



MHIX115

An Introduction to Big History

S1 OUA 2017

Dept of Modern History, Politics & International Relations

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Lorna Barrow

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Prerequisites

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

While most history units look in detail at a particular country, theme or period, this unit surveys history on the biggest possible scale. It begins with the origins of the Universe and goes on to tell a series of linked stories about the origins of the stars and planets; the earth and its inhabitants; human beings; various types of human societies; and global interactions to the present day. Students in the unit explore the changing interactions between people, and between people and the environment. In so doing, they are encouraged to think about the kinds of evidence available to historians and the role that history can play in understanding the local and global communities that people belong to today. Finally, the unit invites students to think about what they regard as the central themes of world histories and big history. No prior knowledge of science or history is required. All enrolment queries should be directed to Open Universities Australia (OUA): see www.open.edu.au

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.open.edu.au/student-admin-and-support/key-dates/>

Learning Outcomes

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

Analyse and express your judgement about a range of historical phenomena in written form

Read literature from different historical disciplines and interpret written and material evidence with appreciation and understanding

Plan, revise and submit written work according to schedule

Understand the relationship between human history and the natural sciences

Draw together and judge pre-selected and self-located evidence to provide an analysis of a major historical phenomenon in big history

Construct a synopsis of big history, highlighting a self-selected theme

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Essay 1	20%	No	Midnight, Sunday Week 6
Essay 2	30%	No	Midnight, Sunday Week 10
Synoptic essay	40%	No	Midnight, Sunday Week 13
Online participation	10%	No	Weekly

Essay 1

Due: **Midnight, Sunday Week 6**

Weighting: **20%**

In this assessment you are required to write an analytical and argumentative paper of **1200 words** on one (1) of seven possible topics. You will need to base your paper on specific evidence drawn from lectures, tutorial discussions, and the readings. You should undertake some additional reading and research beyond the required reading for the Tutorial Topic that relates to the question – the Suggested Additional Readings listed for each Tutorial Topic are a good place to start but these are not exhaustive.

Your essay must be fully referenced, including footnotes and a bibliography – see the referencing guidelines on the unit website for instructions. The footnotes and bibliography are not included in the word count.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Analyse and express your judgement about a range of historical phenomena in written form
- Read literature from different historical disciplines and interpret written and material evidence with appreciation and understanding
- Plan, revise and submit written work according to schedule
- Understand the relationship between human history and the natural sciences
- Draw together and judge pre-selected and self-located evidence to provide an analysis of a major historical phenomenon in big history

Essay 2

Due: **Midnight, Sunday Week 10**

Weighting: **30%**

In this assessment you are required to write an analytical and argumentative paper of **1700**

words on one (1) of eleven possible topics. You will need to base your paper on specific evidence drawn from lectures, tutorial discussions, and the readings. You should undertake some additional reading and research beyond the required reading for the Tutorial Topic that relates to the question – the Suggested Additional Readings listed for each Tutorial Topic are a good place to start but these are not exhaustive.

Your essay must be fully referenced, including footnotes and a bibliography – see the referencing guidelines on the unit website for instructions. The footnotes and bibliography are not included in the word count.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Analyse and express your judgement about a range of historical phenomena in written form
- Read literature from different historical disciplines and interpret written and material evidence with appreciation and understanding
- Plan, revise and submit written work according to schedule
- Understand the relationship between human history and the natural sciences
- Draw together and judge pre-selected and self-located evidence to provide an analysis of a major historical phenomenon in big history

Synoptic essay

Due: **Midnight, Sunday Week 13**

Weighting: **40%**

The final, synoptic essay **2000 words**, takes the place of an exam, so it will not be returned with comments. The synoptic essay requires you to attempt an overview of the entire course, because what makes big history distinctive is not the details, but rather the way it can help you see interconnections between many different areas of knowledge. So the synoptic essay will encourage you to develop your ability to see connections between different areas of the course. Everyone will be asked to answer the same question: “**What, in your view, was the most important single theme of MHIX115 : An Introduction to Big History? Give examples from different parts of the course to support your view.**” As you work on the synoptic essay, make sure you touch on several different parts of the course, and also that you are aware of the rubrics that we will use as we mark the essay.

Your essay must be fully referenced, including footnotes and a bibliography – see the referencing guidelines on the unit website for instructions. The footnotes and bibliography are not included in the word count.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Analyse and express your judgement about a range of historical phenomena in written form

- Read literature from different historical disciplines and interpret written and material evidence with appreciation and understanding
- Plan, revise and submit written work according to schedule
- Understand the relationship between human history and the natural sciences
- Draw together and judge pre-selected and self-located evidence to provide an analysis of a major historical phenomenon in big history
- Construct a synopsis of big history, highlighting a self-selected theme

Online participation

Due: **Weekly**

Weighting: **10%**

The online discussion task, undertaken through the iLearn site, tests your ability to communicate ideas, your appreciation and comprehension of the themes and concepts discussed in the course, your ability to critically assess and evaluate the arguments of others, and your ability to clearly articulate your thoughts. It is also a task that monitors your progress across the unit topics. You are expected to do the weekly readings, participate in weekly discussions and make postings within the time frame of each discussion topic. These begin on Monday of the discussion week and run through to the following Sunday. You should look to answer at least two of the set questions each week, as well as engaging with the posts of other students. Each individual post should be kept to **a maximum of 100 words**. A professional and courteous approach towards staff and fellow students is expected at all times.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Analyse and express your judgement about a range of historical phenomena in written form
- Read literature from different historical disciplines and interpret written and material evidence with appreciation and understanding
- Understand the relationship between human history and the natural sciences

Delivery and Resources

Students will require the textbook: David Christian, Cynthia Stokes Brown and Craig Benjamin, *Big History: Between Nothing and Everything*, New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2014.

All other essential readings are provided online. Students may be required to do further research for their essays.

Unit Schedule

Week 1	INTRODUCTION TO BIG HISTORY
Week 2	THE UNIVERSE AND THE STARS
Week 3	THE EARTH AND ITS HISTORY
Week 4	LIFE AND EVOLUTION
Week 5	EVOLUTION OF HUMANS
Week 6	WHAT MADE HUMANS DIFFERENT?
Week 7	AGRICULTURE AND ITS IMPACT
Week 8	CITIES, STATES AND EMPIRES
Week 9	EVOLUTION OF AGRARIAN CIVILIZATIONS
Week 10	GLOBAL ECOLOGICAL EXCHANGES

Week 11	BREAK-THROUGH TO MODERNITY
Week 12	THE ANTHROPOCENE
Week 13	WHERE IS IS ALL GOING?

Policies and Procedures

Late Submission - applies unless otherwise stated elsewhere in the unit guide

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, (a) a penalty for lateness will apply – two (2) marks out of 100 will be deducted per day for assignments submitted after the due date – and (b) no assignment will be accepted more than seven (7) days (incl. weekends) after the original submission deadline. No late submissions will be accepted for timed assessments – e.g. quizzes, online tests.

Extension Request

[Special Consideration Policy and Procedure \(https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policies/special-consideration\)](https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policies/special-consideration)

The University recognises that students may experience events or conditions that adversely affect their academic performance. If you experience serious and unavoidable difficulties at exam time or when assessment tasks are due, you can consider applying for Special Consideration.

You need to show that the circumstances:

1. were serious, unexpected and unavoidable
2. were beyond your control
3. caused substantial disruption to your academic work
4. substantially interfered with your otherwise satisfactory fulfilment of the unit requirements
5. lasted at least three consecutive days or a total of 5 days within the teaching period and prevented completion of an assessment task scheduled for a specific

date.

If you feel that your studies have been impacted submit an application as follows:

1. Visit [Ask MQ](#) and use your OneID to log in
2. Fill in your relevant details
3. Attach supporting documents by clicking 'Add a reply', click 'Browse' and navigating to the files you want to attach, then click 'Submit Form' to send your notification and supporting documents
4. Please keep copies of your original documents, as they may be requested in the future as part of the assessment process

Outcome

Once your submission is assessed, an appropriate outcome will be organised.

OUA Specific Policies and Procedures

Withdrawal from a unit after the census date

You can withdraw from your subjects prior to [the census date](#) (last day to withdraw). If you successfully withdraw before the census date, you won't need to apply for Special Circumstances. If you find yourself unable to withdraw from your subjects before the census date - you might be able to [apply for Special Circumstances](#). If you're eligible, we can refund your fees and overturn your fail grade.

If you're studying Single Subjects using FEE-HELP or paying up front, you can [apply online](#).

If you're studying a degree using HECS-HELP, you'll need to [apply directly to Macquarie University](#).

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

Assessment Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy_2016.html

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

Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/complaint_management/procedure.html

Disruption to Studies Policy (in effect until Dec 4th, 2017): http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html

Special Consideration Policy (in effect from Dec 4th, 2017): <https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policies/special-consideration>

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/

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) 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://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be

imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Analyse and express your judgement about a range of historical phenomena in written form
- Read literature from different historical disciplines and interpret written and material evidence with appreciation and understanding
- Understand the relationship between human history and the natural sciences
- Draw together and judge pre-selected and self-located evidence to provide an analysis of a major historical phenomenon in big history
- Construct a synopsis of big history, highlighting a self-selected theme

Assessment tasks

- Essay 2
- Synoptic essay

Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Analyse and express your judgement about a range of historical phenomena in written form
- Plan, revise and submit written work according to schedule
- Construct a synopsis of big history, highlighting a self-selected theme

Assessment task

- Online participation

Commitment to Continuous Learning

Our graduates will have enquiring minds and a literate curiosity which will lead them to pursue knowledge for its own sake. They will continue to pursue learning in their careers and as they participate in the world. They will be capable of reflecting on their experiences and relationships with others and the environment, learning from them, and growing - personally, professionally

and socially.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Analyse and express your judgement about a range of historical phenomena in written form
- Read literature from different historical disciplines and interpret written and material evidence with appreciation and understanding
- Plan, revise and submit written work according to schedule
- Understand the relationship between human history and the natural sciences
- Draw together and judge pre-selected and self-located evidence to provide an analysis of a major historical phenomenon in big history
- Construct a synopsis of big history, highlighting a self-selected theme

Assessment tasks

- Essay 1
- Essay 2
- Synoptic essay
- Online participation

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Analyse and express your judgement about a range of historical phenomena in written form
- Read literature from different historical disciplines and interpret written and material evidence with appreciation and understanding
- Understand the relationship between human history and the natural sciences
- Construct a synopsis of big history, highlighting a self-selected theme

Assessment tasks

- Essay 1
- Essay 2
- Synoptic essay
- Online participation

Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Analyse and express your judgement about a range of historical phenomena in written form
- Read literature from different historical disciplines and interpret written and material evidence with appreciation and understanding
- Understand the relationship between human history and the natural sciences
- Draw together and judge pre-selected and self-located evidence to provide an analysis of a major historical phenomenon in big history
- Construct a synopsis of big history, highlighting a self-selected theme

Assessment tasks

- Essay 1
- Essay 2
- Synoptic essay

Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Analyse and express your judgement about a range of historical phenomena in written

form

- Read literature from different historical disciplines and interpret written and material evidence with appreciation and understanding
- Understand the relationship between human history and the natural sciences
- Draw together and judge pre-selected and self-located evidence to provide an analysis of a major historical phenomenon in big history
- Construct a synopsis of big history, highlighting a self-selected theme

Assessment tasks

- Essay 1
- Essay 2
- Synoptic essay

Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Analyse and express your judgement about a range of historical phenomena in written form
- Understand the relationship between human history and the natural sciences
- Construct a synopsis of big history, highlighting a self-selected theme

Assessment tasks

- Essay 1
- Essay 2
- Synoptic essay
- Online participation

Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation's historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded, sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Analyse and express your judgement about a range of historical phenomena in written form
- Plan, revise and submit written work according to schedule
- Understand the relationship between human history and the natural sciences
- Construct a synopsis of big history, highlighting a self-selected theme

Assessment tasks

- Synoptic essay
- Online participation

Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible

We want our graduates to be aware of and have respect for self and others; to be able to work with others as a leader and a team player; to have a sense of connectedness with others and country; and to have a sense of mutual obligation. Our graduates should be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Analyse and express your judgement about a range of historical phenomena in written form
- Plan, revise and submit written work according to schedule
- Understand the relationship between human history and the natural sciences
- Construct a synopsis of big history, highlighting a self-selected theme

Assessment tasks

- Synoptic essay
- Online participation