Course description:

Many other Homo species existed contemporaneously with us, but we are the only one that remains, which is both impressive and worrisome. We will use Harari’s book “Sapiens – a brief history of humanity” to follow the journey of our species from the very first humans to walk the earth to today as a succession of three revolutions: the cognitive revolution (when we got smart), the agricultural revolution (when we got nature to do what we wanted), and the scientific revolution (when we got dangerously powerful). Drawing on insights from biology, anthropology, paleontology and economics, Harari explores how the currents of history have shaped our human societies, the animals and plants around us, and even our personalities. The book is bold and provocative and should stimulate healthy debates and conversations in a classroom.

Course objectives:

The book raises many questions on which students may have their own opinions, perhaps different from the author. Have we become happier as history has unfolded? Can we ever free our behavior from the heritage of our ancestors? And what, if anything, can we do to influence the course of the centuries to come? Discussing these and other similar questions should stimulate and enhance critical thinking.

Required course materials:


Class behavior:

Please show respect for the instructor and for your classmates: turn off your cell phone, laptop, and any other electronics before class, don’t have side conversations during discussions, don’t engage in other activities during class, and speak respectfully to others in the class. Above all, conduct our class debates/discussions in a civil and respectful manners.

Course assignments and grading:

The class will be divided in four groups and each group will moderate all class activities for one chapter. We will dedicate 3 to 4 lectures for each chapter. All students are expected to read each chapter and submit a 2 page summary by Monday at 5 pm prior to the first lecture dedicated to that chapter. The group of students moderating the activities for a chapter are expected to work together and prepare a presentation of the chapter in the first lecture. The same group of students will moderate the class discussion/debate of the chapter’s major concepts in the second lecture. After the second lecture all students will submit a list of major take home points (at least five) by Sunday 5 pm and these points will provide the base for the discussion in the third lecture when, collectively, the class will debate and prioritize these take home points. To conclude each chapter, the moderating group will develop an executive summary of the major take home points and submit to the class website for comments.

**Grades and Grade Points**

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

The students will be evaluated based on quality of the four summaries (40 points each) and the four major take-home points (25 points each) submitted for each chapter (65% of the grade), active class participation throughout the course (4 points per discussion session for a total of 40 points; 10% of the grade) and, how the group moderated the chapter and the quality of the executive summary for the chapter (100 points; 25% of the grade, all members of the group will receive the same number of points).

**Total maximum number of points: 400**

Letter grades will be assigned based upon the following scale:

- **A = 90-100%**
- **B = 80-89%**
- **C = 70-79%**
- **D = 60-69%**
- **F = < 60%**

It is possible that a sliding scale will be imposed on the class but the scale would always be used to lower the number of points needed to achieve a grade rather than increase it.

**Tentative timeline:**

- Jan. 10: Introduction, where we come from, and how we will run this course
- Jan. 17: Present part one *The Cognitive Revolution*
- Jan. 24: Discuss part one *The Cognitive Revolution*
- Jan. 31: Take home points from part one *The Cognitive Revolution*
- Feb. 7: Present part two *The Agricultural revolution*
- Feb. 14: Discuss part two *The Agricultural revolution*
- Feb. 21: Take home points from part two *The Agricultural revolution*
- Feb. 28: Present part three *The Unification of Humankind*
- Mar. 7: No class – Spring Break!
- Mar. 14: Discuss part three *The Unification of Humankind*
- Mar. 21: Take home points from part three *The Unification of Humankind*
- Mar. 28: Present part four *The Scientific Revolution*
- Apr. 4: Discuss part four *The Scientific Revolution*
- Apr. 11: Discuss part four *The Scientific Revolution*
• Apr. 18: Take home points part four *The Scientific Revolution*

**Attendance and Make-Up Work:**

This course relies heavily on class attendance and discussion, so it is expected that students will attend all scheduled classes. Students will be excused from class only for reasons deemed consistent with university policies, and only with sufficient written documentation. Valid reasons for missing class include death in the immediate family (for which there is written documentation provided), severe illness or injury for which medical attention was sought (and for which there is written documentation provided), or representation of the university at a university sponsored event (such as an athletic team member, and for which there is written documentation). Family travel, non-urgent medical appointments, and other excuses will not be considered excused absences. More information about university policy can be found at: [https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx](https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx)

All written assignments (summaries and take-home points for each chapter may be handed in late (with no penalty) in emergency situations or if it is arranged with the instructor. Otherwise there will be a 2-point penalty per day.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Services for Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

**Online course evaluation process**

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at [https://evaluations.ufl.edu](https://evaluations.ufl.edu). Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at [https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/](https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/).

**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.

**Academic Honesty**

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students 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.” The Honor Code
(https://www.dso.ufl.edu/scrr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

The writing assignments will be screened for plagiarism using turnitin software and penalized accordingly.

**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/ Counseling Services, Groups and Workshops, Outreach and Consultation, Self-Help Library, Wellness Coaching
- U Matter We Care, www.umatter.ufl.edu/
- Career Resource Center, First Floor JWRU, 392-1601, www.crc.ufl.edu/

**Student Complaint Process**

For information see https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF_Complaints_policy.pdf.