**IDH 2930**

Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies

an (un)common read Book Club

Spring 2017, Section 11BD, 1 credit

Wednesdays, 2nd period (8:30 – 9:20 a.m.)

117 Little Hall

Instructor: Dr. Elaine Turner Office: 2001 McCarty Hall D

Office Phone: (352) 392-1961 E-mail: returner@ufl.edu

**Office Hours**

Mondays from 8:00 am – 9:00 am., room 2025 McCarty Hall D. If I am unable to keep office hours on a given day, I will email the class the day before to notify you. If my office hours don’t work for you, I am happy to schedule an appointment outside of office hours. To schedule an appointment, call my office (352-392-1961).

**Course Description**

The UF Honors Program (un)common reads courses are discussion oriented classes centered around a single book. Like a Book Club, we read independently then gather to share what we have learned and explore new ideas and questions. Our Book Club selection, *Guns, Germs and Steel* poses the question, “Why did human societies have such diverse fates?” and seeks to answer that question through exploration of factors that affected development of civilizations around the world and the intersections of science and history.

**Materials**

**Required Book**: *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. By Jared Diamond. W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1999. ISBN 978-0-393-31755-8. It’s your choice whether to have a hard copy or electronic version, but plan to bring the book to class with you each week.

**Recommended:** Journal/notebook. It is recommended that you have a journal or notebook with you as you read to make notes, pose questions, respond to preflection and reflection questions, etc.

**Learning Objectives**

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

1. Trace the development of agriculture around the world and the factors than enhanced or impeded the domestication and dispersion of plant and animal species.
2. Discuss the roles of diseases and technology in shaping societies.
3. Identify factors that affected the success or failure of societies in different parts of the world.

**Attendance and Classroom Policies**

Attendance at every class is important to the success of our Book Club. By reading the assigned chapter(s) each week and making notes of topics or questions for discussion, you will be prepared to contribute. So that we maximize our Book Club time, strive to arrive before the beginning of the class period. We are a small group, so your tardiness or absence will be noticed. While you are in class, please silence your phones. Be prepared to talk as well as listen, and be respectful of others’ opinions. If you need to miss a class, please notify me as soon as possible. Requirements for class attendance and make-up work are consistent with university policies; see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

**Course Communications**

Throughout the semester, we will rely on our course website in Canvas. Communications about the course will occur via the Canvas email system. Time sensitive announcements (such as change in office hours) will also be sent to your Gatorlink email. Be sure that you are checking both daily.

**Course Requirements**

1. **Weekly Reflections:** Prior to each class, read the assigned chapter or chapters. Make note of 2-3 (or more) sections of text that either 1) spark your curiosity – something you would like to know more about; 2) need more explanation – something you don’t understand; 3) confirm something you have wondered about or experienced; and/or 4) challenge something you believe. Note these in your book or in a journal and be prepared to discuss in class. Some weeks you will be give specific preflection questions to consider as you read. After each class period, weeks 2-15, reflect on your reading and the class discussion and write a short (150-200 words) reflection highlighting one or more of the text sections you identified period. Submit your reflection via Canvas no later than 11:59 p.m. Thursday (the day after class). Reflections must be received on time to earn full credit. 12 critiques will account for 50% of your final grade. No reflection is due Spring Break week. Grading will consider integration of class discussion, depth of thought and presentation (grammar and spelling are important).
2. **Book Critique:** Prepare a critique of about 1,000 words (3-5 pages, double-spaced) that details your assessment of the book. I am interested in your personal impressions, positive and negative – What did you learn? How did the book make you feel? Are you interested in learning more about the ideas presented in the book? Would you read another book by Jared Diamond? Would you recommend this book to a friend? You decide how to structure your Critique in terms of content, organization, style and tone. Submit your Critique via Canvas no later than 11:59 p.m., Monday April 24. Critiques must be received on time to earn full credit. Your critique is worth 25% of your final grade. Grading will consider presentation (grammar and spelling are important), clear construction of ideas and well-supported arguments.
3. **Class Participation:** A successful Book Club depends on the engagement and participation of its members. Participation will be evaluated by attendance, self-evaluation and instructor evaluation. Class participation is worth 25% of your final grade.

**Grading**

The course grade will take into account weekly reflections, class participation and the book critique. No final exam will be given. There will be 480 points possible for the course:

Weekly reflections 240 points (20 points each; 12 required)

Book Critique 120 points

Class Participation 120 points

The final grading scale will be:

A 445 – 480 points

A- 432 – 444.99 points

B+ 418 – 431.99 points

B 398 – 417.99 points

B- 384 – 397.99 points

C+ 370 – 383.99 points

C 336 – 349.99 points

D 288 – 335.99 points

E less than 288 points

For information on current UF policies for assigning grade points, see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>.

**Course Schedule**

Week 1 (January 4) First day of class. Introductions; Yali’s Question (Preface and Prologue, pages 9-31)

Week 2 (January 11) Up to the Starting Line (Chapter 1, pages 35-51)

Week 3 (January 18) A Natural Experiment of History; Collision at Cajamarca (Chapters 2-3, pages 52-78)

Week 4 (January 25) Farmer Power; History’s Haves and Have-Nots (Chapters 4-5, pages 81-99)

Week 5 (February 1) To Farm or Not to Farm; How to Make an Almond (Chapters 6-7, pages 100-125)

Week 6 (February 8) Apples or Indians (Chapter 8, pages 126-150)

Week 7 (February 15) Zebras, Unhappy Marriages and the *Anna Karenina* Principle;

Spacious Skies and Tilted Axes (Chapters 9-10, pages 151-183)

Week 8 (February 22) Lethal Gift of Livestock (Chapter 11, pages 187-205)

Week 9 (March 1) Blueprints and Borrowed Letters (Chapter 12, pages 206-228)

Week 10 (March 8) **SPRING BREAK – No Class**

Week 11 (March 15) Necessity’s Mother (Chapter 13, pages 229-253)

Week 12 (March 22) From Egalitarianism to Kleptocracy (Chapter 14, pages 254-280)

Week 13 (March 29) Yali’s People; How China Became Chinese (Chapters 15-16, pages 283-319)

Week 14 (April 5) Speedboat to Polynesia; Hemispheres Colliding (Chapters 17-18, pages 320-360)

Week 15 (April 12) How Africa Became Black (Chapter 19, pages 361-385)

Week 16 (April 19) Last day of class – wrap up

**Important Dates**

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| First Day of our Class | Wednesday January 4 |
| University Drop/Add Deadline | Tuesday January 10, 11:59 pm |
| **Weekly Reflections Due** | **Thursdays by 11:59 pm** |
| Spring Break | March 4 – March 11 |
| Last Day to Drop a Class | Friday April 7, 5:00 pm |
| Last Class | Wednesday April 19 |
| **Book Critique Due** | **Monday April 24, 11:59 pm** |

**Online Course Evaluation Process**

Student assessment of instruction is an important part of efforts to improve teaching and learning. At the end of the semester, students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course using a standard set of university and college criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open for students to complete during the last two or three weeks of the semester; students will be notified of the specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

**Academic Honesty**

As a student at the University of Florida, you have committed yourself to uphold the Honor Code, which includes the following pledge:  “*We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.”*  You are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community, and on all work submitted for credit at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: *"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment*."

It is assumed that you will complete all work independently in each course unless the instructor provides explicit permission for you to collaborate on course tasks. Furthermore, as part of your obligation to uphold the Honor Code, you should report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. It is your individual responsibility to know and comply with all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the Student Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For more information regarding the Student Honor Code, please see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code>.

**Software Use**

All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

**Services for Students with Disabilities**

The Disability Resource Center coordinates the needed accommodations of students with disabilities. This includes registering disabilities, recommending academic accommodations within the classroom, accessing special adaptive computer equipment, providing interpretation services and mediating faculty-student disability related issues. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation

0001 Reid Hall, 352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc)

**Campus Helping Resources**

Students experiencing crises or personal problems that interfere with their general well-being are encouraged to utilize the university’s counseling resources. The Counseling & Wellness Center provides confidential counseling services at no cost for currently enrolled students. Resources are available on campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career or academic goals, which interfere with their academic performance.

* *University Counseling & Wellness Center, 3190 Radio Road, 352-392-1575,* [www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/](http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/)

Counseling Services

Groups and Workshops

Outreach and Consultation

Self-Help Library

Wellness Coaching

* U Matter We Care, [www.umatter.ufl.edu/](http://www.umatter.ufl.edu/)
* *Career Resource Center,* First Floor JWRU, 392-1601, [www.crc.ufl.edu/](http://www.crc.ufl.edu/)