



HIST188: The History of Now

Credits: 3, Section: 172

Instructor: Darryl Flaherty, Ph.D., Associate Professor
Department of History

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What is the history of now? Why do we live in this world that we inhabit? How has the past changed the present and how might it change the future? This course explores the complexities of our contemporary world through the lens of history. The course grounds itself in the critical questions for our current times and will explore a range of topics and themes. The semester opens with a meta-question, can the past teach? (The answer: yes!) We then turn to a range of contemporary concerns related to food; political borders; leisure and play; the social self; climate change; rights for androids; the meaning of music; and what the past tells us about corporations and power.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand how the past connects to the present through a range of themes
- Study how history emerges from systems and structures
- Develop skills to evaluate, generally, connections between the past and the present
- Analyze how change in the past suggests possibilities for change in the present

REQUIREMENTS

This course departs from the common model of a history class. Rather than offering you a narrative and then asking you to respond to it. It will first ask for your thoughts about “the now”—to be submitted each week as “observations” on Canvas. Then, you will dive into lectures and readings with these thoughts—your observations—in mind. The course will present material in the form of videos, lectures, and readings that explores the topic. This material, organized by module, will explore both “the now” and the history of each topic.

Observations: 20%

Reflection and Responses: 60%

Topic proposal: 20%

Potential excerpts from

Helen Carr and Suzannah Lipscomb, *What is History, Now?*, W&N, 2021.

Patel, Raj. *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things*, U of Chicago Press, 2018.

Wineburg, Sam. *Why Learn History (When it's Already on Your Phone)*, U of Chicago Press, 2018.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Week 1.

Introduction History: Can the Past Teach?

Week 2.

The Self(ie): The Changing Nature of Being (And Capturing) Oneself in the World

Week 3.

Food: How (most of) Humanity Went from Subsistence to Overabundance

Week 4.

Income Inequality: What do Local and Global Distributions of Wealth Tell US about our New Century?

Week 5.

Computing Technology: AI, Consciousness, and the Singularity

Week 6.

Soundtracks: The History and Joy of Music!

Week 7

Your Now, Your History

Week 8.

Politics: People and Corporations

Week 9.

Refugees: The Movement of People Across National Borders

Week 10.

Climate Change: The Beginning or End of What?

Week 11.

Pandemics: Remembering the History of Forgetting Disease

Week 12.

Ripped from the Headlines

Week 13

Ripped from the Headlines

Week 14

Earth: The History of the Humans in, and of, Nature

Grading Scale

A: 94.0 and above

A-: 90.0 to <94.0

B+: 87.0 to <90.0

B: 84.0 to <87.0

B-: 80.0 to <84.0

C+: 77.0 to <80.0

C: 74.0 to <77.0

C-: 70.0 to <74.0

D+: 67.0 to <70.0

D: 64.0 to <67.0

D-: 61.0 to <64.0

F: <61.0

Note on academic honesty:

Conduct yourself with integrity in your academic affairs. The Code of Student Conduct at the University of Delaware has severe penalties for academic misconduct (cutting and pasting from the web, using other people's words or ideas as your own, and so on. Familiarize yourself with the UD policies toward plagiarism and other forms of cheating. For further information see: <http://www.udel.edu/judicialaffairs> . The learning exercise here is the engagement in thoughtful dialogue. Use of machine learning and large language models ("AI" such as ChatGPT, Dall-E 2, or any similar program) wastes your time and money. Formulate your own ideas on the topics in the course.