

Humanity's Past

A biological and social history of the human race

Purpose: Our goal is to tell the story of humanity from the first appearance of *Homo sapiens*, roughly 150,000 years ago, to the present state of human affairs.

Course #	19SHP
Format:	Seminar
Moderator:	James Averill
Date and Time:	Wednesday, 1:30-3:30 10 weeks, starting February 27
Location:	Smith College Campus Center, Room 102

Description: The seminar begins with David Reich's "deep history of our species"; it is "deep" because few artifacts remain to document how *Homo Sapiens* came to populate the world from modest beginnings in Africa, more than 150,000 years ago. However, past migrations and intermixing of populations etched a record in our genes. Deciphering that record is the subject of Reich's book. Next, we turn to Yuval Harari's socio/cultural history of our species, from roughly 50,000 years ago to the present.

With few exceptions, each session of the seminar is devoted to a particular "epoch" identified, not by calendar years, but rather by one or more chapters in the assigned readings. For example, "Populating the Americas" is an epoch represented by Chapter 7 of Reich's book, and "The Scientific Revolution" is an epoch represented by Chapters 14 and 15 of Harari's history.

Finally, we explore the implications of humanity's past for issues of current concern, including problems of identity and inequality.

Role of participants: Everyone is expected to read the two assigned books, which we will discuss epoch by epoch in sequence. Each hour-long session will be led by a participant who selects issues that he or she believes epitomize an epoch, and leads a discussion of those issues and their implications.

Resources: *Who We Are and How We Got Here: Ancient DNA and the New Science of the Human Past*, Reich, David (2018). Pantheon Books. (Required) and *Sapiens: A brief history of humankind*, Harari, Yuval (2015). HarperCollins. (Required)

About the Moderator: I was formerly a professor of psychology at UMass. This seminar is broader in scope than the previous ones that I have moderated for LIR. I look forward to the challenge.

Maximum number of participants: 18

Auditors accepted: yes, 1