Global Past, Global Present:  
From the Big Bang to Globalization  
LCC 350-I, Spring 2009

 Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn’t go away.  
—Philip K. Dick

This course is a thematic survey of global history from its origins to the present. Its aim is to provide a wide contextualized understanding of human existence in a new format that is called “Big History,” a concept that integrates knowledge from the natural and social sciences with the humanities. The result is a more realistic understanding of how humans fit into the vast expanse of the universe. As a part of this survey, we will consider some of the challenges of modern globalization, with an important theme being the quest to develop sustainable and ethical lifestyles. The overall focus of this course will be on what such knowledge might mean in our everyday lives and how we should—as responsible individuals and a responsible species—conduct ourselves in this world.

This course is offered in a hyperflexible format—“hyperflex.” One section is in-person (class # 8114), which will meet as shown in the schedule, below. The other section (class # 8118), is online for those who cannot attend classes in-person for reasons of distance, job schedule, disability or family needs. Our official in-class meeting time will be on Thursdays, 13h00 to 15h30, in room #105, at USM’s Lewiston-Auburn College. The following course materials are required and may be obtained in the USM-LA bookstore:


Manu Chao, *La Radiolina*, Manu Chao, 2007. (Music C.D.)

You also should refer to the following presentations about cosmology, evolution and life:

*A Walk through Time*, Foundation for a Global Community 

Universcale, Nikon: 
Ideas, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, on the Maine Public Broadcasting Network, 19h00, Friday evenings: (http://www.mpbn.net/) and http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/index.html

Team & Class Projects

The class will form a union to promote workplace democracy, as well as work teams to facilitate projects. The class will choose a solidarity project that relates to the course. Ongoing projects include assisting Indigenous refugees in the Caucasus Mountains and promoting Earth Day activities. Students could also initiate a new project based on our other studies. The solidarity project will be presented at the final class and be discussed in the final exam essay. Team projects are discussed in the course schedule, below.

Class Schedule

I. Introduction. 22 January 2009


**Section One: The Universe & Earth**

II. Origins of the Universe—fourteen to five billion years B.P. 29 January 2009


The Elegant Universe, Part 2, “String’s the Thing,” NOVA and others, Joseph McMaster (director), 2003; running time—50 minutes (On Reserve).

Fred Spier, “The Small History of the Big History Course at the University of Amsterdam” (worldhistoryconnected.press.uiuc.edu/2.2/spier.html).
Paper #1: Write a three-page essay about yourself, your family and your community, as well as about how you see yourself fitting into the universe.

Begin reading *Einstein’s Dreams*.

III. Solar System & Planet Earth—five to one billion years B.P. 5 February 2009

Quiz #1. Class will be held at the University of Southern Maine’s Portland campus, where we will see an astronomy presentation at the Southworth Planetarium (www.usm.maine.edu/~planet/). We will meet at the cafeteria in the Woodbury Center at 12h45 to take the quiz.


*Origins: Earth is Born*, NOVA and others, Alice Harper (director), 2004; running time—60 minutes. (On Reserve).


Review the Paleomap Project at (www.scotese.com/Default.htm).


Continue reading *Einstein’s Dreams*.

IV. Life on Earth—one billion to ten million years B.P. 12 February 2009


Review *The Encyclopedia of Life* at (www.eol.org/).

Edward Wilson, “Protect biodiversity hot spots and the rest will follow,” *Science News*, 20 December 2008, p. 32, as well as at the website: (www.sciencenews.org/view/generic/id/39071/title/Protect_biodiversity_hot_spots_and_the_rest_will_follow).

Complete reading *Einstein’s Dreams*.

**Winter Break, Sunday February 15 to Sunday, February 22**

**World Chechnya Day, Monday, February 23**
(ISOLA sponsored, activities to be announced)

V. Discussion & Activities, Section One 26 February 2009

In-class film excerpt on ethics and the scientific process: The case of physicist Lise Meitner (film excerpt and discussion) from *Einstein’s Big Idea*, NOVA and others, Gary Johnstone (director), 2005; running time—15 minutes.

Team Presentation #1: Each team must choose one of the movies listed below (or a different one selected with the professor), then research its scientific background, relate it to our course materials, and make a presentation – using film clips. These films may be obtained from movie stores, online or through interlibrary loan. If anyone has difficulty obtaining one, contact the professor well in advance and he can assist you in locating a copy. A well thought-out and well organized presentation is required.

*The Day After Tomorrow*, Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, Roland Emmerich (director), 2004; running time—124 minutes.

*The Core*, David Foster Productions, Jon Amiel (director), 2003; running time—135 minutes.

*Deep Impact*, Dreamworks SKG, Mimi Leder (director), 1998; running time—120 minutes.

*Contact*, South Side Amusement Company and others, Robert Zemeckis (director), 1997; running time—153 minutes.


Betsy Mason, “Muons Meet the Maya,” *Science News* 172 (23), 8 December 2007, pp. 360–361. This journal is subscribed to online through the USM library; please contact them with questions about how to access it.

George Ellis, “Physics, Complexity and Causality,” *Nature* 435, 9 June 2005, p. 743. This journal is subscribed to online and through the USM library; please contact them with questions about how to access it.

**Section Two: Early Humans & the Earth**

VI. Early Humans—ten million to ten thousand years B.P. 5 March 2009

Union/Team meetings. Today’s assignment:


Paper #2: Using the materials that we have considered so far in this course, write a formal three-page essay linking cosmic origins to human development and discuss what this means in your own life. At least ten different sources must be used in a meaningful way with full citations.

VII. Origins of Agriculture—ten to five thousand years B.P. 12 March 2009

Team Presentation #2: Each team will bring a botanical description and historical account of an ancient crop, as well as material about modern varieties.


Begin reading *Macedonia: What does it take to stop a war?*

VIII. Power, Cities & States—five to one thousand years B.P. 19 March 2009

Quiz #3.

New Internationalist Cooperative, “Cotton: The Peril and the Promise,” New Internationalist 399, April 2007, pp. 2–21. This journal is subscribed to online and in hard-copy through the USM-LA library; please contact them with questions about how to access it.

Continue reading Macedonia: What does it take to stop a war?

**Spring Break: Sunday, March 22 to Sunday, March 29**

IX. Discussion & Activities, Section Two 2 April 2009

Quiz #4. Union/Team meetings. In-class film: The Future of Food, Lily Films, Deborah Koons (director), 2004; running time—88 minutes.


Jaman Matthews, “Coming Full Circle: Integrated Farming in Vietnam.” World Ark, July/August 2007, pp. 6–19; this article is also online at (www.heifer.org/site/c.edJRKQNFiG/b.2877337/#).

New Internationalist Cooperative, “Edible Earth: In Search of Permaculture,” New Internationalist 402, July 2007, pp. 4–20. This journal is subscribed to online and in hard-copy through the USM-LA library; please contact them with questions about how to access it.

Rachel Ehrenberg, “Let’s get vertical, city buildings offer opportunities for farms to grow up instead of out,” Science News 174 (8) 11 October 2008, pp. 16–20. This journal is subscribed to online and in hard-copy through the USM-LA library; please contact them with questions about how to access it. The article is available online at the website for Science News: (http://www.sciencenews.org/view/feature/id/36823/title/Let%E2%80%99s_Get_Vertical).

Complete reading Macedonia: What does it take to stop a war?

**Section Three, Modern Era**

X. Early Modernity—one thousand years B.P. to the present 9 April 2009

In-class film: Flow: For Love of Water, Seven Starr Productions and others, Irena Salina (director), 2008; running time—93 minutes.

Begin reading *The Oath*.

Paper #3: Write a formal three-page essay that considers the rise of agriculture and its centralization of power in fewer hands, how issues of food affect your life and how that might change in the future.

XI. Globalization — ten to three hundred years B.P. 16 April 2009

Team Presentation #3: Each team should listen to Manu Chao’s *Radiolina*. Choose a song from it, play it for the class, and explain its relationship to issues of globalization and our readings. Also, do some online research about Manu Chao. In-class film: *A Crude Awakening*, Lava Productions, Basil Gelpke and Ray McCormack (directors), 2006; running time—85 minutes.

Today’s assignment:


Barry Rodrigue and others, *Chechnya, the Caucasus & World Justice*, Lewiston: International Student Organization of Lewiston-Auburn and others, 2008 ([usm.maine.edu/lac/isola/Chechnya_Caucasus_Booklet.pdf](http://usm.maine.edu/lac/isola/Chechnya_Caucasus_Booklet.pdf)).

Πλακατό τον ήλιοσ (Crying Sun: The Impact of War in the Mountains of Chechnya). Memorial (Russia) and Witness (New York), Zarema Mukusheva (director), 2007; running time—26 minutes. (On Reserve at the USM-LA library).


Continue reading *The Oath*.

**Earth Day Celebration! 22 April 2009**
(ISOLA sponsored, activities to be announced)

XII. The Modern World—three hundred years B.P. to the present 23 April 2009

Team Presentation #4: Symbols, thoughts and representations of reality. Each team will choose one of the following “art films” or a different one selected with the professor. These films may be obtained from movie stores, online or through interlibrary loans. If anyone has difficulty obtaining one, contact the professor well in advance and he can assist you in finding a copy. You will analyze the film’s symbolic meaning and make a presentation to the class—using film clips, relating it to course materials, daily life and your own philosophies.
La Face cachée de la lune (The Far Side of the Moon), FCL Films and others, Robert Lepage (writer/director), 2003; running time—105 minutes (Québec).

Ikiru, Toho Company, Akira Kurosawa (director), 1952; running time—143 minutes (Japan).

Orfeu Negro (Black Orpheus), Dispat Films and others, Marcel Camus (director), 1959; running time—107 minutes (Brazil).

Солярис (Solaris), Mosfilm, Andrei Tarkovsky (director), 1972; running time—165 minutes (Soviet Union).

Cléo de 5 à 7 (Cleo from 5 to 7), Ciné-tamaris, Agnès Varda (director), 1982; running time—90 minutes (France).

Det Sjunde inseglet (The Seventh Seal), Svensk Filmindustrie, Ingmar Bergman (director), 1957; running time—96 minutes (Sweden).

Le sang d'un poete (The Blood of a Poet), Vicomte de Noailles, Jean Cocteau (director), 1933; running time—55 minutes (France).


Look through the “Mixed Media” section at the back of old editions of New Internationalist magazine, comparing and contrasting them to your presentation. This journal is subscribed to online and in hard-copy through the USM-LA library; please contact them with questions about how to access it.

Continue reading The Oath.

**Optional Field Trip, Mégantic Observatory & Kennebec Fossils**

XIII. Section Three Discussion 30 April 2009

Quiz #5. Film: Hubert Reeves, Star Teller, Canadian National Film Board, Iolande Cadrin-Rossignol (director), 2002; running time—52 minutes.

New Internationalist Cooperative, “State of the World’s Oceans,” *New Internationalist* 397, January/February 2007, pp. 2–27. This journal is subscribed to online and in hard-copy through the USM-LA library.


Complete reading *The Oath*.

XIV. Holocaust and Human Rights Center of Maine 7 May 2009

Field Trip to the Holocaust and Human Rights Center of Maine (for direction go to their website at www.hhrc.org/hhrchome.html), discussion with Director Robert Bernheim, and film: *Were the House Still Standing: Maine Survivors and Liberators Remember the Holocaust*, Robert Katz (director), running time—80 minutes.

Today’s assignment: New Internationalist Cooperative, “Justice after Genocide,” *New Internationalist* 378, May 2005, pp. 2–21; and “Daring to Dream: Inspiration from the Majority World,” *New Internationalist* 400, May 2007, pp. 4–20. This journal is subscribed to online and in hard-copy through the USM-LA library; please contact them with questions about how to access it.


XV. Final Exam 14 May 2009

In-class film: *Home*, Elzévir Films and others, Yann Arthus-Bertrand (director), 2009; running time—90 minutes.

This course challenges many traditional views of the universe and the human place in it. Moreover, it challenges individuals to reassess their own lives. Your assignment is to write a five-page paper describing your vision of your role in the universe. You must incorporate at least twenty different sources from this course in a meaningful fashion, along with proper citations and a complete bibliography. Strict attention must be paid to the conventions of a formal essay.

Solidarity project presentation.