Week 1  Jan. 23  Introduction to Course
    Discussion and film: Frank Capra  It’s A Wonderful Life

Week 2  Jan. 30

Reading:
What is History?:
“Editor’s Column: An Inquiry into History, Big History and Metahistory,”
in Cliodynamics: the Journal of Theoretical and Mathematical History 2 (1) at: http://escholarship.org/uc/item/7xk1n3wb#page-1

    A historian’s commentary:  David Christian, “A Single Historical Continuum” in Cliodynamics  2 (1) at: http://escholarship.org/uc/item/7xk1n3wb#page-1 (later, actually, please scroll forward).

Week 3, Feb. 6

Ideas about History and the History of Life:
Stephen J. Gould, Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History (1989) selections on library reserve as follows:
Part I selections, pp. 23-49; 227-279

    Practical consequences of the explanations for life: http://www.talkorigins.org/faqs/edwards-v-aguillard.html
Week 4  Feb. 13  The Lottery: Dinosaurs and Earth Worms; and Representing The History of Life and Time

Continue Reading Gould, Part 3 of assignment, 280-323

And a comment on Gould and later concepts: at Douglas Erwin, “A Paleontological Look at History” in Cliodynamics: the Journal of Theoretical and Mathematical History at http://escholarship.org/uc/item/31j4540h

Representing the Past:
John Passmore, “Narratives and Events” in The Representation of Historical Events in History and Theory (26), Sept., 1987 (to be posted on Sakai)
An anthropologist on “Big History” from the Big Bang on: Fred Spier, ”Complexity in Big History,” Cliodynamics 2 (1) at http://escholarship.org/uc/item/3tk971d2

Week 5  Feb. 20

Kurt Vonnegut, Galapagos: A Novel

Week 6  Feb. 27  Theories of Explanation in History and Science
Peter Novick, that Noble Dream: The ‘Objectivity Question’ and the American Historical Profession, pp.387-400 (to be provided)


Predicting the future based upon the past: international politics and elections: Philip Tetlock, “Theory Driven Reasoning About Plausible Pasts and Probable Futures in World Politics” in Hueristics and Biases, Thomas Gilovich et al. editors (2002), reading to be provided.

Other topics/assignments:
Random Events:  Nassim N. Taleb, The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable (selections); See also Taleb in http://edge.org/conversation/learning-to-expect-the-unexpected

Chaos Theory and History:
Readings applying chaos theory to history:
David Ruelle. Selection:
http://www.ihes.fr/~ruelle/PUBLICATIONS/130dragon.pdf

Possible examples: Howard Bluestein, Tornado Alley: Monster Storms on the Great Plains; or the history of medicine (e.g. the Spanish flu in 1918 or brain death research)

Economic Disasters, Manias and Crashes:

Terrorism:
Gerald Holton, “Reflections on Modern Terrorism” in Edge
http://edge.org/conversation/reflections-on-modern-terrorism

Civilizations: Rising and Falling:
Jared Diamond, Collapse: how Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed, selections to be assigned