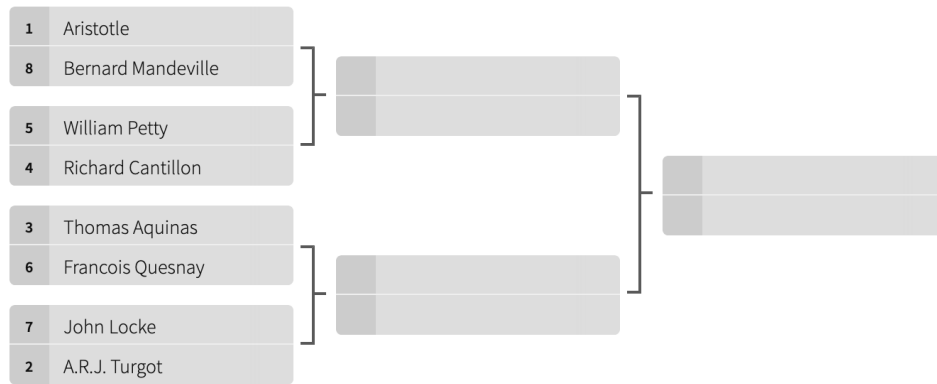
"The other economist I'd really like to highlight is Joan Robinson, arguably one of the most influential female economists of the 20th century and of Post-Keynesian economics. Much of Robinson's most influential work came from her book *The Economics of Imperfect Competition*, where she first coined the term "monopsony", a concept now discussed thoroughly in *Industrial Organization*. I find Robinson interesting not only for her influence on economics in the NeoClassical Era, but because much of her work was focused on methods in which to uplift the underdeveloped and developing world."

"I think Elinor Ostrom would have been a nice addition to the list, both as an interesting New Institutional and the first (and only, until 2019) woman to win the Nobel prize in economics. She did a lot of research into problems with "the tragedy of the commons" and countered the idea of the helpless citizen, especially with her work "Governing the Commons" which talks about collective action. One of my favorite quotes of hers is 'There is no reason to believe that bureaucrats and politicians, no matter how well meaning, are better at solving problems than the people on the spot, who have the strongest incentive to get the solution right.'"

Appendix C

Please post below with your explanations.

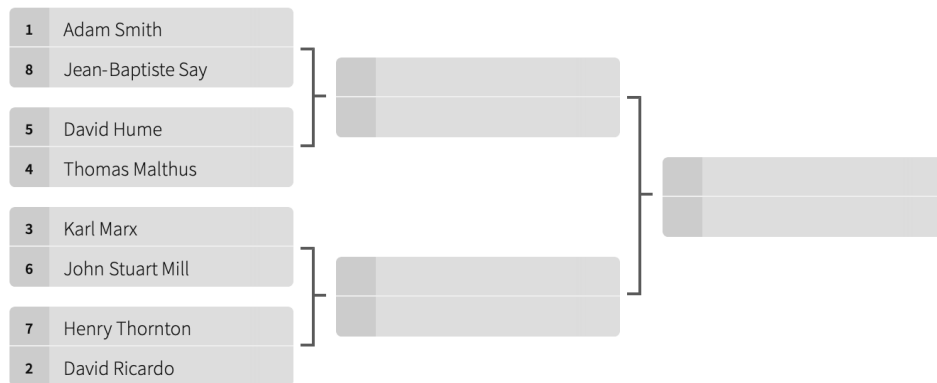
Brackets



Bracket HQ

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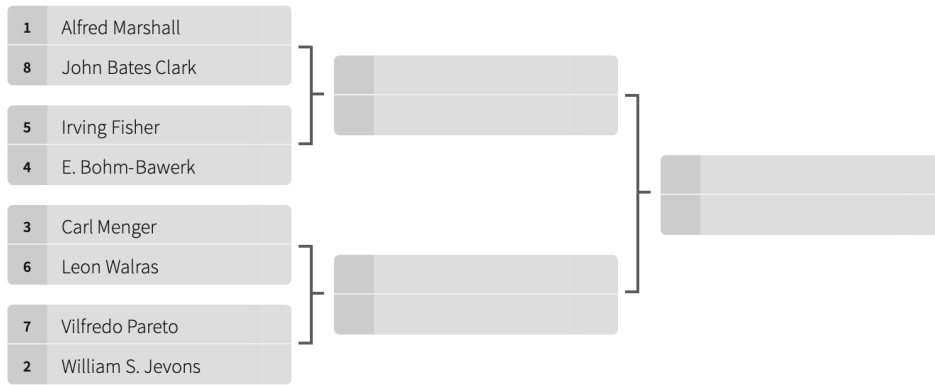
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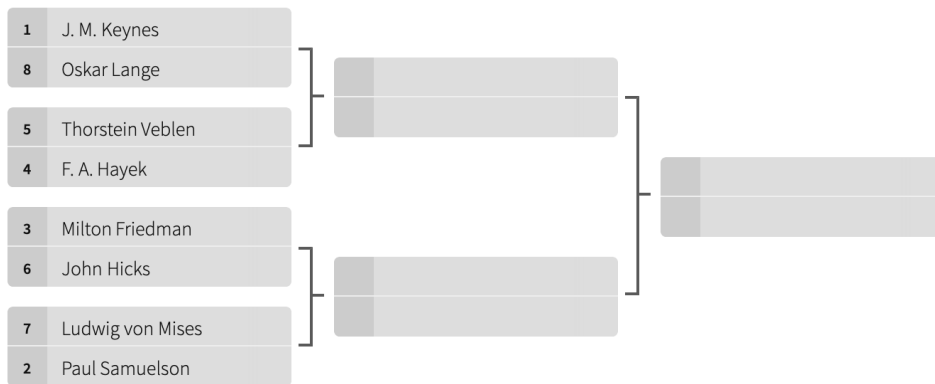
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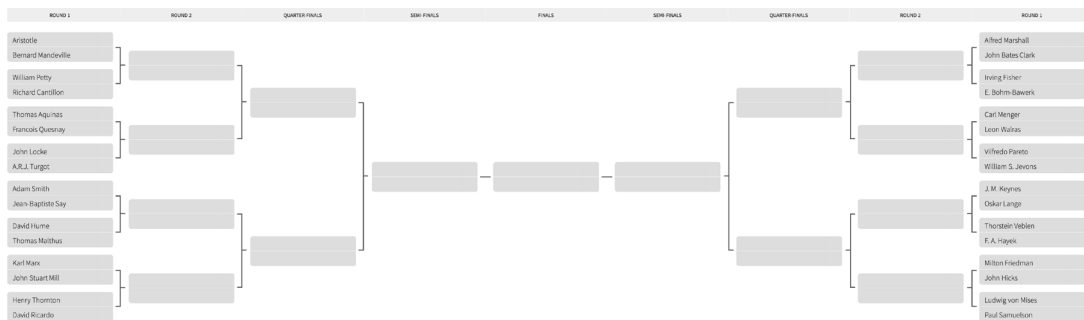
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Empty Modern Division Bracket



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