

Welcome to the Human Laboratory

History is not about memorizing endless lists of dates, facts, and names—because the teacher told you to.

At least, that's not how we do history. In this course you're gonna study the story of civilization as an epic adventure filled with unforgettable characters and world-changing events. You'll meet heroes like Hammurabi, who created the first written laws; Alexander the Great, who conquered the known world before turning 33; and Marie Curie, who revolutionized our understanding of science despite being told women couldn't be scientists. Their choices and actions didn't just matter in their time—they shaped the world you live in today and teach us important lessons about human life.

The Great Human Laboratory

Think about what scientists do in their laboratories. They run experiments to discover what works and what doesn't. A chemist might mix different substances to see what happens. A biologist might test how plants grow under different conditions.

But we can't (and definitely shouldn't!) experiment with entire societies just to see what happens! What if we tried a government system that caused suffering for millions of people? That would be terrible!

The amazing thing is that we don't need to run these experiments—history has already done it for us. Throughout thousands of years, humans have tried almost every possible way of organizing society:

- Ancient Egypt built a civilization centered around god-kings and preparation for the afterlife
- Greek city-states tried democracy in Athens and military rule in Sparta
- The Roman Republic created a system of checks and balances to prevent any one person from gaining too much power
- Medieval Europe organized life around lords, knights, and the Catholic Church
- Communist countries tried eliminating private property and having the government control the economy

Each of these "human experiments" had real, measurable results! Some societies flourished for thousands of years while others collapsed quickly. Some produced incredible art, science, and philosophy while others stagnated. By studying these outcomes carefully, we can discover which fundamental ideas lead to human prosperity and which ones almost always end in disaster.

Developing Your History Glasses

In this course, we won't treat history as a random collection of disconnected events that happened by accident. As you learn and progress through this course, you'll develop what we call "history glasses" - a special way of seeing the world that lets you spot connections most people miss!

You'll see how each major civilization built upon the achievements of those that came before, and how different parts of society influence each other in fascinating ways. For example:

- Religious beliefs affect what kinds of government people think are good
- Economic systems impact what types of art get created
- Scientific discoveries can change religious understandings
- Artistic movements influence how people thought about government

As your history glasses get stronger throughout this course, you'll start noticing how some events lead to others in chain reactions. You'll see patterns that repeat across different times and places. And you'll understand how changes in one area of society can affect everything else.

By the end of this course, you'll have your history glasses and see connections everywhere that will help you make sense of the complex world you live in.

Notes, Assignments, and Tests

Throughout this course, you'll have notes to take, assignments to complete, and tests to pass. But these aren't just busy work! They're designed to teach you important skills and make sure you're really understanding the big ideas and keeping up with the material.

We're convinced that the insights you'll gain in this course will prepare you for an amazing life by making you a stronger thinker, helping you make better decisions, and giving you a deeper understanding of the world around you. That's why we want to make sure you're really getting the important lessons.

Adventure Awaits!

So, are you ready to enter the Human Laboratory? In the chapters ahead, you'll travel through time to witness humanity's greatest triumphs and most terrible failures. You'll meet unforgettable characters whose ideas and actions still shape our world today. Let's dive in and start exploring what history is exactly and how we even know what happened millions of years ago!