Archival Data and Economic Pedagogy: Building Skills and Engagement in Undergraduate Classrooms

This paper presents a teaching approach that integrates archival data into undergraduate economics instruction to build data literacy and foster critical thinking. Developed through a research project on British Mandate Palestine, the approach engages students in cleaning, interpreting, and analyzing historical datasets. Especially effective in introductory courses, the assignments support inclusive, hands-on learning and connect core economic concepts to broader questions of inequality, policy, and development. By embedding student contributions in a larger research initiative, the approach promotes collaboration, early exposure to research practices, and a deeper understanding of economics as a historically grounded social science.

Moheb Zidan†

†Knox College

1. Introduction

This paper presents a teaching approach that introduces students to data work early in their economics training while bringing them into direct contact with the raw materials from which economic knowledge is produced. By transcribing, cleaning, and analyzing archival sources, students engage with data not as a finished product but as something constructed, which requires judgment, contextual awareness, and critical interpretation. This process strengthens data literacy, fosters critical thinking, and shows students how economic evidence is generated and what might be lost, distorted, or overlooked along the way.

A distinctive feature of the approach is that student work contributes to a larger research infrastructure. Data assignments are designed so that students are not only practicing data skills but also helping build datasets that will eventually become publicly accessible resources. In this way, students experience firsthand how economic knowledge is created, accumulated, and shared, and they gain a sense of participating in a broader scholarly community.

The approach grew out of the Mandate Palestine Data Project, a collaborative research initiative that collects and analyzes digitized archival material from the period of British rule in Palestine (1920–1948). In my introductory courses, students transcribe statistical tables from government reports, clean and code the resulting data, and use them for structured analysis assignments. These tasks serve both pedagogical and research purposes: they provide students with hands-on experience in constructing and interpreting data, while simultaneously feeding into a cumulative archival dataset that supports ongoing research. Ultimately, the goal is to integrate teaching and research in a way that benefits both.

Although the examples in this article draw on a specific historical case, the approach is broadly portable. Many regions, particularly former British colonies, hold extensive but underutilized statistical records that are dispersed across archives and libraries. Similar classroom-based archival data projects could be developed wherever historical data exists but has not yet been systematically cleaned or analyzed. The approach therefore offers a template for creating collaborative, student-centered research infrastructures beyond the context of Palestine or Middle Eastern economic history.

While this paper focuses primarily on introductory economics courses, where students complete guided and highly structured archival data assignments, the approach has also been extended to upper-level classes. In those settings, students take on more independent projects, work with more complex materials, and contribute to expanding the dataset in new directions. This continuity illustrates how archival data work can serve as a scaffold for skill development throughout the economics curriculum.

This orientation also connects to broader conversations about the teaching of economics. Student-led initiatives such as the Rethinking Economics movement, founded in 2012 and joined by economics students from local groups at 65 universities across 30 countries by 2014, have drawn attention to the need for a more pluralistic, empirically grounded, and historically informed economics curriculum ("Rethinking Economics," n.d.). The movement argues that students benefit from encountering the discipline as a living, contested field shaped by institutions, historical processes, and diverse methodological approaches (International Student Initiative for Pluralism in Economics, 2014). Integrating archival data into the classroom offers one concrete response to these concerns. It situates technical skill-building in real-world sources, highlights the constructed nature of economic measurement, and positions students as active contributors to the production of economic knowledge rather than passive users of pre-packaged datasets.

2. Literature and Pedagogical Framework

This section connects the teaching approach presented in this paper to broader pedagogical discussions in economics education. It draws on three strands of literature: (1) the use of primary sources and historical perspectives in economics instruction, (2) the importance of building data literacy in undergraduate students, and (3) the value of undergraduate research as a form of active learning and knowledge creation. Together, these literatures inform the rationale for integrating archival data into economics courses and support the scalability and impact of this teaching approach.

A. Primary Sources and Historical Perspectives in Economics Teaching

While primary sources and archival documents are commonly integrated into courses in history or political science, they remain underutilized in economics education. Xu (2021) offers examples across disciplines, demonstrating how these materials enhance critical thinking, student engagement, and independent inquiry. Their limited use in economics is perhaps not surprising given the sharp decline of economic history as a core field in many economics departments (Diebolt & Haupert, 2022). Resource constraints, curricular overcrowding, and disciplinary politics have made the reintroduction of economic history into undergraduate curricula difficult (Brownlow & Colvin, 2022). As a result, students rarely engage with long-run historical perspectives or develop a critical understanding of how economic data and institutions evolved. Brownlow and Colvin (2022) propose integrating economic history content into existing courses rather than relying solely on stand-alone modules, an approach that resonates with the teaching approach presented in this paper. Similarly, Fishback and Haupert (2022) argue that economic history provides an ideal context for teaching active, data-intensive learning: students can examine where historical data come from, who collected them and why, and how they map onto economic concepts. The approach described in this paper aligns with those goals. It introduces students to primary historical sources while helping them interrogate the construction of economic and social indicators within specific institutional and political contexts. This teaching approach does not replace economic history courses but rather complements them by embedding long-run historical inquiry and archival data skills into the economics curriculum more broadly.

B. Data Literacy

One of the key proficiencies expected of economics majors, as outlined by Hansen (2001), is the ability to interpret and manipulate data. This includes identifying patterns and trends in published sources, constructing tables to illustrate economic issues, and describing relationships among variables. In recent years, economics educators have increasingly emphasized data literacy as a core component of undergraduate training. Kassens (2025), for example, argues that the definition of "doing economics" should be expanded to include data literacy as a central practice. This shift is reflected in pedagogical initiatives across various contexts. Wolfe (2020) demonstrates how to fully integrate empirical work into an introductory macroeconomics course, which allows students to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world data. Halliday (2019) likewise emphasizes the value of data engagement in courses on economic development, highlighting the role of active, hands-on data work in building student understanding. The CORE Econ project furthers this movement by offering empirical projects that engage students in policy analysis using real-world datasets, helping them build both conceptual understanding and practical skills. Kassens (2025) also details the use of the Inside Economics platform in a labor economics course at a liberal arts college, showing how structured, small-scale data projects can enhance both data literacy and classroom community. Together, these contributions reflect a growing consensus that data skills are essential, not just

for econometrics or senior theses, but as a foundation of economic education more broadly.

C. Undergraduate Research and Creating Knowledge

Engaging undergraduates in research yields significant benefits for students, faculty mentors, and the institution as a whole (Fenn et al., 2010; Zvobgo et al., 2023). Many economics departments now prioritize expanding research opportunities, partly in response to ongoing calls for curricular reform that promote critical thinking and experiential learning (Siegfried et al., 1991; Hansen, 2001). Importantly, these opportunities need not be limited to senior capstones. DeLoach, Perry-Sizemore, and Borg (2012), for instance, advocate for a comprehensive approach in which foundational research skills are developed across all four years, culminating in more advanced independent work. Wagner (2015) similarly proposes a long-term framework in which faculty cultivate collaborative research projects with undergraduates—an approach that not only benefits students but also incentivizes faculty by aligning teaching with scholarly productivity.

Creating a culture of undergraduate research, however, requires more than just programmatic changes. Hoyt and McGoldrick (2017) emphasize the importance of exposing students early to faculty research and providing clear pathways for involvement. Some departments use seminars or incorporate examples of faculty research into coursework to demystify the research process. Yet one persistent challenge remains: faculty time. Many report that student demand for mentorship far exceeds what is feasible without additional institutional support (Hoyt & McGoldrick, 2017).

The teaching approach I outline in this paper addresses this challenge by embedding research opportunities in regular coursework, especially in large or lower-division classes, and organizing student contributions around a broader archival data project. This approach helps distribute the workload, create economies of scale, and give more students meaningful research experiences early in their academic journey. It offers a practical, scalable path to engaging students in active, collaborative knowledge production while aligning with calls for increased inclusion, skill-building, and interdisciplinarity in economics education.

3. Background: The Mandate Palestine Data Project

This teaching approach emerged from a broader initiative to construct a research infrastructure on Palestine during the British Mandate period (1920–1948). The initiative, which I began and am continuing to develop, aims to build a publicly accessible repository of clean datasets on the economy and society of Mandate Palestine.

A wealth of archival documents from this period is already available in digital form through university archives, libraries, and national collections. However, digitization in this context typically refers to scanning and preserving documents as images rather than producing datasets that can be analyzed statistically. Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology and related software provide some tools for converting scanned pages into text, but they perform poorly on historical materials. Many documents are degraded, irregularly formatted, or of generally low quality, either because of the condition of the originals or the way they were scanned. As a result, automated extraction is unreliable. Much of the statistical content in these materials cannot be accurately processed by software and must be manually transcribed into spreadsheets before any cleaning or analysis can occur.

This work requires collaboration. The volume of documents makes it unrealistic for a single researcher to process them, but structured student involvement turns this challenge into an opportunity. By engaging undergraduates in the patient and essential work of data

transcription and cleaning, the project addresses two gaps at once: the limited availability of accessible historical datasets for research and the need for meaningful data training in undergraduate economics. Students also gain exposure to historical sources and contexts that deepen their understanding of how data is produced, why it matters, and how economic analysis connects to political and social change. Digital tools such as cloud-based spreadsheets and shared drives make this collaboration feasible. In this way, teaching becomes a form of research infrastructure building, advancing both student learning and the creation of new knowledge.

4. Implementation

A. Pre-term Preparation

To develop the datasets used in class, I begin by identifying and extracting statistical tables from official government reports and archival sources. I organize materials by subject and select a specific sub-topic to build out as a dataset. For example, under trade, I focused on "imports by country of origin" and located that table across multiple years, creating a time series of comparable data.

To ensure consistency and reduce student workload, I create standardized Google Sheet templates for each dataset. These templates included pre-filled titles, column headers, and row categories that matched the original archival tables. This minimized formatting errors and made it easier to merge student work into clean, analyzable datasets.

In selecting the sub-topic and designing the assignment, I review the available material to assess both its suitability for analysis and its connection to course themes. I also consider what kinds of economic questions the data could support and how many students were likely to participate. Since these assignments have been optional so far, I tailor each project to ensure students could engage meaningfully with the material without being overwhelmed.

I structure the assignment to maintain a deliberate balance between data construction and data analysis. Roughly 15–20 percent of the work entails transcribing archival tables and validating the resulting dataset, including entering information, identifying inconsistencies, and completing targeted exercises that reinforce accuracy. The remaining 80–85 percent focuses on analytical tasks. Using the pooled dataset created by the entire class, students generate descriptive statistics, examine historical patterns, and relate their findings to course concepts. The transcription stage thus serves as a meaningful gateway to more substantive analytical work while highlighting the origins and limitations of the data.

B. Introducing the Project in the Classroom

In the first two weeks of the term, I dedicate approximately 45 minutes of one class session to introducing students to the larger research project and to my own work as a scholar. I explain the nature of the data collection effort, the questions driving my research, and the broader goals of constructing publicly accessible datasets on the economy and society of Mandate Palestine. I emphasize that their contribution to this assignment extends far beyond a course requirement: they are participating in a collaborative research initiative with the potential to support new scholarship and inform broader public conversations.

To help make this more tangible, I show students examples of how archival data can lead to real-world impact. In one case, a dataset I developed on femicide in Palestine was used in collaboration with a feminist organization to launch a public-facing platform dedicated to documenting the lives of women killed in gender-based violence. This collaboration helped

raise awareness through public events, storytelling, and visualizations of the data. I stress that historical data, especially when made accessible and contextualized, can inform both academic inquiry and public engagement.

I also provide historical background on the British Mandate and highlight how the questions we ask, such as what life expectancy looked like a century ago in Palestine, are deeply relevant to understanding development, inequality, and institutions. These early discussions serve multiple purposes: they make the assignment more meaningful, create space for interdisciplinary thinking, and help students, especially those with little prior data experience, see the relevance of economics beyond models and formulas.

During this session, I also walk students through the learning goals of the specific assignment for the term, along with its structure and expectations. I explain how the individual contributions of students will feed into a larger dataset and demonstrate how this kind of work builds foundational research and data skills. To inspire further engagement, I share examples of students who have used the datasets in independent studies or senior research projects. I also let students know that I'm happy to support continued research beyond the class, whether through data sharing, guidance, or collaboration. Here is an excerpt from the written instructions I provide students as part of the assignment:

> This assignment is part of a long-term project that I plan to continue working on over the next few years. By participating in this initiative, students not only contribute to improving the historical and statistical record but also open the door to potential future collaborations. For those interested, I am more than happy to share documents, files, and ideas to explore further research opportunities. This assignment bridges the gap between classroom learning and real-world impact, providing a unique and meaningful experience that goes beyond traditional coursework. Whether your goal is to develop practical skills, contribute to historical research, or simply explore economic concepts in greater depth, your work here plays a valuable role in a larger collaborative effort.

At the end of this introductory session, students who are interested in participating are invited to opt in by completing a short online form. This form allows them to indicate whether they plan to work individually or in a group, identify their group members if applicable, and share any questions or concerns they may have. This voluntary sign-up process helps ensure that students are committing intentionally to the project and gives me an opportunity to provide support or clarification early on.

Participation in these assignments was always optional and designed so that students' grades could only improve. I experimented with two grading models to balance fairness and motivation. In some cases, the project counted as extra credit, allowing students to earn up to five additional points on their final course grade, depending on the quality of their work. In other cases, the project replaced up to 20 percent of the course grade: for example, if a group earned 80 percent on the project, that score translated into 16 percent of their final grade, while the weights of all other components were proportionally reduced from 100 to 84 percent. Across both models, students were never penalized for participating.

Accountability has not posed major challenges in these assignments, in part because students recognized that their work contributed to a real research project. The knowledge that their datasets would be integrated into larger compilations and even reused by classmates created a strong sense of responsibility. Group work also helped sustain commitment, as students held one another accountable for completing their portion. To further reinforce accuracy, I assigned certain tables to multiple groups, creating intentional overlap. This practice not only encouraged careful work but also allowed me to cross-check the resulting datasets

and identify discrepancies more efficiently.

5. Implementation Examples

This section presents three examples drawn from an introductory microeconomics course. Although these examples originate in a principles-level setting, assignments based on historical data do not need to be limited to economic history or development courses. There is a wide range of possibilities for how instructors might use these materials depending on the goals of their course. Some may choose to emphasize data literacy, graph construction and interpretation, or basic statistical concepts. Others may focus on economic indicators, measures such as per capita values, or connections to concepts discussed in class. The level of difficulty can be adjusted, and each assignment can be designed to highlight different aspects of working with data.

A. Implementation Example 1: Mortality and Life Expectancy

In one introductory microeconomics course, students completed a two-stage archival data assignment. To keep the workload manageable and highlight the value of collaborative research, I divided a large set of historical mortality tables (about 30 in total) into smaller portions and assigned each group a subset. Students could work individually or in groups of up to three, with the number of assigned tables adjusted to group size. The source material included death counts by age, gender, and religious affiliation from official archival reports.

The first stage of the assignment focused on manual data entry. Students entered their assigned tables into standardized Google Sheets that I had pre-formatted in advance. To support skill development in data literacy and accuracy, I built in simple exercises: checking totals, calculating percentages, and generating basic charts to describe the data. This phase familiarized students with the challenges of historical data and introduced core practices in data cleaning. After submissions, I reviewed and compiled the entries into a single clean worksheet and shared them with the class.

In the second stage, students used the compiled dataset to construct life tables and estimate life expectancy. I provided a brief historical overview of the data and a short video tutorial to guide them through the calculations, which we also walked through together in class. Some groups analyzed trends over time within a specific religious group (e.g., Muslim males from 1936 to 1940), while others compared life expectancy across gender or religious lines in a single year. Though some additional data entry was required to estimate death rates, this stage was lighter in workload and focused more on applying economic reasoning and quantitative tools to interpret historical patterns. Each group submitted a short report summarizing their findings.

This example demonstrated that even relatively simple archival tables can be used to teach students how to read complex sources, clean data, construct new variables, and communicate their findings visually.

B. Implementation Example 2: Trade

In another introductory microeconomics course, students completed an archival data project focused on international trade. This assignment differed from the mortality example in two important ways. First, it centered more directly on a core economic concept: trade patterns and their determinants. Second, a teaching assistant who had previously completed a similar assignment supported the project. Their familiarity with the structure and common student challenges improved preparation, communication, and the level of individual support provided

during the assignment.

This project centered on two types of trade data from archival sources: trade by country of origin/destination and trade by class of goods. As in the previous example, the raw data were divided among student groups, and each group was responsible for entering and analyzing a subset of tables. To reinforce data literacy and minimize errors, I incorporated several simple exercises. For instance, students were asked to calculate total trade across all countries or commodities and verify that their totals matched those reported in the original tables. These checks helped students recognize inconsistencies and refine their attention to detail. The assignment also required students to produce basic visualizations to summarize their data.

Each group submitted a short written report that addressed a set of guiding questions. Some groups focused on comparative advantage by examining the types of goods that Palestine imported and exported. Others explored changes in trade volume over time and considered how events such as the Great Depression or World War II might have influenced these patterns. A few groups engaged with ideas related to the gravity model by identifying Palestine's main trading partners and considering what factors might explain those relationships. Through these analyses, students applied course concepts to real-world historical data, deepening both their theoretical understanding and their appreciation for economic history.

C. Implementation Example 3: Agricultural Production, Population, and Rainfall

The third example builds directly on work completed by students in previous semesters. When introducing the assignment in class, we discussed why agricultural data is important for understanding economic conditions in Mandate Palestine. Agriculture was a central part of the economy, and production data offers insights into living standards, economic resilience, and the relationship between environmental conditions and economic activity. This framing helped students see the broader significance of the dataset they were helping to build.

The assignment again consisted of two parts. The first part involved data entry and validation. Students worked with scanned tables reporting production of six major crops by subdistrict and year. Much of this information had already been entered by earlier student cohorts, so the task this time was to complete missing years and verify the accuracy of previously entered data. Each group received different scanned tables corresponding to years that were not yet included in the dataset.

The second part involved data analysis using three previously cleaned datasets: agricultural production, population, and rainfall. Working with multiple datasets allowed students to see clearly how the contributions of earlier cohorts made current analysis possible. This provided an opportunity to emphasize the cumulative nature of research and the value of careful data preparation.

Students merged datasets, created new variables, and constructed graphs to examine relationships between agricultural production, population growth, and rainfall. Exercises introduced concepts such as per capita measures and why they might be more appropriate for comparisons across districts or overtime. Other questions encouraged students to explore regional differences, specialization, comparative advantage, and correlations between rainfall and output, including the idea of lagged effects.

Students submitted a report summarizing their findings, supported by graphs and clear explanations. The assignment emphasized not only data construction and visualization, but also interpretation and the ability to explain patterns in their own words.

6. Discussion: Reflections and Extensions

A. Student Engagement and Skill Development

A central aim of integrating archival data into my economics courses has been to strengthen students' data skills while deepening their engagement with historical and policy-relevant questions. This has been especially effective in introductory classes, where students come from diverse academic backgrounds and often have little prior exposure to economics or data analysis. By working with real historical data in unstructured formats, students learn core skills such as spreadsheet use, data entry, cleaning, basic statistical reasoning, and visualization. These assignments help level the playing field for students with varying levels of preparation and build confidence that carries over into upper-level coursework.

Although participation in these assignments was optional, participation was consistently high. Between 65 and 90 percent of students elected to participate. More importantly, the completion rate was almost universal. Out of more than one hundred student groups who elected to participate across several semesters, only two failed to complete the assignment. This pattern suggests that students viewed the work as meaningful, worthwhile, and different from their usual coursework. Student feedback supports this interpretation. Many noted that the project was enjoyable and memorable. For example, students commented: "I really liked entering the data from ancient documents and coming up with ways to check that it was correct," and "It was cool to see real numbers from the 1930s." Others found that the assignments sparked curiosity and encouraged independent exploration, noting that "We ended up looking at extra sources because we were curious about the trends we found."

Students also emphasized the value of learning quantitative skills in a hands-on setting. One student wrote, "I learned how to use Excel, mostly formulas and graphs, and working with actual data was so interesting," and several mentioned simply that "it was fun." Others highlighted the broader experience of working with primary sources, explaining, "This is something I have never had the opportunity to learn before, so I am grateful for it."

Students from a variety of backgrounds engaged strongly with the project, including those primarily interested in finance or data science who valued the opportunity to apply data skills, as well as students with limited prior exposure to quantitative work who viewed the assignment as a chance to strengthen their proficiency. Others were motivated by the historical dimension, the novelty of working with primary sources, or the opportunity to contribute to a collaborative project. Compared with other course assignments, the archival projects typically generated more sustained engagement, greater attention to detail, and more organized and thoughtful written work. Many students reported feeling a stronger sense of ownership and responsibility because their work contributed to a dataset that would be used by others. In this way, the assignments may help reduce gaps in data literacy early in a student's academic trajectory, which is particularly important in liberal arts institutions where students enter with diverse backgrounds and skill levels.

B. Building Bridges: Economics Across Disciplines

These assignments also provide an opportunity to highlight the interdisciplinary nature of economics. Topics like life expectancy and gender disparities anticipate themes discussed in upper-level courses on development and inequality. The trade data assignment opens questions related to international trade theory, economic geography, and political economy. As such, these projects help students see the continuity between core concepts in introductory economics and the broader analytical questions that define the field.

Although these assignments emerged from my own work in economic history and development, the underlying approach is not limited to these fields. The archives used in my classes contain statistics and qualitative material related to many parts of the economy and society. As such, they offer opportunities across much of the economics curriculum.

For example, government budgets, expenditure reports, tax records, monetary statistics, price indices, and exchange rate data can be used in introductory or intermediate level macroeconomics courses. These sources allow students to explore macroeconomic policy, inflation, cost of living, and the role of money. Market reports that record quantities and prices of goods are suitable for teaching supply and demand, market structure, and government interventions such as price controls, which were common in the late Mandate period. Industry surveys and labor reports can support exercises on unemployment, wages, sectoral change, or labor markets. Teachers of statistics can draw on the wide range of available datasets to introduce descriptive statistics, visualization, sampling concerns, and inferential concepts, all while giving students the opportunity to contribute new data to a growing repository.

The unifying principle is not the specific topic, but the pedagogical value of having students interact with real, imperfect, and historically situated data. This work encourages students to think critically about measurement, about the construction of economic indicators, and about the institutional and political forces that shape what is recorded and what is not.

The assignments also resonate with the broader goals of Rethinking Economics, especially in their emphasis on pluralism, historical context, and economic knowledge as a common good. By exposing students to the ambiguities and construction of historical datasets, students are encouraged to reflect critically on data as a product of specific institutional, historical, and political forces.

Instead of presenting economic knowledge as an objective reality, the assignments problematize existing records and their use in the discipline by explaining to students the importance of primary sources and the difficulties of using them in economics. Students encounter difficulties that are central to the life of professional researchers which include format issues of scans that make them incompatible with Excel, the low quality of scanned documents, errors in published tables, and the sheer volume of the workload. Furthermore, students are able to see for themselves how sources are shaped by the colonial structures in which they were authored. As such, the content and structure of the archival data often reflects the priorities and assumptions of the colonial administration. For example, the categorization of populations by religion in mortality tables highlights political agendas, while large gaps or inconsistencies in trade data during wartime highlight the limits of colonial institutional capacity. Another striking example is the recurring absence of data on Bedouin communities, especially in the southern districts, revealing the ways certain populations were systematically excluded from official statistics, and thus from the colonial state's conceptual map of the economy and society.

This assignment sequence promotes inclusivity, which, according to Lopez and Wandschneider (2024), can be achieved through strengthening student connections to the major and profession. This can be accomplished through context-rich, experiential, and community-based activities. Furthermore, the scaffolding of these particular assignments allows students to build statistical analysis skills at both the beginner and advanced level. Finally, the inclusion of pressing current events from a historical perspective allows students to see the interconnectedness of economics and history (Fishback & Haupert, 2022).

C. Outcomes and Future Directions

Since the launch of this project, students have worked with over 200 archival tables

on education, production, prices, mortality, trade, rainfall, and crime. These data are currently being cleaned and documented with the aim of public release. One student used a rainfall dataset produced in class to develop his senior thesis by re-analyzing an existing paper that examined, how income inequality between Arabs and Jews in Mandate Palestine affects violent conflict, using rainfall as an instrument. The student replaced a national variable with a more granular district-level indicator—yielding very different results and allowing space for critique. More students are beginning to draw on this growing database for their own research projects, and I expect these applications to expand further as the infrastructure matures.

While the focus here has been on introductory courses, this teaching approach is highly adaptable. I recently implemented a similar project in an intermediate macroeconomics course, where students reconstructed a historical cost-of-living index from the 1940s. The emphasis in that setting shifted toward data interpretation and analysis and included in-class presentations to strengthen communication skills.

The teaching approach outlined here can also be replicated at other institutions, in other regions, and using different archives. It could be embedded in coursework, could be included as a capstone, or as a summer research program. One ongoing extension involves a project on the history of the economics department at my institution, drawing on internal reports, course catalogs, and student publications to create a dataset documenting curricular and demographic change over time.

7. Conclusion: Data, History, and Inclusion in Economics Pedagogy

This paper has presented a teaching approach grounded in real-world historical sources and oriented toward inclusion, critical inquiry, and student engagement. The project responds directly to calls from the Rethinking Economics movement to broaden what is taught in economics, how it is taught, and whose experiences it includes. By embedding students in meaningful data work connected to broader research efforts, this approach encourages curiosity, strengthens data literacy, and fosters a deeper understanding of the economic past and its relevance to present concerns.

The pedagogical benefits are multiple: students learn practical skills, engage interdisciplinary themes, and contribute to research infrastructure. They also gain a more realistic and nuanced view of data production, particularly in colonial contexts like Mandate Palestine, where statistical records were shaped by political agendas, institutional limitations, and broader structures of power.

Ultimately, this approach illustrates how archival data can serve not only as a teaching tool but also as a foundation for student-faculty collaboration, public knowledge production, and pluralist economics education.

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