

Term Information

Effective Term Spring 2018
[Previous Value](#) Summer 2015

Course Change Information

What change is being proposed? (If more than one, what changes are being proposed?)

Adding distance education component.

What is the rationale for the proposed change(s)?

This course will occasionally be taught online, including in Spring 2018.

What are the programmatic implications of the proposed change(s)?

(e.g. program requirements to be added or removed, changes to be made in available resources, effect on other programs that use the course)?

No programmatic implications.

Is approval of the request contingent upon the approval of other course or curricular program request? No

Is this a request to withdraw the course? No

General Information

Course Bulletin Listing/Subject Area	History
Fiscal Unit/Academic Org	History - D0557
College/Academic Group	Arts and Sciences
Level/Career	Undergraduate
Course Number/Catalog	2720
Course Title	Big History
Transcript Abbreviation	Big History
Course Description	"Big History" attempts to explain history at the very largest scales in the widest perspectives, exploring theories of how the universe, planet, life, and humanity came to be. Students will work to understand the essential state of knowledge about cosmic, earth, evolutionary, and human history.
Semester Credit Hours/Units	Fixed: 3

Offering Information

Length Of Course	14 Week, 12 Week, 8 Week, 7 Week, 6 Week, 4 Week
Flexibly Scheduled Course	Never
Does any section of this course have a distance education component?	Yes
Is any section of the course offered	100% at a distance
Previous Value	No, Greater or equal to 50% at a distance, Less than 50% at a distance
Grading Basis	Letter Grade
Repeatable	No
Course Components	Recitation, Lecture
Grade Roster Component	Recitation
Credit Available by Exam	No
Admission Condition Course	No
Off Campus	Never
Campus of Offering	Columbus, Lima, Mansfield, Marion, Newark

Prerequisites and Exclusions

Prerequisites/Corequisites	Prereq or concur: English 1110.xx, or permission of instructor.
Exclusions	
Electronically Enforced	Yes
Previous Value	No

Cross-Listings

Cross-Listings

Subject/CIP Code

Subject/CIP Code	54.0101
Subsidy Level	Baccalaureate Course
Intended Rank	Freshman, Sophomore, Junior

Requirement/Elective Designation

General Education course:
Historical Study
The course is an elective (for this or other units) or is a service course for other units

Course Details

Course goals or learning objectives/outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students have a new appreciation of the contemporary state of natural and social sciences, and of the power and limits of different disciplinary methods.
Content Topic List	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Modern Creation Myth• Origins of the universe• Planetary history• Evolutionary theory• Agriculture and agrarian civilizations• Early Modern World• Globalization• Scenarios of the future
Sought Concurrence	Yes

COURSE CHANGE REQUEST
2720 - Status: PENDING

Last Updated: Heysel,Garett Robert
10/25/2017

Attachments

- History 2720 Syllabus - Online Delivery.docx: 2720 Syllabus - Online
(Syllabus. Owner: Bowerman,Ashley E.)
- History 2720 Syllabus - Big History.docx: 2720 Syllabus - In-Person
(Syllabus. Owner: Bowerman,Ashley E.)
- History 2720 - ASC Tech Feasibility Review.pdf: ASC Tech Review
(Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Bowerman,Ashley E.)
- History 2720 Concurrence from EEOB.docx: Previous concurrence
(Concurrence. Owner: Bowerman,Ashley E.)
- Anthropology Concurrence - History 2720.pdf: Previous concurrence
(Concurrence. Owner: Bowerman,Ashley E.)
- Astronomy Concurrence - History 2720.pdf: Previous concurrence
(Concurrence. Owner: Bowerman,Ashley E.)

Comments

Workflow Information

Status	User(s)	Date/Time	Step
Submitted	Bowerman,Ashley E.	10/25/2017 09:53 AM	Submitted for Approval
Approved	Stebenne,David Lawler	10/25/2017 10:09 AM	Unit Approval
Approved	Heysel,Garett Robert	10/25/2017 09:26 PM	College Approval
Pending Approval	Nolen,Dawn Vankeerbergen,Bernadette Chantal Oldroyd,Shelby Quinn Hanlin,Deborah Kay Jenkins,Mary Ellen Bigler	10/25/2017 09:26 PM	ASCCAO Approval



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

SYLLABUS: HIST 2720 BIG HISTORY SPRING 2018

Course overview

Instructor

Instructor: S.A. White

Email address: white.2426@osu.edu

Phone number: 614-292-5596

Office hours: Office hours will be held online twice a week through Carmen Connect, in two formats. Open office hours will allow students to enter the Carmen Connect conference room and participate simultaneously through voice, webcam, and chat, as in a webinar. Closed office hours will allow students to discuss issues one on one with an instructor. {online office hours TBD} Students may also make appointments to speak with an instructor in person or by phone.

Course description

Big History brings together the cosmic, earth, evolutionary, and human past. This course provides a consilient, non-technical introduction to the essential state of knowledge about the galaxy, planet, life, and humanity. The unifying theme throughout the course will be the emergence and fragility of complex systems in a universe forever moving toward entropy. By the end of the course, students will have a basic grounding in some of the major theories that help explain our place in the cosmos, and a better understanding of where we came from and where we might be going.

GE Historical Study

Goals of GE Historical Study: Students recognize how past events are studied and how they influence today's society and the human condition.

Expected Learning Outcomes of Historical Study

1. Students construct an integrated perspective on history and the factors that shape human activity.
2. Students describe and analyze the origins and nature of contemporary issues.
3. Students speak and write critically about primary and secondary historical sources by examining diverse interpretations of past events and ideas in their historical contexts.

How This Course Meets Historical Study ELOs

1. Students will explore how history operates at multiple scales from the whole of cosmic time down to events of the past century, as well as the connections among cosmic, earth, life, and human history.
2. Students will examine human impacts on the environment in the wider context of earth and human history.
3. Students will write an essay weighing the strengths and weaknesses of macrohistorical theories and metanarratives.

Course learning goals

By the end of this course, students should successfully be able to:

- Explain the fundamentals of three core historical paradigms in modern science: big bang cosmology, plate tectonics, and evolution by natural selection, and identify major debates and discoveries leading up to each paradigm.
- Discuss and apply the concept of paradigm shifts in the history of science.
- Explain the features of complex (natural and human) systems.
- Compare the timescales of cosmic, earth, evolutionary, and human history and recall essential steps in each.
- Analyze and critically evaluate metanarratives of human history that draw on concepts and insights from the natural sciences.

Course materials

Required

David Christian, Cynthia Stokes Brown, and Craig Benjamin, *Big History: Between Nothing and Everything* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2013).

This book may be purchased online or from the bookstore, or rented in an electronic format from Amazon.com for only \$17.

Required supplemental materials

All required supplemental materials will be posted to Carmen in the module for which they are required.

Optional materials

All optional supplemental materials will be posted to Carmen in the module for which they are optional.

Course technology

For help with your password, university e-mail, Carmen, or any other technology issues, questions, or requests, contact the OSU IT Service Desk. Standard support hours are available at <https://ocio.osu.edu/help/hours>, and support for urgent issues is available 24x7.

- **Self-Service and Chat support:** <http://ocio.osu.edu/selfservice>
- **Phone:** 614-688-HELP (4357)
- **Email:** 8help@osu.edu
- **TDD:** 614-688-8743

Baseline technical skills necessary for online courses

- Basic computer and web-browsing skills
- Navigating Carmen

Technology skills necessary for this specific course

- CarmenConnect text, audio, and video chat
- Collaborating in CarmenWiki

Necessary equipment

- Computer: current Mac (OS X) or PC (Windows 7+) with high-speed internet connection
- Webcam: built-in or external webcam, fully installed
- Microphone: built-in laptop or tablet mic or external microphone

Necessary software

- [Microsoft Office 365 ProPlus](#) All Ohio State students are now eligible for free Microsoft Office 365 ProPlus through Microsoft's Student Advantage program. Each student can install Office on five PCs or Macs, five tablets (Windows, iPad® and Android™) and five phones.
 - Students are able to access Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and other programs, depending on platform. Users will also receive 1 TB of OneDrive for Business storage.
 - Office 365 is installed within your BuckeyeMail account. Full instructions for downloading and installation can be found <https://ocio.osu.edu/kb04733>.

Grading and faculty response

Grades

Assignment or category	%Final Grade
Writing Exercises	15
Online Discussion	15
Peer Review Exercise	10
Exams	30
Essay	30
Total	100

See course schedule, below, for due dates

Explanation of Assignments

Each lesson has several required components. Students first watch a series of brief videos and presentations, then complete a reading assignment of 8-15 pages (in most lessons), and take a short quiz over the material. Note that these quizzes do not count toward your final average, and you may take them multiple times, but you must pass the quiz first in order to complete the graded portions of each lesson. These graded portions are as follows: first, a brief writing assignment about the presentations and/or a short accompanying essay or primary source; and second, a required discussion post, usually based on the writing assignment. Students will submit discussion posts into small discussion groups created by the instructors. Deadlines for writing assignments and first posts will be at noon on Wednesdays and Fridays. Students who miss these deadlines may not submit late writing assignments and discussion posts, but they may request a make-up written assignment up to four times during the course.

The peer review assignment will give you a chance to give and receive writing advice from your fellow students on your essay rough draft. Instructors will assign two peer reviewers to each paper, which means that each of you will review two papers on a topic other than your own. All students must submit a rough draft in order to participate in the peer review exercise. You will also receive feedback on your rough draft from an instructor. Please note the discussion and communication guidelines below when you complete your peer review.

For the course essay, you will first select one book from a list of works that attempt to apply large insights from the natural or mathematical sciences to human history. Students will write essays analyzing those works and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments. Detailed instructions will be posted on Carmen.

The course will have cumulative midterm and final exams. These will test core concepts from the course. There will be a review session before each exam. Please contact an instructor well in advance if there is a chance you will not be available during the midterm or final exam time.

Late assignments

Required writing assignments and discussion posts may not be submitted late for any grade. Students unable to complete the writing assignment or required discussion post for a given week may request a make-up assignment. Except in extraordinary circumstances, students are unlikely to be permitted more than four make-up assignments for the course. Other late assignments will be marked down by 10% for each day late, weekends included.

Grading scale

93–100: A
90–92.9: A-
87–89.9: B+
83–86.9: B
80–82.9: B-
77–79.9: C+
73–76.9: C
70–72.9: C-
67–69.9: D+
60–66.9: D
Below 60: E

Faculty feedback and response time

I am providing the following list to give you an idea of my intended availability throughout the course. (Remember that you can call **614-688-HELP** at any time if you have a technical problem.)

Grading and feedback

For large weekly assignments, you can generally expect feedback within **7 days**.

E-mail

Instructors will reply to e-mails by the end of the following school day. Note that this means emails sent on over the weekend may not be answered until the following Monday evening.

Discussion board

Instructors will check and reply to messages in the discussion boards at least every **48 hours on school days**.

Attendance, participation, and discussions

Student participation requirements

Because this is a distance-education course, your attendance is based on your online activity and participation. The following is a summary of everyone's expected participation:

- **Logging in: AT LEAST TWICE PER WEEK**
Be sure you are logging in to the course in Carmen each week, including weeks with holidays or weeks with minimal online course activity. (During most weeks you will probably log in many times.) If you have a situation that might cause you to miss an entire week of class, discuss it with me *as soon as possible*.
- **Office hours and live sessions: OPTIONAL OR FLEXIBLE**
All live, scheduled events for the course, including my office hours, are optional. For any live presentations and for the final exam review session, I will provide a recording that you can watch later. If you are required to discuss an assignment with an instructor and you need a time outside scheduled office hours, please contact an instructor at the beginning of the week.
- **Participating in discussion forums: ABOUT 2-4 TIMES PER WEEK**
As participation, each week you can expect to post at least once per lesson (and preferably twice) as part of our substantive class discussion on the week's topics.

Discussion and communication guidelines

The following are my expectations for how we should communicate as a class. Above all, please remember to be respectful and thoughtful.

- **Writing style:** While there is no need to participate in class discussions as if you were writing a research paper, you should remember to write using good grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Informality (including an occasional emoticon) is fine for non-academic topics.
- **Tone and civility:** Let's maintain a supportive learning community where everyone feels safe and where people can disagree amicably. Remember that sarcasm doesn't always come across online.
- **Citing your sources:** When we have academic discussions, please cite your sources to back up what you say. (For the textbook or other course materials, list at least the title and page numbers. For online sources, include a link.)
- **Backing up your work:** Consider composing your academic posts in a word processor, where you can save your work, and then copying into the Carmen discussion.

Other course policies

Academic integrity policy

Policies for this online course

- **Quizzes and exams:** You must complete all exams yourself, without any external help or communication. Weekly quizzes are included as self-checks without points attached.
- **Written assignments:** Your written assignments, including discussion posts, should be your own original work. In formal assignments, you should follow the Chicago Manual of Style “notes and bibliography” format to cite the ideas and words of your research sources (see: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html). You are encouraged to ask a trusted person to proofread your assignments before you turn them in--but no one else should revise or rewrite your work.
- **Reusing past work:** In general, you are prohibited in university courses from turning in work from a past class to your current class, even if you modify it. If you want to build on past research or revisit a topic you've explored in previous courses, please discuss the situation with me.
- **Falsifying research or results:** All research you will conduct in this course is intended to be a learning experience; you should never feel tempted to make your results or your library research look more successful than it was.
- **Collaboration and informal peer-review:** The course includes opportunities for formal collaboration with your classmates. While study groups and peer-review of major written projects is encouraged, remember that comparing answers on a quiz or assignment is not permitted. If you're unsure about a particular situation, please feel free just to ask ahead of time.

For more about academic advising offered on Ohio State’s main campus, please visit <http://advising.osu.edu/welcome.shtml>

For further information about student services offered on Ohio State’s main campus, please visit: <http://ssc.osu.edu>

Ohio State’s academic integrity policy

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and other educational and scholarly activities. Thus, The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the University’s *Code of Student Conduct*, and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University’s *Code of Student Conduct* and this syllabus may constitute “Academic Misconduct.”

The Ohio State University’s *Code of Student Conduct* (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: “Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University,

or subvert the educational process.” Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University’s *Code of Student Conduct* is never considered an “excuse” for academic misconduct, so I recommend that you review the *Code of Student Conduct* and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct.

If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by University Rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that you have violated the University’s *Code of Student Conduct* (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University.

If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

Other sources of information on academic misconduct (integrity) to which you can refer include:

- The Committee on Academic Misconduct web pages ([COAM Home](#))
- *Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity* ([Ten Suggestions](#))
- *Eight Cardinal Rules of Academic Integrity* (www.northwestern.edu/uacc/8cards.htm)

Copyright disclaimer

The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

Trigger warning

Some contents of this course may involve media that may be triggering to some students due to descriptions of and/or scenes depicting acts of violence, acts of war, or sexual violence and its aftermath. If needed, please take care of yourself while watching/reading this material (leaving classroom to take a water/bathroom break, debriefing with a friend, contacting a Sexual Violence Support Coordinator at 614-292-1111, or Counseling and Consultation Services at 614-292-5766, and contacting the instructor if needed). Expectations are that we all will be respectful of our classmates while consuming this media and that we will create a safe space for each other. Failure to show respect to each other may result in dismissal from the class.

Statement on title IX

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been

sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at titleix@osu.edu

Accessibility accommodations for students with disabilities

Requesting accommodations

If you would like to request academic accommodations based on the impact of a disability qualified under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, contact your instructor privately as soon as possible to discuss your specific needs. Discussions are confidential.

In addition to contacting the instructor, please contact the Student Life Disability Services at [614-292-3307](tel:614-292-3307) or ods@osu.edu to register for services and/or to coordinate any accommodations you might need in your courses at The Ohio State University.

Go to <http://ods.osu.edu> for more information.

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know via email immediately so that we can privately discuss options. You are also welcome to register with Student Life Disability Services to establish reasonable accommodations. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

Accessibility of course technology

This online course requires use of Carmen (Ohio State's learning management system) and other online communication and multimedia tools. If you need additional services to use these technologies, please request accommodations with your instructor.

- [Carmen accessibility](#)
- Streaming audio and video
- Synchronous course tools

Your mental health!

A recent American College Health Survey found stress, sleep problems, anxiety, depression, interpersonal concerns, death of a significant other and alcohol use among the top ten health impediments to academic performance. Students experiencing personal problems or situational crises during the quarter are encouraged to contact the College of Pharmacy Office of Student Services in room 150 Parks Hall (614-292-5001) OR OSU Counseling and Consultation Services (614-292-5766) for assistance, support and advocacy. This service is free and confidential.

Course schedule (tentative)

Week	Dates	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	January 8-12	<p>Lesson 1: Introducing Big History <i>No reading</i></p> <p>Lesson 2: The Modern Origin Story Reading: Christian et al., 1-14</p>
2	January 15-19	<p>Lesson 3: Big Bang cosmology (1) Reading: Christian et al, 14-22</p> <p>Lesson 4: Big Bang cosmology (2) <i>No new reading</i></p>
3	January 22-26	<p>Lesson 5: Entropy and Complex Systems <i>No new reading</i></p> <p>Lesson 6: First Complex Systems: Stars Reading: Christian et al, 22-31</p>
4	January 29-February 2	<p>Lesson 7: History of the Solar System Reading: Christian et al, 33-42</p> <p>Lesson 8: Earth History and Plate Tectonics Reading: Christian et al, 42-53</p>
5	February 5-9	<p>Lesson 9: What is Life and How Does it Evolve? Reading: Christian et al, 55-63</p> <p>Lesson 10: How did Life Begin? Reading: Christian et al, 63-68</p>

6	February 12-17	<p>Lesson 11: The Changing Earth System Reading: Big History, 68-76</p> <p>Lesson 12: Evolution and Complexity Reading: William C. Burger, <i>Complexity: The Evolution of Earth's Biodiversity and the Future of Humanity</i> (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2016), 201-36.</p>
7	February 19-23	<p>Lesson 13: Human Origins Reading: Christian et al, 79-92</p> <p>Lesson 14: Review and Midterm <i>No new reading</i></p>
8	February 26-March 2	<p>Lesson 15: The Paleolithic Reading: Christian et al, 93-101</p> <p>Lesson 16: Agriculture Reading: Christian et al, 103-16</p>
9	March 5-9	<p>Lesson 17: Collective Learning and Networks Reading: Big History Project lessons on collective learning</p> <p>Lesson 18: Political Organization <i>No new reading</i></p> <p>(NB: There is no textbook reading for lessons 18-22. This is time for you to complete your reading for your essay.)</p>
10	March 12-16	**Spring Break—No Classes**
11	March 19-23	<p>Lesson 19: Cooperation “Reading”: Radiolab podcast on game theory</p> <p>Lesson 20: Religion <i>No new reading</i></p>
12	March 26-30	<p>Lesson 21: Cities and Social Metabolism “Reading”: Radiolab podcast on cities</p> <p>(NB: There is only one lesson this week so that you can devote time to writing your essay draft)</p>
13	April 2-6	<p>Lesson 22: Summary and Case Study: Easter Island <i>No new reading</i></p>

		<p>Essay Draft Due by April 3 11:59PM</p> <p>Peer Review Exercise Due by April 6 11:59PM</p>
14	April 9-13	<p>Lesson 23: Globalization 1: Global Contact</p> <p>Reading: Fred Spier, <i>Big History and the Future of Humanity</i>, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 256-63</p> <p>Lesson 24: Globalization 2: Industrialization</p> <p>Reading: Spier, 264-71</p>
15	April 16-20	<p>Lesson 25: Globalization 3: The Information Age</p> <p>Reading: Spier, 271-81</p> <p>Lesson 26: The Human Future: Another Threshold?</p> <p>Reading: Christian et al, 289-300</p>
16	April 23 (Last day of class)	<p>Lesson 27: The Big Future</p> <p>Reading: Christian et al, 300-05</p>
17		Final Exam

<<date of syllabus and reminder to check Carmen>>

Hist 2xxx: Big History

<days and times>

<room>

Prof. S. White

259 Dulles Hall

(614)292-5596

white.2426@osu.edu

<office hours>

Course Goals:

“Big History” is the attempt to explain history at the very largest scales in the widest perspectives. This course presents two related challenges: First, we will work to understand the essential state of knowledge about cosmic, earth, evolutionary, and human history—what David Christian terms the “modern creation myth.” We will explore how researchers across a range of fields have posed and tested some of the key theories that help explain how the universe, planet, life, and humanity got to be the way they are. At the same time, we will work to understand and evaluate powerful conceptual tools and perspectives that try to explain history on vast scales. Students must be prepared to engage with these ideas seriously but critically. By the end of class, you should have a new appreciation of the contemporary state of natural and social sciences, and of the power and limits of different disciplinary methods.

General Education Historical Studies Goals

Learning goals: History courses develop students’ knowledge of how past events influence today’s society and help them understand how humans view themselves.

Expected Learning Outcomes

1. Students acquire a perspective on history and an understanding of the factors that shape human activity.
2. Students display knowledge about the origins and nature of contemporary issues and develop a foundation for future comparative understanding.
3. Students think, speak, and write critically about primary and secondary historical sources by examining diverse interpretations of past events and ideas in their historical contexts.

Rationale for Meeting Historical Studies Goals

Rationale for fulfilling the GE Learning Outcomes for Historical Study:

Goals of the course that fulfill the GE Learning Outcomes in Historical Study: History courses develop students' knowledge of how past events influence today's society and help them understand how humans view themselves through the following ways:

1. Critically examine theories of history, and historical methodologies
Students will explore how history operates at multiple scales from the whole of universal time down to events of the past century, as well as the connections among cosmic, earth, life, and human history.
2. Engage with contemporary and historical debates on specific regions, time periods and themes of the human past.
Students will examine contemporary environmental and climate change and human impacts on the planet in the wider context of earth and human history.
3. Through reading in primary and secondary sources and in-depth class discussion, students will access and critically examine social, political, economic, military, gender, religious, ecological, and ethnic/racial/national movements in a wider socio-cultural context.
Students will encounter and critique major theories of change that encompass human behavior in all of its complexity.
4. Students will carry out in-depth analysis in a final paper comparing distinct historical moments, social movements and their effects
Students will write an essay in multiple stages weighing the strengths and weaknesses of macrohistorical theories, including research to find criticisms and competing points of view.

Format:

The course will have two lectures and one discussion section each week. In most weeks, we will cover essential information based on a chapter of the textbook in the first class, and then explore a related issue in more detail during the second class. When possible, we will invite guest speakers with expertise in particular fields to discuss current topics and new discoveries.

<<NB: In practice, I will adopt the special topics according to the guest speakers available, or new discoveries and current issues in science. The topics below are only current suggestions, based on issues that have received recent attention in mainstream scientific literature, and which I could cover myself if necessary.>>

Course Policies:

Attendance: I will take note of attendance and participation in each class. Students are expected to complete the assigned readings each week and come prepared to discuss the material.

Grading: A (90-100), B (80-89), C (70-79), D (60-69), F (below 60). Plus and minus grades for scores within three points of the next letter grade (e.g., B- starts at 80, B starts at 83, B+ starts at 87).

Submitting Work: Please submit all work by email in a MS Word compatible format (.doc, .docx, .txt, or .rtf). Your assignment is not complete until it reaches my inbox in a readable format. Note that computer issues are not a valid excuse for late or incomplete work.

Late Work: Late work will receive 8 points off for every 24 hours late, weekends included, except in cases of documented family or medical emergencies. If you contact me at least four days before an assignment is due, I *might* in exceptional cases grant an extension. Assignments for other classes or other extracurricular activities are not a valid excuse for late work.

Assignments:

Attendance and Participation:

Students are expected to attend each lecture and to complete the reading for participation at each discussion section. Your attendance for all classes and participation at discussion sections will be worth 20% of your final average.

Quizzes:

The course will have frequent short-answer quizzes, on the lectures and reading. Students may use their own hand-written or typed notes for these quizzes, but not any material copied from other students or any other source. Quizzes missed will count as a 0. I will drop your lowest score and average the others for a combined 25% of your course grade.

Essay:

Each student will select one title from a list of books proposing some large overarching interpretation of history based on one of the big concepts—thermodynamics, game theory, evolutionary biology, etc.—that we will discuss in this class. You will read this work carefully and critically and evaluate whether the author's theory is sound or not. There will be four steps to this essay project, each with a different due date: a prospectus, a explanation of the author's case, a critique of the author's case (using two outside sources),

and a final essay synthesizing the explanation and critique. Please read the detailed essay instructions <attached> carefully before you begin.

Final Exam:

There will be a final exam testing major facts and ideas from the entire course, worth 20% of your final average.

Final Average:

20% Attendance and participation

25% Quizzes

35% Essay (including intermediate steps)

20% Final Exam

Reading:

The course will have three types of reading. First, there is the required textbook: David Christian, Cynthia Stokes Brown, and Craig Benjamin, *Big History: Between Nothing and Everything* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2013).

Second, students will select one book from a list for their essay assignment (see attached essay instructions).

Third, the professor or teaching assistant may assign additional short readings on discussion topics for each discussion section.

Schedule:

Week 1: Introducing “Big History”

1. What is Big History?

-*Big History*, introduction

2. Science as a “Modern Creation Myth”?

Week 2: The Universe

1. Origin of the Universe and Stars

-*Big History*, chapter 1

2. What is the Universe Made Of? Historical debates and current research

Week 3: The Solar System

1. The Sun and Planetary History

Big History, chapter 2

2. A “Goldilocks Planet”? Historical and modern debates on the uniqueness of Earth

Week 4: Life

1. Origins and Evolutionary Theory

Big History, chapter 3

2. Does Evolution have a Direction? Debates on teleology

Week 5: Humanity

1. Human Origins and Evolution

Big History, chapter 4

2. When Did We Become “Human”? Debates on hominid humanity

Week 6: Agriculture

1. Origins of Agriculture

Big History, chapter 5

2. Invasion or Coexistence? The archaeological and genetics of early farmers and hunter-gatherers

Week 7: Agrarian Civilizations (1)

1. Origins of Agrarian Civilizations

-Big History, chapter 6

2. Climate change and collapse? Holocene climate trends and historical influence

Week 8: Agrarian Civilizations (2)

1. Classical Empires in Eurasia

-Big History, chapter 7

2. What Drives Cooperation? Game theory approaches to macrohistory

Week 9: Agrarian Civilizations (3)

1. Religion, Culture, and Exchange across the Old World

-Big History, chapter 8

3. Do Ideas have a Life of Their Own? Theories and criticisms of cultural evolution

Week 10: Agrarian Civilizations (4)

1. Agrarian Civilizations in the Americas and the Pacific

-Big History, chapter 9

2. What Happened on Easter Island? Archaeology and the debate over an ecological parable

Week 11: Early Modern World

1. Global Connections 1000-1700

-Big History, chapter 10

2. A Connected World? The discoveries of network theory and its application to history

Week 12: Modernization

1. Origins of the Modern World 1700-1900

-*Big History*, chapter 10

2. Why did Violence Decline? Statistics and multidisciplinary perspectives

Week 13: The Anthropocene

1. Globalization 1900-2010

-*Big History*, chapter 12

2. When does the Anthropocene Begin? Debating a man-made geological epoch

Week 14: The Future

1. Scenarios of the Future

-*Big History*, chapter 13

2. Can We Guess the Future? A brief history of big predictions

Hist 2xxx: Big History

Essay Instructions

In addition to your regular reading questions, you have one essay assignment to be completed in multiple parts over the course of the semester. The goal of this assignment is to explore in depth and evaluate one approach to understanding the human condition through one or more of the disciplines discussed in class.

Please choose from one of the following books:

Ball, Philip. *Critical Mass: How One Thing Leads to Another*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004. (Big Idea: Apparently complex social behaviors often emerge from mere particle-like interactions of individuals.)

Diamond, Jared M. *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2005. (Big Idea: Geographical differences can explain the long-term ascendance of some nations over others.)

Gould, Stephen Jay. *Full House: The Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin*. New York: Harmony Books, 1996. (Big Idea: The faith in increasing complexity and progress is mostly a statistical illusion or a human delusion.)

Pinker, Steven. *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*. New York: Viking, 2011. (Big Idea: Evolutionary psychology can explain the persistence of violence in human history—and its recent decline. NB: This is a *very* long book, so students interested in this selection should consult with me about which chapters to read.)

Spier, Fred. *Big History and the Future of Humanity*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. (Big Idea: There is a continuum of increasing complexity throughout cosmic,

evolutionary, and human history, which can be understood in terms of the density of free energy flows.)

Waal, F. B. M. de. *Our Inner Ape*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2005. (Big Idea: Our primate heritage enlightens our understanding of human relations, politics, conflict, and cooperation.)

Wilson, Edward O. *The Social Conquest of Earth*. New York: Liveright, 2012. (Big Idea: Culture has allowed humans to live and evolve—*almost*—like eusocial insects.)

Wilson, Edward O. *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*. New York: Knopf, 1998. (Big Idea: We can and should now unite all the major branches of knowledge and bridge the sciences and humanities.)

Wright, Robert. *Nonzero: The Logic of Human Destiny*. New York: Vintage Books, 2000. (Big Idea: The history of human society is the rise of non-zero-sum collaboration.)

Step #1: Choose

-Select a book, and write a short explanation (about 200 words) of why you chose it, and what preliminary ideas you have about the author's theory. <due date>

Step #2: Explanation

-Read the book and write a formal summary of the author's argument of about 500 words. For now, focus on presenting the argument's *strengths*. <due date>

Step #3: Contextualize and Critique

-In an essay of about 500 words, briefly assess the context and limits of the author's approach and the *weaknesses* of his argument. Locate and cite at least two critical reviews of the book in question published in respectable journals, or direct challenges to the book in respectable published articles or monographs. <due date>

Step #4: Final Essay

-Write a formal essay of about 1600 words with a clear thesis statement, evaluating the strengths and weakness of the author's theory.

You will be graded holistically on the final essay and on all aspects of the writing process, for a total of 35% of your final class grade. Failure to complete any step of the essay will result in an automatic 10 points off your essay grade.

Please e-mail or see your TA or professor at office hours if you have any questions or concerns.

Concluding Notes:

Statement on Plagiarism and Misconduct: It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not

limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (<http://sja.osu.edu/page.asp?id=1>).

Here is a direct link for discussion of plagiarism:

http://cstw.osu.edu/writingCenter/handouts/research_plagiarism.cfm

Here is the direct link to the OSU Writing Center: <http://cstw.osu.edu>

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Statement on Registration: All students must be officially enrolled in the course by the end of the second full week of the semester. No requests to add the course will be approved by the Chair after that time. Enrolling officially and on time is solely the responsibility of the student.

Statement on Disability Services: Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu>

Arts and Sciences Distance Learning Course Component Technical Review Checklist

Course: History 2720 Big History

Instructor: S.A. White

Summary: Distance Learning Course Offering (DL)

Standard - Course Technology	Yes	Yes with Revisions	No	Feedback/recommendations
6.1 The tools used in the course support the learning objectives and competencies.	✓			The tools used in this course support the learning objectives and competencies in the following ways. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing exercises • Discussion posts • Peer review exercise • Weekly quick check quizzes • Weekly online office hours
6.2 Course tools promote learner engagement and active learning.	✓			Students will engage with the course materials and instructor on a weekly basis in the following ways. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carmen • Carmen Connect
6.3 Technologies required in the course are readily obtainable.	✓			All technologies being used for this course are readily obtainable through the Carmen LMS and/or a web browser.
6.4 The course technologies are current.	✓			All technologies being used for this course are current and available through the Carmen LMS and/or a web browser.
6.5 Links are provided to privacy policies for all external tools required in the course.	✓			There are no external tools being used for this course. All tools are part of the OSU core common tool set.
Standard - Learner Support				

7.1 The course instructions articulate or link to a clear description of the technical support offered and how to access it.	✓			A Link has been provided in the "Course technology section" of the syllabus for the technical support available for the Carmen LMS. A link has been included for the technical support offered for YouTube.
7.2 Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's accessibility policies and services.	✓			a
7.3 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution's academic support services and resources can help learners succeed in the course and how learners can obtain them.	✓			b
7.4 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution's student services and resources can help learners succeed and how learners can obtain them.	✓			c
Standard – Accessibility and Usability				
8.1 Course navigation facilitates ease of use.	✓			Recommend using the Carmen Distance Learning Course Shell to provide a consistent student-user experience in terms of navigation and access to content.
8.2 Information is provided about the accessibility of all technologies required in the course.	✓			All tools being used for this course are part of the OSU core common toolset and meet the university accessibility standards.
8.3 The course provides alternative means of access to course materials in formats that meet the needs of diverse learners.	✓			Recommend that resources be developed to address any requests for alternative means of access to course materials. These resources should be in formats that meet the needs of diverse learners.
8.4 The course design facilitates readability	✓			Recommend using the Carmen Distance Learning Course Shell to provide a consistent student-user experience in terms of navigation and access to content.
8.5 Course multimedia facilitate ease of use.	✓			All assignments and activities that use the OSU core common tool set at Ohio State facilitate ease of use with embedded multimedia.

Reviewer Information

- Date Reviewed: 10/24/17
- Reviewed By: Mike Kaylor

Notes:

- Page 1 GE comment/question response: Here is the information that was sent to me by Bernadette Vankeerbergen, Program Director, ASC Curricular and Assessment services in regards to your comment/question.
 - **If the course is a GE course, it must include the following:**
the GE category or categories it fulfills (e.g., Cultures and Ideas)
the “[GE Expected Learning Outcomes](#)” boilerplate language pertaining to the appropriate area(s)
a statement beneath these that explains how the course will satisfy the stated Expected Learning Outcomes

[The goals and expected learning outcomes for GE Historical Study are:](#)

Historical Study

Goals

Students recognize how past events are studied and how they influence today’s society and the human condition.

Expected Learning Outcomes

1. Students construct an integrated perspective on history and the factors that shape human activity.
2. Students describe and analyze the origins and nature of contemporary issues.
3. Students speak and write critically about primary and secondary historical sources by examining diverse interpretations of past events and ideas in their historical contexts.

[By the way, the course learning outcomes \(or learning goals\) are different from the GE goals and expected learning outcomes. So this course should have course goals and in addition the syllabus should include the information about GE Historical Study above.](#)

- On page 2 of the syllabus in the “Course materials” section remove the instructor place holder text.
- Page 2 GE comment/question response: Yes, please remove these two bullet points.
- Recommend that you write brief descriptions for all assignments listed in the “Grades” section of the syllabus. The curriculum committee will be looking for this information (e.g. what is the peer review exercise?).
- On page 4 of the syllabus in the “Faculty feedback and response time” section, remove references to the Carmen D2L system and leave Carmen statement for the Canvas version but remove the word Canvas. There is only one Carmen now.

^aThe University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know via email immediately so that we can privately discuss options. You are also welcome to register with Student Life Disability Services to establish reasonable accommodations. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue. **Consider putting text for the accessibility statement in BOLD 16 pt font.**

^bAdd to the syllabus this link with an overview and contact information for the student academic services offered on the OSU main campus. <http://advising.osu.edu/welcome.shtml>

^cAdd to the syllabus this link with an overview and contact information for student services offered on the OSU main campus. <http://ssc.osu.edu>. Also, consider including this link in the “Other Course Policies” section of the syllabus.

“This looks like a really interesting course, and if I was a student of history, natural science, anthropology, etc. I would be very interested in taking it.

I think the proposal is well thought out and would complement a number of facets of the ecology and aquatic sciences courses I'm involved with, as well as my global change ecology seminar course.

While the proposal hits on most of the main topics I would want to see included in a course of this scope, one thing that could benefit it is inclusion (on the several thousand yrs BP time frame) of the role of sea level stability, or lack thereof, as a primary determinant of the development of human societies. For example, there is a growing body of literature on how, following the most recent Holocene deglaciation (~20k yrs ago - present), sea level stabilized only a few thousand years ago and this allowed societies to flourish in coastal regions, which had profound impacts on maritime trade, the stability and growth of population centers in coastal regions, etc. The theory is that until sea level stabilized after deglaciation, human societies could not develop to nearly the extent they did once sea level rise slowed and essentially stopped for the last couple thousand years. This also has major implications for how societies are predicted to be destabilized again once sea level starts rising in the Anthropocene.

The instructor may be planning on including something on this in the course, but might be worth mentioning just in case they hadn't thought about it.”

“I think this sounds like an interesting course. I suspect it will be quite challenging for a 2xxx level course, considering the scope of topics to be covered. Expecting students to grasp evolutionary theory in one lecture may be a stretch; and I expect the same may apply to the other topics. There will be some overlap with quite a few courses on campus, but not enough to be concerned with. One thing I wondered about is whether there are any pre-requisites? Will this be a history student's first (only?) exposure to the scientific method and process? That aside, I support the proposal.”

“This sounds like a very interesting multidisciplinary course. As Doug mentioned, my only concern is that students gain a correct understanding of evolutionary theory. Is it a good idea to include debates on teleology? I would want students to be clear about the distinction between historical/current beliefs and scientific facts. Other than that, I fully support the scope of this topic. I think it is beneficial for students to see how science/ the environment are directly linked with human societies. Another interesting topic that could be covered is environmental anthropology as it directly focuses on the relationship between people and their environment, both in the present and past.”

“I think it sounds like a great course – especially for a General Education history course. It's an ambitious list of topics but very relevant. I would second Dr. Bauer's comments about sea levels and economic development. As a former student of physical geography and the geography of development I think those are crucial concepts to understanding historical events.”

From: [Baker, Paula](#)
To: [Bowerman, Ashley](#)
Subject: FW: concurrence request
Date: Thursday, April 24, 2014 12:12:15 PM

From: Baker, Paula
Sent: Wednesday, April 23, 2014 9:16 AM
To: McGraw, William
Subject: RE: concurrence request

Dear Scott,
Thanks for getting back to me so quickly!
Paula

From: McGraw, William
Sent: Wednesday, April 23, 2014 9:13 AM
To: Baker, Paula
Subject: RE: concurrence request

Hi Barbara,

We've looked the syllabus and it looks great. No obstacles or objections from Anthropology: we offer full concurrence.

Best of luck with the course.

Regards,
Scott

W. Scott McGraw, PhD
Professor
Department of Anthropology
The Ohio State University
4064 Smith Laboratory
174 West 18th Avenue
Columbus, OH 43210-1106

Phone: (614) 688-3794
Fax: (614) 292-4155
Email: mcgraw.43@osu.edu

From: Baker, Paula
Sent: Tuesday, April 22, 2014 5:42 PM
To: McGraw, William; Larsen, Clark
Subject: concurrence request

Dear Professors McGraw and Larson,
History is interested in offering a new course, "Big History," and we need the concurrence of Anthropology to go forward. I'm not sure if either of you is the correct contact, but if you could either

let me know who the correct contact is or -- better yet! -- process the request, I'd be most grateful.
We're hoping to offer the course next fall semester.
I've attached the syllabus.
Thanks,

Paula Baker
Associate Professor and Chair, Undergraduate Studies
Department of History

From: [Baker, Paula](#)
To: [Bowerman, Ashley](#)
Cc: [Vankeerbergen, Bernadette](#)
Subject: FW: concurrence request
Date: Wednesday, April 23, 2014 6:41:50 PM

Ashley,
Can you attach this to Sam's course?
Thanks,
Paula

From: dmterndrup@gmail.com [dmterndrup@gmail.com] on behalf of Don Terndrup
[terndrup@astronomy.ohio-state.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, April 23, 2014 6:34 PM
To: Baker, Paula
Subject: Re: concurrence request

Dear Paula,

I have reviewed your planned syllabus for the "Big History" course, and I concur that the course can go forward through the college process.

I do have a few concerns about how the course will run. One of the biggest issues I have in my own classes is that many students think that certain subjects (e.g., evolution or the Big Bang) are still matters for debate, when in fact the debate was settled long ago through accumulated evidence and strong, predictive theories. We now know, for example, that even though some people have a hard time accepting it, there is nothing about evolution that could possibly support any teleological point of view. Will the students be able to understand the differences between settled and open questions after taking this course?

Best wishes,

Don Terndrup

On Tue, Apr 22, 2014 at 6:29 PM, Baker, Paula <baker.973@osu.edu> wrote:

Dear Professor Terndrup,
The History department seeks your concurrence on a new course we'd like to offer. While it's obviously not a science course (it would carry Historical Studies GE credit), we need your concurrence for the course to go forward through the College process.
We'd like to begin offering the course next fall.
I've attached a syllabus.
Please let me know - an email is fine for the College's purposes.
Thanks,

Paula Baker
Associate Professor and Undergraduate Studies Chair
Department of History

--

Donald Terndrup

Ohio State University: terndrup.1@osu.edu

Personal: dmterndrup@gmail.com