Discussion Section Syllabus

History 3B – Introduction to History of Science: Newton to Darwin

TA: Sameer Shah
Office: 2155 Bunche    Hours: Friday 2-4    Email: samjshah@ucla.edu

Purpose of Section
Section discussion is integral to the class. The lectures will provide you with broad historical themes and provide the background which will be necessary to understand and evaluate the readings. The readings themselves (mainly primary sources) will constitute the backbone of the discussion.

What we want to get from the readings is three-fold. First is simply to understand their content. Reading primary sources can be difficult, especially if you are coming from a 21st century understanding of physics and mathematics. By reading primary sources, we get an unfiltered glimpse of how specific persons attempted to understand their world. Second, the readings will provide context to the times and places in which they were written, and tell us something about their authors. Third, we will find the readings act as vehicles to explore broader themes and concepts from the lectures – such as the Enlightenment, temporality, political-economy, and ‘revolutions’.

Attendance and Reading
Discussion section is *fundamental* to the course. Attendance is mandatory and factored into your participation grade. In the same breath, discussion is rendered useless for you if you do not do the reading; it is also disrespectful to the students who have done the reading. You ought to come to the sections ready to engage with the readings.

Reader Responses
Each week you will be expected to provide a one or two paragraph response to a question posed by Professor Wise concerning the reading. **This response must be emailed to your TA by 8pm the night before your section.** You should consider these responses an important part of your participation grade. More importantly, we want you leaving this course not only knowing key people, themes, and ideas, but also improving writing and analysis skills. We will work on these skills through your reader responses; you will get comments and grades on both content and writing. A check plus will be for ‘excellent’, a check for ‘good’, and a check minus for ‘needs improvement’.

To construct a good response paragraph, you will want to write a thesis statement and then defend it with evidence from the lectures, the readings, or any outside research you may have done. Please cite your textual sources.

Essay
A destructive tendency is to leave writing the essay until the night before it’s due. Let this be our recommendation that you start early. The essay itself will be based on the readings
and lectures, however if you have a topic you would like to research independently, come to us early so we can work something out.

We are happy to read rough drafts if you send them to us by Wednesday, November 24th; this way we can get them back to you via email – it’s Thanksgiving break – by Saturday, November 27th to give you time to reconsider and revise. If you do send us a rough draft, please staple a copy of it to your final draft.

Availability
We are excited to be teaching this course and will do everything possible to make ourselves available for you. Please, please, please come to office hours if you are confused about anything, need assistance writing your paper, or have any other course issues you want to talk about. If you cannot make the time of our office hours, you should feel free to schedule an appointment via email.

As a side note, many professors and TAs have found that face-to-face interaction is best. Often it becomes trying, time-consuming, and ineffective to address “big” issues or questions regarding the text over email. If you have a significant question or problem, let’s work through it in office hours.

Discussion Board
We will be setting up a discussion board on the course website where students, TAs, and the professor can have side-conversations about the course content. If you have an idea that you want to throw out there for people to read and discuss, feel more than free. Of course, we encourage thinking about the material as much as possible! Hopefully this will be a lively forum to cover topics that you are interested in but we just cannot fit into the lectures or discussion section – or, in fact, anything related to history or the history of science. Posting to the discussion board is optional, but it is a type of participation that can help your grade if you are on the fence.