

# HIST 250

# What is History?

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# Some nuts and bolts

- Tutorials have 12/4/4/3. So that'd be one of 12 and one of 11. Or 3 of 7 or 8.
- My gut tells me we should go with two tutorials, to prompt the most discussion.
- On LEARN I'll launch a survey, please fill it in by next Thursday.

# Where to find out about history?

- Blogs/Twitter feeds to subscribe to?
  - <http://christophermoorehistory.blogspot.ca/>
  - <http://activehistory.ca/>
  - <http://www.damninteresting.com/>
  - **#twitterstorians**
  - **#aha16** (this weekend)

**Any ones from you?**

# ... a recap.

- Is history objective?
- Is history completely subjective?
- How do outside events determine what we record as history?

History as a continual, open-ended process of argument. There is never a closed question, because new evidence or a new way of looking at things can arrive.

# Plan for the Day

- What is History?
- Explored through three questions:
  - (1) Is history an art or a science?
  - (2) What is the difference between history and memory?
  - (3) What makes history special?

# **What is history?**

# What is history?

- **History** is not a synonym of **past**
- For us, history is **what is written and taught about the past (historiography)**



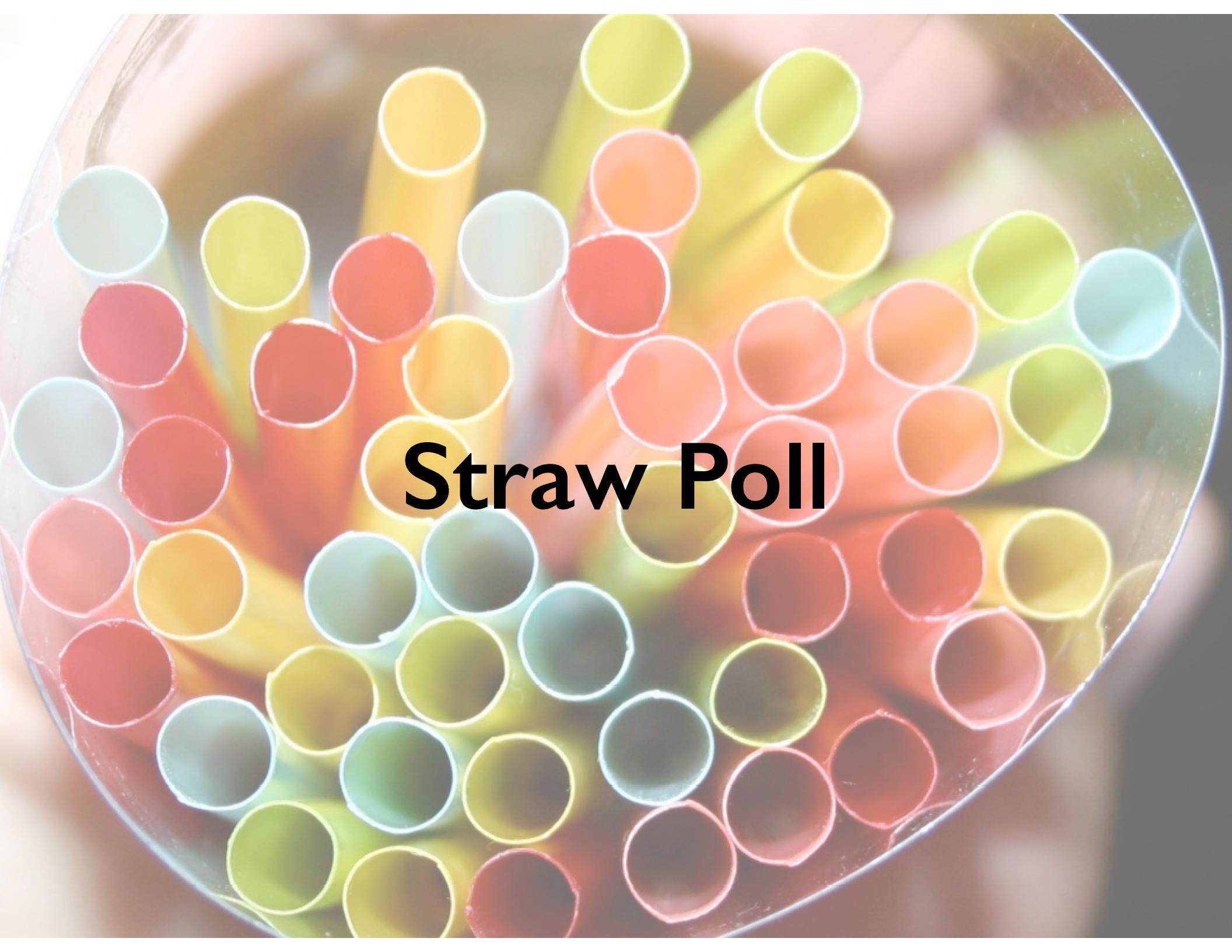
There really is no  
agreement between  
historians...

**Question #1**

**Is History an Art or**

**a Science?**

**Do you lean?**



**Straw Poll**

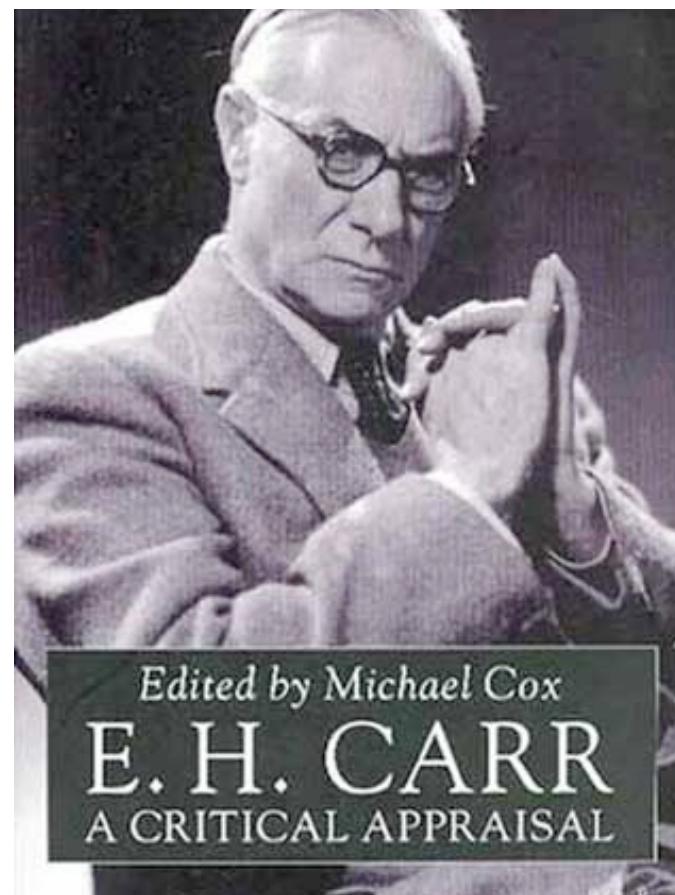
# Yes - it's a science!

- Sir Geoffrey Elton  
(1921-1994) and  
*Practice of History*  
(1967)
  - The ‘conventional view’
  - “**Hard work and clear thinking.**”



# ... No! It's an art!

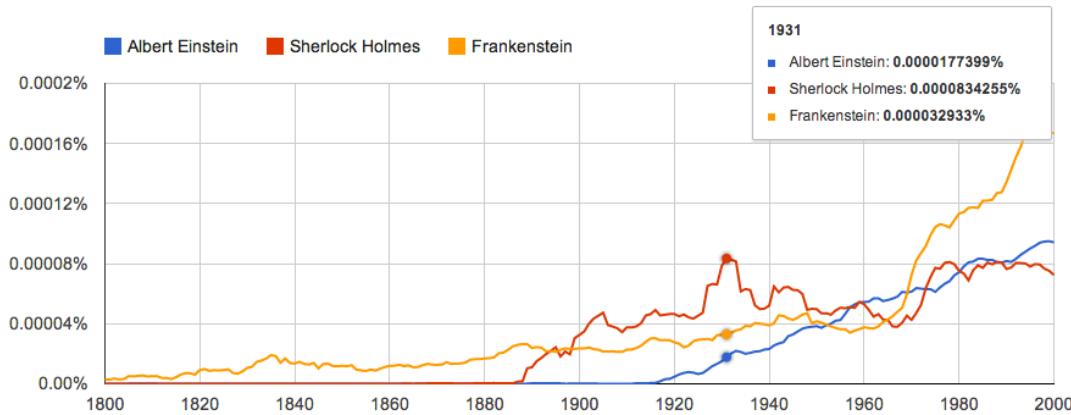
- E.H. Carr (1892 -1982)
- History is subjective because **historians cannot be disentangled from the process**



## Google books Ngram Viewer

Graph these **case-sensitive** comma-separated phrases: **Albert Einstein, Sherlock Holmes, Frankenstein**  
between **1800** and **2000** from the corpus **English** with smoothing of **3**.

[Search lots of books](#)



Run your own experiment! Raw data is available for download [here](#).

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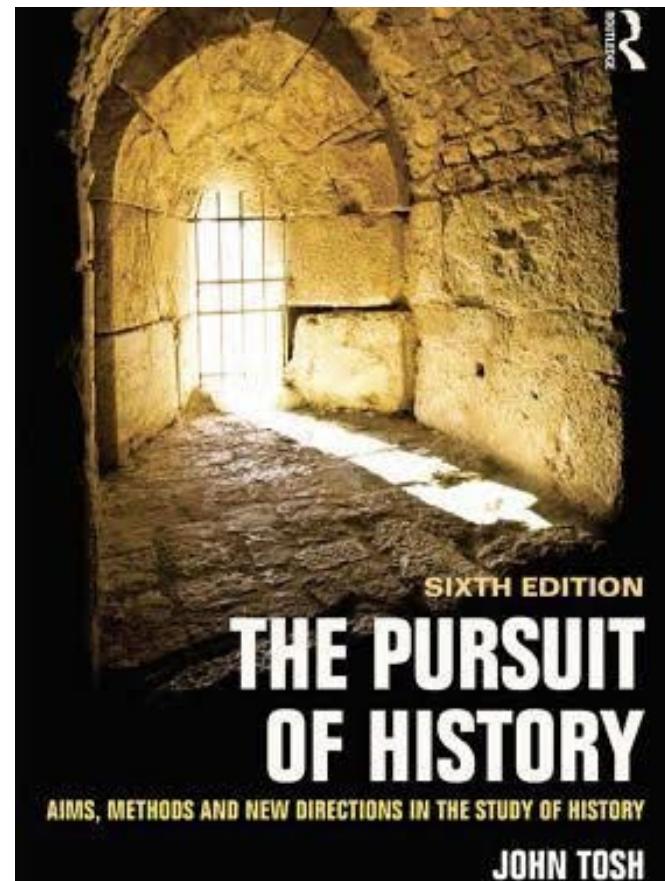
# “Scientific” History?

What do you think?

**Question #2:**  
**What is the difference  
between history and  
memory?**

# Question #2

- **Historical Awareness**
- **Social Memory**
- **Collective Memory**





# Social Memory



Collective Memory vs. Individual  
Memory



# Memory, History and Harlan County

1931, 1941

Frances "Granny" Hager had been in the Battle of Evarts and remembered it well. Yet when historian Mike Mullins asked her, "What was the roughest place over there that you can remember? Roughest time you had here in organizing?" she said: "Let's see, I'll think the name of the place—Crummies Creek." Her interviewer couldn't place the episode. Likewise, when Florence Reece referred to Crummies Creek, the interviewer commented that even veterans could not recall what she was talking about.<sup>64</sup>

GRANNY HAGER: Crummies Creek. Now, there was killing there and I can't tell you just how many that were killed. You see, I used to have all of that down, but it got washed away so many times, and burned out. I don't know all that did happen, but they really had a battle up there. I think there was five killed. They wanted the scabs to go on to work and they wanted to run the union men away, you see. And that is what started the battle. Now that was the roughest place we had in Harlan County.

*They Say in Harlan County: An Oral History*  
By Alessandro Portelli (p 229)

**Question #3:**  
**What makes history**  
**special?**

**“The Past is a  
Foreign Country.”**

**- L.P. Hartley, 1953**

# Question #3

- **Historicism** (Leopold von Ranke, stay tuned)
- ***wie es eigentlich gewesen*** (show what actually happened)
- Three main principles



# Anachronism

- Different material, physical, etc. conditions in the past
- Different behaviours and mentalities



# Context

- Judging things in the **CONTEXT** of their time
- The case of **Emily Murphy** and **First-Wave Feminists**
- Big difference that makes historians special



# Process

- Continuity vs. Change



# Recap

# **Have a great weekend!!!**

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