



# MHPG852

## Big History and Interdisciplinary Curriculum

S1 External 2015

*Dept of Modern History, Politics & International Relations*

### Contents

---

<a href="#"><u>General Information</u></a>	2
<a href="#"><u>Learning Outcomes</u></a>	3
<a href="#"><u>General Assessment Information</u></a>	3
<a href="#"><u>Assessment Tasks</u></a>	4
<a href="#"><u>Delivery and Resources</u></a>	6
<a href="#"><u>Unit Schedule</u></a>	6
<a href="#"><u>Policies and Procedures</u></a>	7
<a href="#"><u>Graduate Capabilities</u></a>	9

---

#### **Disclaimer**

Macquarie University has taken all reasonable measures to ensure the information in this publication is accurate and up-to-date. However, the information may change or become out-dated as a result of change in University policies, procedures or rules. The University reserves the right to make changes to any information in this publication without notice. Users of this publication are advised to check the website version of this publication [or the relevant faculty or department] before acting on any information in this publication.

## General Information

### Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

David Christian

[david.christian@mq.edu.au](mailto:david.christian@mq.edu.au)

Contact via [david.christian@mq.edu.au](mailto:david.christian@mq.edu.au)

### Other Staff

Tracy Sullivan

[tracy.sullivan@mq.edu.au](mailto:tracy.sullivan@mq.edu.au)

Contact via [tracy.sullivan@mq.edu.au](mailto:tracy.sullivan@mq.edu.au)

### Library Staff

Melinda Stewart

[melinda.stewart@mq.edu.au](mailto:melinda.stewart@mq.edu.au)

### Credit points

4

### Prerequisites

Admission to MA in (History or Modern History) or PGDipArts in Modern History or PGCertArts in Modern History

### Corequisites

### Co-badged status

### Unit description

Big History explores the origins of the universe and humankind as an historical narrative framed at the largest possible scales, deepening our understanding of who we are and where we come from. Inherent in understanding the plethora of linked stories throughout the Big History framework is the intertwining of knowledge drawn from an array of disciplines; from astronomy to geology, sociology to anthropology. This makes Big History an interdisciplinary undertaking on the largest scale. This unit will combine the latest theory and research in Big History and interdisciplinary education. The role of interdisciplinarity in meeting the educational needs of the 21st century learner in the context of the school will be explored. With a focus on practical classroom application the unit will bridge the gap between theory and practice to provide meaningful educational experiences for educators and their students. The main focus of this unit will be secondary education, however, the themes and concepts explored will also be relevant to the primary and tertiary contexts.

## Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

## Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the inter-disciplinary framework of Big History
- Examine the role of Big History in supporting inter-disciplinary learning and teaching
- Critically reflect on existing Big History teaching practice and understanding
- Apply Big History concepts and ideas to inter-disciplinary teaching and learning
- Plan, revise, self-assess and submit unit assessment activities according to schedule
- Use appropriate research methods and bibliographical and referencing systems
- Demonstrate the ability to communicate with and respond to the views of other participants in the unit

## General Assessment Information

**Content:** The course runs on two parallel tracks

### TRACK 1: BIG HISTORY CONTENT

- The course will work through the big history story, a profoundly trans-disciplinary story that requires trans-disciplinary teaching. The story begins with the origins of the Universe, and tracks the slow increase in complexity as stars appeared, then new chemical elements, then planets, living organisms and ultimately, one of the most complex entities we know of, human societies.

### TRACK 2: CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES OF INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING

- Bouncing off the big history story, the course will begin by discussing both the possibilities and the difficulties of teaching across multiple disciplines.
- It will discuss broad general concepts and approaches that can help us connect different disciplines, such as the idea of origin stories and the theme of increasing complexity.
- It will also discuss the distinctive pedagogical concept of 'claim testers', a practical way of exploring the epistemological challenges of interdisciplinary study and teaching.
- Most of the course will explore the challenges of teaching and communicating particular aspects of the big history agenda, such as the origins and evolution of life on earth and the distinctive role of humans and human societies in the biosphere.

## Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
<a href="#">Quiz 1</a>	10%	24 April
<a href="#">First Short Essay</a>	10%	24 April
<a href="#">Quiz 2</a>	10%	5 June
<a href="#">Second Short Essay</a>	10%	5 June
<a href="#">Action Research Project</a>	50%	5 June
<a href="#">Online Discussions</a>	10%	5 June

### Quiz 1

Due: **24 April**

Weighting: **10%**

First short quiz

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the inter-disciplinary framework of Big History

### First Short Essay

Due: **24 April**

Weighting: **10%**

First short essay

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Critically reflect on existing Big History teaching practice and understanding
- Apply Big History concepts and ideas to inter-disciplinary teaching and learning
- Plan, revise, self-assess and submit unit assessment activities according to schedule

### Quiz 2

Due: **5 June**

Weighting: **10%**

Second short quiz

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the inter-disciplinary framework of Big History

## Second Short Essay

Due: **5 June**

Weighting: **10%**

Second short essay

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Critically reflect on existing Big History teaching practice and understanding
- Apply Big History concepts and ideas to inter-disciplinary teaching and learning
- Plan, revise, self-assess and submit unit assessment activities according to schedule

## Action Research Project

Due: **5 June**

Weighting: **50%**

Major Project

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the inter-disciplinary framework of Big History
- Examine the role of Big History in supporting inter-disciplinary learning and teaching
- Critically reflect on existing Big History teaching practice and understanding
- Apply Big History concepts and ideas to inter-disciplinary teaching and learning
- Plan, revise, self-assess and submit unit assessment activities according to schedule
- Use appropriate research methods and bibliographical and referencing systems

## Online Discussions

Due: **5 June**

Weighting: **10%**

Online discussions

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Examine the role of Big History in supporting inter-disciplinary learning and teaching
- Critically reflect on existing Big History teaching practice and understanding
- Apply Big History concepts and ideas to inter-disciplinary teaching and learning
- Demonstrate the ability to communicate with and respond to the views of other participants in the unit

## Delivery and Resources

### Teaching Mode:

This course will be taught entirely online, using the iLearn web site. Discussions will be online, most of the course materials are available online and you will be asked to submit your work online.

### Main Text:

David Christian, Cynthia Stokes Brown & Craig Benjamin, *Big History: Between Nothing and Everything*, McGraw/Hill, 2014 (available in hard back from the University Co-op bookstore, and also as an ebook)

### Optional Texts:

David Christian, *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004). David Christian, *This Fleeting World: A Short History of Humanity* (Berkshire Publishing: 2008), a short overview of human history. Fred Spier, *Big History and the Future of Humanity* (Wiley-Blackwell: 2011), very good on the theory of complexity

### Online materials:

The weekly readings will be available on line

Much of the material we will explore can be found at the web site of the Big history Project, <http://www.bighistoryproject.com/portal>

This unit has an online presence. Login is via: <https://ilearn.mq.edu.au/>

Students are required to have regular access to a computer and the internet. Mobile devices alone are not sufficient.

- For technical support go to: [http://mq.edu.au/about\\_us/offices\\_and\\_units/informatics/help](http://mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/informatics/help)
- For student quick guides on the use of iLearn go to: [http://mq.edu.au/iLearn/student\\_info/guides.htm](http://mq.edu.au/iLearn/student_info/guides.htm)

## Unit Schedule

**WEEK 1: 2 March: Introduction to this Unit: Big History & Interdisciplinarity**

**WEEK 2: 9 March: What is Big History & What is Interdisciplinarity?**

**WEEK 3: 16 March: Big Bang – interdisciplinary teaching and thinking**

Submit topic for Action Research Project

**WEEK 4: 23 March: Stars – Making thinking visible in Big History (claim-testing)**

**WEEK 5: 30 March: Chemical elements: Chronology & scale in Big History**

MID SEMESTER BREAK

Thur Apr 2, last day of classes, Apr 3 Good Fri, Apr 6 Holiday

**WEEK 6: 20 April: Planets, Solar System, Earth: Approaching multiple literacies for students in Big History**

Complete first quiz

**WEEK 7: 27 April: Life, the role of narrative in teaching Big History**

Submit detailed plan for Action Research Project

**WEEK 8: 4 May: Collective Learning, problem-based learning & big history**

**WEEK 9: 11 May: Agriculture, assessment & big history**

**WEEK 10: 18 May: Modern Revolution, integration big history curriculum into existing curriculum**

**WEEK 11: 25 May: What comes next? Developing evidence-based hypotheses - bringing it all together**

**WEEK 12: 5 June: Submit Action Research Project**

Complete second quiz & second short essay

## **Policies and Procedures**

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy [http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic\\_honesty/policy.html](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html)

Assessment Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Grievance Management Policy [http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance\\_management/policy.html](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html)

Disruption to Studies Policy [http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption\\_studies/policy.html](http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html) *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

## Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: [https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student\\_conduct/](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/)

## Results

Results shown in *iLearn*, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit <ask.mq.edu.au>.

## Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

## Learning Skills

Learning Skills ([mq.edu.au/learningskills](http://mq.edu.au/learningskills)) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

## Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

## Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at <ask.mq.edu.au>

## IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). The policy



applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

## **Graduate Capabilities**

### **PG - Capable of Professional and Personal Judgment and Initiative**

Our postgraduates will demonstrate a high standard of discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgment. They will have the ability to make informed choices and decisions that reflect both the nature of their professional work and their personal perspectives.

This graduate capability is supported by:

#### **Learning outcomes**

- Critically reflect on existing Big History teaching practice and understanding
- Apply Big History concepts and ideas to inter-disciplinary teaching and learning

### **PG - Discipline Knowledge and Skills**

Our postgraduates will be able to demonstrate a significantly enhanced depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content knowledge in their chosen fields.

This graduate capability is supported by:

#### **Learning outcomes**

- Examine the role of Big History in supporting inter-disciplinary learning and teaching
- Critically reflect on existing Big History teaching practice and understanding
- Apply Big History concepts and ideas to inter-disciplinary teaching and learning
- Use appropriate research methods and bibliographical and referencing systems

#### **Assessment tasks**

- Quiz 1
- First Short Essay
- Quiz 2
- Second Short Essay
- Action Research Project
- Online Discussions

### **PG - Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking**

Our postgraduates will be capable of utilising and reflecting on prior knowledge and experience, of applying higher level critical thinking skills, and of integrating and synthesising learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments. A characteristic of this form of thinking is the generation of new, professionally oriented knowledge through personal or group-based critique of practice and theory.

This graduate capability is supported by:

### **Learning outcomes**

- Demonstrate an understanding of the inter-disciplinary framework of Big History
- Examine the role of Big History in supporting inter-disciplinary learning and teaching
- Critically reflect on existing Big History teaching practice and understanding
- Apply Big History concepts and ideas to inter-disciplinary teaching and learning

### **Assessment tasks**

- First Short Essay
- Second Short Essay
- Action Research Project

## **PG - Research and Problem Solving Capability**

Our postgraduates will be capable of systematic enquiry; able to use research skills to create new knowledge that can be applied to real world issues, or contribute to a field of study or practice to enhance society. They will be capable of creative questioning, problem finding and problem solving.

This graduate capability is supported by:

### **Learning outcomes**

- Critically reflect on existing Big History teaching practice and understanding
- Apply Big History concepts and ideas to inter-disciplinary teaching and learning
- Plan, revise, self-assess and submit unit assessment activities according to schedule
- Use appropriate research methods and bibliographical and referencing systems

### **Assessment tasks**

- First Short Essay
- Second Short Essay
- Action Research Project

## **PG - Effective Communication**

Our postgraduates will be able to communicate effectively and convey their views to different social, cultural, and professional audiences. They will be able to use a variety of technologically supported media to communicate with empathy using a range of written, spoken or visual formats.

This graduate capability is supported by:

### **Learning outcome**

- Demonstrate the ability to communicate with and respond to the views of other

participants in the unit

## Assessment tasks

- Quiz 1
- First Short Essay
- Quiz 2
- Second Short Essay
- Action Research Project
- Online Discussions

## PG - Engaged and Responsible, Active and Ethical Citizens

Our postgraduates will be ethically aware and capable of confident transformative action in relation to their professional responsibilities and the wider community. They will have a sense of connectedness with others and country and have a sense of mutual obligation. They will be able to appreciate the impact of their professional roles for social justice and inclusion related to national and global issues

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- Plan, revise, self-assess and submit unit assessment activities according to schedule
- Demonstrate the ability to communicate with and respond to the views of other participants in the unit

## Assessment task

- Online Discussions