

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Department of History

Fall 1986

History (also IES) 497

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A Natural History of Man

NHM is an effort to see human history whole, and in its place in the larger evolution of all life. This is a rather large enterprise, drawing on the fields of anthropology, biology, physics, prehistory, economics, etc., as well as history itself. Lectures are not meant to be authoritative; they present my current views on how to bring these matters together into some kind of coherent picture. Readings represent only my current acquaintance with the fields in question. It follows that students must be prepared to do a great deal of thinking for themselves. The course is designed to facilitate this.

Lectures on Tuesdays (full session) & Thursdays (half).

Discussions on Thursdays. I will divide the class into several smaller groups and these will meet separately at the same time; I will circulate. Early in the semester each group will gather with me for a day in the country or an evening in Madison.

Diaries. Six diary entries of about 600-1000 words, consisting of informal reflections on lectures, readings, etc., are due on the indicated dates. Each entry must list reading done since the last entry. I will comment and return. No grade, but bonuses for particularly interesting entries, and unbones for being late or too short.

Essay (not "term paper"). A short (9-12 page) and carefully-considered investigation of an important or interesting issue. See separate sheet for details and suggested topics. List tentative topics on pass-around sheet 23 Oct.; one page outlines due 6 Nov.; essays due 26 Nov., without fail.

Exams. Midterm (50 min) on 21 Oct, Endterm (90 min) on 4 Dec -- both based on advance lists of questions. Optional final -- see below.

Grades. Midterm is 25% of final grade, endterm and essay 35% each, with a bonus of 5% for the highest of the three. I will pass out course grades at the last class. Those who want to, may take the optional 90 minute final in exam week (also with advance question list). Revised course grade: lowest of the four drops out, the three remaining count 25%, 35%, 35% with 5% bonus for highest (and adjustment in case the dropped grade is the midterm).

Reading. There is a particularly varied and rich collection of readings listed on the following pages -- far too much to swallow in one semester. The rules reflect this. I expect you to read 2000 pages: about 1000 pages which everyone must read by Tuesday of the week it belongs to ("Required"), plus about 1000 which you choose yourself from the other readings ("Choice"). Almost all works listed in the syllabus are on Reserve (Helen C. White Library) -- check the Readings Finder. Seventeen of the more useful, readable and inexpensive works are also available at the University Book Store: three are required, the rest are optional.

Office hours in 5219 Humanities: Tuesdays 3-4, Fridays 10:30-11:30 or by agreement at other times.

EVOLUTION

1. Sep 2T - Layers. "Pictures."

Required

Hodgson 227-31 - devastating passage on maps & ethnocentrism.  
Thomas Kuhn on paradigms & paradigm change (in Truit & Solomons (eds.),  
pp. 100-06).

Choice

Geertz, Interpretation 368-404 - a masterpiece; how the Balinese perceive  
time and how this relates to their notions of self and society.

2. Sep 4R - Deevey curves. Discussions.

Required

Deevey - where the curves come from. His views on future population may be  
interesting but concentrate on the 3 curves and how he constructs them.

3. Sep 9T - Thermodynamics. Genetic evolution (see readings for #4 below).

Required

Dyson, "Energy in the universe" (in Scientific American, Energy & Power)  
- on the "hangups" that obstruct the slide down to maximum entropy.  
Gates, "The flow of energy in the biosphere" (also in Energy & Power), a fine  
compact survey. His opening sentences can be framed and hung on the wall.

4. Sep 11R - Genetic evolution (cont.). Discussions. (Diary 1 due)

Required

Schopf, "Evolution of earliest cells" and Valentine, "Evolution of multi-  
cellular plants & animals" (in Scientific American, Evolution) are fine  
surveys. Also in Schopf (Choice): Chapter III (origin of  
life) is excellent but tougher for those without much biology; Chapters VI  
(ecological systems), VII (behavior) and IX (adaptation) are valuable  
but more specialized.

Margulis - a lovely & readable essay on a fundamental idea she reintroduced  
to biology 15 years ago.

Dickerson - a good representative article on protein evolution. Built around  
a gorgeous full page map of a protein.

Cloud and Gibor, "The oxygen cycle" (in Scientific American, Biosphere) -  
oxygen, as they present it, offers the most insights for NHM. But see  
also Bolin on carbon and Penman on water in the same book -- Choice.

Choice

Thomas, chapters 1, 2, 6, 14, 15, 29 - elegant, brief and full of meat like  
the other essays in the book. Symbiosis & related themes are a special  
interest of his.

McAlester - esp. 3-27 and charts on pages 92, 110, 132, 138, 148. A textbook  
but clear and to the point. Could be useful if you're finding all the  
biology here hard to handle.

5. Sep 16T - Rules of the game.

Choice

Simpson - Part I is a narrative of evolution (animals only - a common and bad habit). Part II is philosophical questions more useful for NHM -- see esp. chapters 12, 13, 15.

Corner - does the plants. A superb and loving book if you have the time to get into it.

FIRST CURVE: THE PRIMAL ORDER

6. Sep 18R - Roots. Discussions.

Required

Natural History Museum -- Ancestors - a good quick survey of hominid evolution.

Fox - a lively popularizing article by a revisionist anthropologist.

Geertz, Interpretation 33-83 - two fine essays. Wider, deeper and more academic than Fox, and some of it very hard work, but like all Geertz very well written and exciting.

Ancestors

Choice

Spuhler (ed.) - old and partly outdated, but a marvelously short, packed & lively colloquium. Esp. the pieces by Spuhler himself, Gerard, and Sahlins.

7. Sep 23T - Emergence. Film. (Diary 2 due)

Required

Tanner & Zihlman (Pt I) - an admirable brief statement of a new approach emerging from recent work in the feminist perspective.

Hockett & Ascher - a tightly-drawn line of reasoning. Not too difficult but deserves two readings. Source of Romer's Rule (p17) and Hockett's Law (p16, note 4).

Hockett, "Origin of speech" - the crucial feature of speech treated all by itself and more abstractly than in Hockett & Ascher. For an earlier version of his study of speech see his piece in Spuhler (ed.). Pay special attention to pattern variables #10 to 13 for discussion.

Choice

Gough

Slocum

Two further articles showing the extraordinarily fruitful effects of the feminist impulse on studies in this field.

Thomas - Chapter 17.

8. Sep 25R - Film. Discussions.

Choice

Two wide-ranging essays in Lee & DeVore: Washburn & Lancaster, "Evolution of hunting" (293-303) and Laughlin, "Hunting..." (304-20). Compare W & L's emphasis on tools, Laughlin's on behavior. Occasional patches of jargon in Laughlin; skate around them. See also Washburn on "Tools & biological evolution" in Spuhler (ed.).

9. Sep 30T - Adaptive radiation.
10. Oct 2R - World building. Discussions. (Diary 3 due)

Required

Berger 1-28 - a powerful book. Densely-packed and built around a special set of concepts, but mercifully free of mere decorative jargon.

SECOND CURVE: THE CIVIC ORDER

11. Oct 7T - Tehuacan.

Required

MacNeish - the basic facts on Tehuacan itself.

Jacobs, Chapters 1 & 2 - challenges everybody by arguing that towns preceded domestication. Fine, easy style.

Edgar Anderson - esp. Chapters 1, 2, 4, 9. Absorbing reading on weeds and dump heaps. Attractive casual style. Read at least two chapters.

Harlan, "The plants & animals that nourish man" - an excellent, comprehensive article in an outrageous book, a classic of pro-"development" propaganda.

Choice

Bronson, "The earliest farming: demography as cause and consequence" in S. Polgar (ed.), Population, ecology and social evolution 53-78

Harlan, Crops and Man - the most recent and best survey of this complex field. Nicely done, and written for the general reader.

Rappoport, "The flow of energy in an agricultural society" (in Scientific American, Energy and Power) - New Guinea slash-and-burn farming in its local ecosystem. Note esp. his remarks at the end.

Allen, TFH, "Neolithic urban primacy: the case against the invention of agriculture" - a fine lusty assault on orthodox views; a botanist leagues himself with Jacobs.

McNeill (Rise 64-652 or World History 22-278) covers the second curve. Rise is the only good survey of recorded history; World History is the abridged text version.

12. Oct 9R - Tehuacan (cont.) Village farming. Film.
13. Oct 14T - Civic Order. Emergence.

Required

Redfield, Peasant society and culture - Chapter 3 (pp 40-59), "The social organization of tradition." On the Great Tradition and the Little Tradition.

Choice

Fried - a shrewd analysis of the stages of social organization leading up to the civic order. Good frame in which to set the problems of emergence.

Choice for Session 13 continued on next page.

Choice (cont.)

---There are three really first-class studies of the emergence of the civic order in different centers:

Adams - a model comparative study of Mesopotamia and Mesoamerica. Shortest and easiest of the three. Emphasizes social stratification.

Wheatley - Part I is China in detail. Part II, general and comparative, is the most useful for NHM. Hard reading but don't be put off by his learned style. Emphasizes religion.

Renfrew - his case is the Bronze Age Aegean. For NHM the best section is the general introduction (3-60; required). Part I is detailed and technical. Part II has more meat for NHM, especially in the later chapters, culminating in Chapter 21, pp 476-504.

--- Other works in the high-quality literature on this subject:

Harry Pearson - "The economy has no surplus" in Polanyi, Trade and Market... (320-41). Challenges the common notion of economic surplus.

Carneiro - a short, sharp essay emphasizing war and environmental or social "circumscription."

14. Oct 16R - Kingship and religion. Discussions. (Diary 4 due)  
(Advance questions for midterm)

15. Oct 21T - Judgements; EXAM

16. Oct 23R - Diffusion. (Tentative essay topics due)

Required

Kroeber - pages 473-6, 485-7, 497-508, 530-7 - various stories of item diffusions, very nicely told. If you like Kroeber read the rest of Chapters 12 (diffusions) and 13 (the alphabet).

Hodgson - a superb essay that provides a master concept: the spread of the "civilized zone" itself. May take a second reading and well worth it.

17. Oct 28T - Cycles.

Required

Skinner - a crisp article by a brilliant anthropologist. On the dynastic cycle in China, and much else.

Ben Anderson 1-19 - the apparently elementary notion of political "power" in two altogether different forms, ours and that of the civic order Javanese.

Goody and Watt - an absorbing essay on writing, one of the major features of the civic order.

Choice

Huizenga - a bit old-fashioned but a tremendous idea.

18. Oct 30R - Limits. Discussions. (Diary 5 due)

Choice

Thomas, Chapter 3 - the connection here is between termite architecture and the Tower of Babel.

THIRD CURVE: THE TECHNIC ORDER

19. Nov 4T - Roots. Breaking the circle: space.

Required

Ellul, Technological society - v-viii, 3-22, 64-167. Brilliant and perverse in the French mandarin style but quite easy reading. Comes closest to capturing the essence of the technic order. In particular Ellul puts technology firmly in its place as no more than one manifestation of a much larger phenomenon.

Mumford, Technics and Civilization, 3-59. Mumford is bolder (or foolhardier) and broader (or shallower) than White on much the same subjects. Read whole book if you can.

Choice

Berger, 105-53 - on the Biblical/Christian tradition: transcendence, immanence & secularization. (summarized in lecture)

McNeill, Rise 538-59 - on tensions within the older Western civic tradition.

McNeill, Rise 565 to end, World History 287 to end - covers roughly the third curve.

White, Medieval - three short chapters on particular topics in early European technology. Ignore the footnotes and it reads very freely. Order of readability is Chapters 2, 1, 3.

Needham - read one of the essays collected here, e.g., No. 1, 2 or 7. Needham is the cure for any notions that science and technology are somehow the private property of Europeans. And much more -- he's one of the greats.

20. Nov 6R - Breaking the circle: time. Discussions. (Essay outlines due)

Required

Eliade, Chapter 1 - reminds one that "myth" and "mythical" are not only derogatory words. Presents pre-technic mythic perceptions of space and time in an easily readable form.

Giedion, 14-31 - an engaging and thought-provoking book, profusely illustrated. The topical arrangement makes it easy to dip into for Choice.

21. Nov 11T - Breaking the circle: energy.

Choice

--- Readings on the economic domain in general:

Polanyi, Primitive p. ix-xlvi - an introduction to Polanyi and his work by George Dalton.

Polanyi, Trade and Market - esp. 97-114, 243-70. Few revisionists have cut so deeply as Polanyi. In particular he and his supporters argue that the dominant market economy that appeared at the opening of the modern era was a gigantic historical deviation.

Choice (cont.)

Barnet and Muller - on the multinational corporation. Highly readable.

22. Nov 13R - Breaking the circle: society. Discussions. (Diary 6 due)

Required

Foucault, 3-7, 135-94 - a magnificent and perverse book which, though Foucault would vehemently deny it, offers deep insight on the emergence of the technic order.

Smith, English Language, final chapter. In a brief survey of meaning changes in English words he matter-of-factly sketches a veritable revolution in the way we have come to see the world in the Technic Order.

Weber, Chapters 12 & 18 (Choice: Chapters 6 & 17). A marvelously live picture of how the Technic Order penetrated the French countryside, and the lives of individuals, in the decades after 1870.

Braverman, 45-151 - a magnificent book. He thinks he disagrees with Ellul but in fact his "capitalism" is the same inexorable force as Ellul's "technique," the master compulsion of the Technic Order.

Choice

Polanyi, Great Transformation 33-76 - flawed but still one of the better treatments of the emergence of the Technic Order. Source of "embedded" and "disembedded."

Giedion, 169-209 - how, why & when we got the cotton wool now called "bread." The same trend Braverman is talking about but seen from a different angle.

23. Nov 18T - Technic master picture. Diffusion: the "Expansion of Europe"

Choice

Crosby - the best survey of the greatly-accelerated world-wide movements of plants, animals and diseases since 1492.

24. Nov 20R - Diffusion: the Technic Order.

25. Nov 25T - Prometheus unbound. Discussions. (Essays due)

Required

Ellul, Propaganda ix-xvii, 88-105, 138-160. A somewhat erratic book, but these sections cut as deeply as anything in his Technological Society.

THANKSGIVING

(Dec 1M - Advance questions for endterm exam - collect at 5219 Humanities)

26. Dec 2T - Prometheus rebound. Discussion: exam questions.

NHM 86 p8

27. Dec 4R - ENDTERM.

FORESIGHT

28. Dec 9T - The acceleration of history.

Choice

Thomas, Chapter 21.

29. Dec 11R - Prospect. (Advance questions for optional final exam)

READINGS FINDER

\* -- on Reserve  
UBS -- Available in University Book Store  
Coll -- in College Library (H.C. White)

Adams, Robert -- Evolution of Urban Society \*GN 490 A4  
Allen, TFH -- "Neolithic Urban Primacy: The Case  
Against the Invention of Agriculture" \*  
Anderson, Ben -- "Idea of Power in Javanese Culture"  
in Claire Holt (ed), Culture & Politics in Indonesia \*JQ 762 H6  
Anderson, Edgar -- Plants, Man & Life \*SB 107.5 A5  
Barnet, Richard & Ronald Muller -- Global Reach, the  
Power of Multinational Corporations \*HD 69 17 B32  
Berger, Peter L. -- Sacred Canopy \*BL 60 B42 UBS  
Braverman, Harry -- Labor & Monopoly Capital: The  
Degradation of Work in the 20th Century \*HD 51 B7 UBS  
Bronson, Bennett -- "The Earliest Farming: Demography  
as Cause and Consequence" 53-78 \*  
Carneiro, Robert -- "The Origin of the State" \*RB Hist C2644 TH  
Corner, EJH -- Life of Plants QK 45 C59 Coll  
Crosby, AW, Jr. -- Columbian Exchange \*E 98 D6 C7  
Deevey, Edward S. Jr. -- "Human Population"  
a. Offprint UBS  
b. in Shepard, Paul & David McKinley (eds) --  
Subversive Science \*HM 206 S53  
Dickerson, Richard -- "Structure & History of an  
Ancient Protein" \*RB Hist D5887 ST UBS  
Eliade, Mircea -- Cosmos & History (also titled: Myth  
of the Eternal Return) \*BD 701 E38 UBS  
Ellul, Jacques -- Technological Society \*T14 E553 UBS  
Ellul, Jacques -- Propaganda \*HM 263 E413  
Foucault, Michel -- Discipline & Punish \*8HV 8666 F6813 UBS  
Fox, Robin -- "The Cultural Animal"  
a. Encounter article - xerox \*RB Hist F6788 CU  
b. in JF Eisenberg (ed), Man and Beast \*BF 671 M26  
Fried, Morton -- Evolution of Political Society \*GN 490 F7  
Geertz, Clifford -- Interpretation of Cultures \*GN 315 G36  
Giedion, Siegfried -- Mechanization Takes Command \*T19 G54 UBS  
Goody, Jack & Ian Watt -- "Consequences of Literacy" \*RB Hist G6283 CO  
Gough, Kathleen -- "Origin of the Family" \*RB Wom St G6834 OR  
Harlan, Jack - Crops & Man \*SB 71 H3  
Harlan, Jack -- "Plants & Animals that Nourish Man"  
in Scientific American, Food & Agriculture \*S 523 F65  
Hockett, Charles -- "Origins of Speech" \*RB Hist H6924 OR UBS  
Hockett & Ascher -- "The Human Revolution" in Shepard  
& McKinley (eds) -- Subversive Science \*HM 206 S53  
Hodgson, Marshall -- "Interrelations of Societies in  
History" \*RB Hist H7056 IN  
Huizenga, Johan -- Homo Ludens \*CB 151 H815

Jacobs, Jane -- Economy of Cities	*HT 321 J32	
Kroeber, Alfred -- Anthropology	*GN 24 K7 1948	
Lee, Richard & Irven DeVore (eds) -- Man the Hunter	*GN 422 S9	
McAlester, A Lee -- History of Life	*QH 366 M24	
McNeill, William -- A World History	*D 21 M32	
McNeill, William -- Rise of the West	*CB 59 M3	
MacNeish, Richard -- "Origins of New World Civilization"	*F 1219.1 T224 M3	
Margulis, Lynn -- "Symbiosis and Evolution"	*RB Hist M4050 SY	UBS
Mumford, Lewis -- Technics and Civilization	*T 15 M8	UBS
Natural History Museum -- Ancestors	*	UBS
Needham, Joseph -- The Grand Titration	*Q 127 C5 N42	
Polanyi, Karl -- Primitive, Archaic & Modern Economies	*HB 75 P67	
Polanyi, Karl -- Trade & Market in the Early Empires	*HC 31 P6	
Polanyi, Karl -- The Great Transformation	*HC 53 P6	
Redfield, Robert -- Peasant Society & Culture (bound in same volume with another Redfield book: Little Community)	*HM 131 R385	
Renfrew, Colin -- Emergence of Civilization	*DF 220 R45	
Scientific American -- The Biosphere	*QH 311 B55	UBS
Scientific American -- Energy and Power	*TJ 153 E478	UBS
Scientific American -- Evolution	*QH 366.2 E853	UBS
Simpson, George -- Meaning of Evolution	*QH 366 S58 1967	
Skinner, G. William -- "Chinese Peasants & the Closed Community"	*RB Hist S5640 CH	
Slocum, Sally -- "Woman the Gatherer" in Rayna Reiter (ed), Toward an Anthropology of Women	*GN 294 T68	
Smith, Logan P -- The English Language	PE 1073 S6	
Spuhler, JN (ed) -- Evolution of Man's Capacity for Culture	*QL 737 P9 S84	
Tanner, Nancy & A. Zihlman -- "Women in Evolution (Pt I)"	*RB Hist T2150 WO	
Thomas, Lewis -- Lives of a Cell	*QH 331 T45 1974	UBS
Truitt, Willis & TWG Solomons (eds) -- Science, Technology & Freedom	*Q 175.5 T78	
Weber, Eugene -- Peasants into Frenchmen	HN 425 W42	
Wheatley, Paul -- Pivot of the Four Quarters	*HT 147 C48 W5	
White, Lynn T., Jr. -- Medieval Technology & Social Change	*T 17 W5	