

T1: Introduction: Basic Concepts of History

What is History?

- ◎ **History** : Record and interpretation of the human past – past thoughts and actions of human beings as well as circumstances that determined or influenced those thoughts and actions
- ◎ Not only information but also interpretation
- ◎ Not just a dry chronicle of past events - history also seeks to identify the causes of those events
- ◎ History studies society, culture, politics, economy and all other spheres of human life in the past

Why study History?

- “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” - George Santayana (1863 –1952), Spanish/American philosopher, poet, novelist
- History focuses on the past – creates the foundation for understanding the present and anticipating the future
- Education remains incomplete without some basic knowledge about the past

Chronology in History: how historians calculate time

- BC: Before Christ
- BCE: Before Common Era (Before Christian Era)
- AD: Anno Domini
- CE: Common Era (Christian Era)
- Decade, Century, Millennium

How historians determine dates

- **Radiocarbon dating** : radiocarbon isotope C_{14} decays into C_{12}
- **Potassium-argon method** : potassium decays into argon
- **DNA analysis**: determines biological inheritance, genetic variations

Evolution of human beings

- African apes separated into gorillas, chimpanzees and **hominids** (human-like creature)
- Hominids eventually became modern humans through a long and complicated evolutionary process
- Skeleton of a young adult hominid found in Ethiopia in 1974 – given the name **Lucy** – just above 3 feet tall, could walk upright, had ape size brain but humanlike jaw and teeth
- Dated approximately 3.2 million years ago

Evolution of human beings



Lucy's skeleton and reconstructed image

Evolution of humans

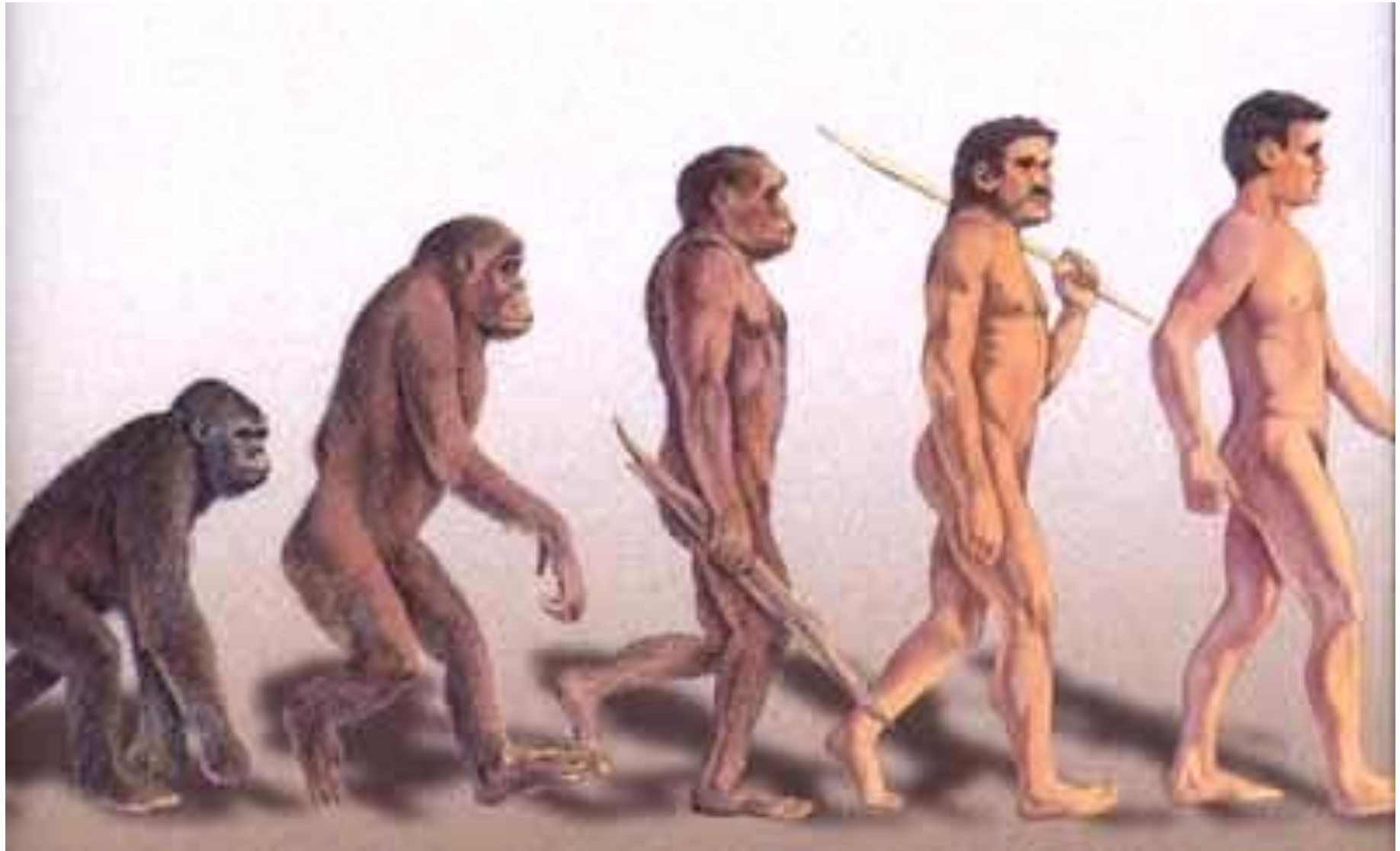
- Survival required constant adaptation with environmental changes – some of the hominid groups were better at it than others.
- Hominids developed bipedalism, cognitive skills



Evolution

Most prominent hominids/humans include:
Australopithecus, Homo Habilis, Homo Erectus, Homo Neanderthal, Homo Sapiens

Human Evolution



***Australopithecus - Homo habilis - Homo erectus - Neanderthal -
Homo sapiens***

Study Questions

- How do you perceive history?
- Why is it essential to know history?
- What is chronology?
- How are past events dated?
- Who are the “Homo sapiens”?

Thank You