**Pre History, Paleolithic & Neolithic Revolutions**

Hello learned and astonishingly attractive pupils; my name is Mr. Matthew Fosheim, and I want to welcome you to the Crash Course: World History. This course is based on a series of online videos which will closely mirror my lectures. Over the next 40 weeks, together we will know how in a mere 15,000 years, humans went from hunting and gathering to…

Test:

Wait you don’t care about this. All you care is what I have to do to pass this class and graduate. Because only then at graduation you can hear your name announced, your mom scream, some overly enthusiastic person who thinks its great that they brought his/her air horn, the annoying photo shoots afterwards, the hugs from family, friends, and teachers saying congrats. Then because that moment was so awesome go onto college and study four maybe seven more years just to feel that adrenaline rush again. Your mom scream, the air horn, the mementos, the hugs, everything.

Right. So about the TEST!!! Listen closely; The TEST will measure whether you are an informed, engaged, and productive citizen of the world, and it will be administered on planes, trains, and in cars and on boats, and maybe even hang gliders, and on top of mountains, in bars, hospitals, offices and dorm rooms and places of worship and yes, even SCHOOLS!!!

 You will be tested on first dates, in job interviews, while watching football, while scrolling through your twitter feed. The TEST will cover not just your thinking about things other than celebrity marriages, whether you will be easily persuaded by empty political rhetoric, and whether you will be able to place your life and your community in a broader context. The TEST will last your entire life, and it will be comprised of millions of decisions which, taken together, will make your life yours. And everything – everything – will be on it.

I know, right? So listen up;

The Cheeseburger:

In just 15,000 years humans went from hunting and gathering to creating such improbabilities as the airplane, the Internet, and the 99cent double cheeseburger. It’s an extraordinary journey, one that I will now symbolize by embarking upon a journey—over to the other side of the room.

Hi, there other side of the room. It’s me, Mr. Fosheim. Let’s start with that double cheeseburger.

“Oh food photography”. How you always seem to lie!!! This hunk of meat and all its awesomeness contains 490 calories. And will destroy any diet when they ask if you would like to supersize that. To get this cheeseburger, you have to feed raise and slaughter cows, then grind their meat then freeze it and ship it to its destination. You also got to grow some wheat and then process the living hell out of it until it whiter than Queen Elizabeth I and taste something like an unsweetened marshmallow, then you got to milk some cows and turn their milk into cheese, which is not even to mention the growing and pickling of cucumbers or the sweetening of tomatoes or the grinding of mustard seeds, etc.

How in the sweet name of everything holy did we ever come to live in a world where such a thing can ever be created? And how is it possible that these 490 calories can be served to me for –assuming I make the federal minimum wage here in the United States—I can earn in 11minutes. And most importantly, should I be delighted or alarmed to live in this strange world of relative abundance?

Well, this may not strictly be history, since we don’t have much to go from here since there isn’t a written record, but thanks to archaeology and paleobioldgy, we do have some idea of what went on deep in the past in the prehistoric world, the time before written history.

Note Taking:

Hmm…Prehistory…the time before written history. That seems important. WRITE IT DOWN NOW!!!. Look at the board if you see words in RED . Much like a stop light it means stop and write it down. I know some of you are preparing for your driving test but let me help you out. RED means STOP! And write it down. YELLOW is a question. I will ask you numerous questions and you need to come up with an answer. Don’t rush the answer. It’s not a race. Think about it. Let it soak in and then give me a response. Anything GREEN are supplemental points to one of my arguments that I just made. If you missed the argument then pay attention more. Please paraphrase each of those points so you understand them.

Let’s go to the thought bubble:

*So 15,000 years ago, humans were foragers and hunters. Foraging meant gathering fruits, nuts, and also wild grains and grasses. Hunting allowed for a protein-rich diet, so long as find something with meat to kill. By far the best hunting gig in the prehistoric world was fishing, which is one of the reasons that, if you look at the history of people they tend to run to the shore and stay there. Marine life was*

1. *Abundant*
2. *Relatively unlikely to eat you.*

*While we tend to think that the lives of foragers (hunter/gathers) was pretty bad, fossil evidence suggests that they actually had it pretty good. Their bones and teeth are healthier that those of agriculturalists, and anthropologists who have studied the remaining forager peoples have noted that they actually worked a lot fewer hours than the rest of us and spend more time on art, music, storytelling—and if you believe the classic of anthropology Nisa, they also have more time for skoodlypooping? What? I call it skoodlypooping. Is that so wrong?*

*It’s important to note that cultivation of crops seems to have arisen independently over the course of millennia in a number of places, from Africa to China to the Americas.*

*What do you think those very first crops were in those places.*

*Southeast Asia – ???*

*Mexico – ???*

*Andes Mountains – ???*

*Fertile Crescent – ???*

*West Africa – ??)*

*Coincidently it didn’t take them long to figure out how to turn each of those into alcohol either.*

*So, using crops that naturally grew nearby – rice in Southeast Asia, maize in Mexico, potatoes in the Andes, Wheat in the Fertile Crescent, yams in West Africa – people around the world began to abandon their foraging for agriculture. Since so many communities made this choice independently, it must have been a good choice, right? Even though it meant less music and art, and yes even skoodilypooping.*

*Thanks, Thought Bubble.*

Neolithic Revolution:

Okay, to answer that question, let’s first take a look at the advantages and disadvantages of agriculture.

Advantage:

1. Controllable food supply: you might have drought or floods but if you’re growing the crops and breeding them to be healthier and heartier, you get a bit more say in whether or not you starve.

Disadvantages:

1. In order to keep feeding people as population grows, you have to radically change the landscape of the planet. You must control the environment every which way you can.

Advantage:

1. You can create a food surplus, especially if you grow grain, which makes cities possible and also the specialization of labor. Like in the days before farming everyone’s job was foraging and it took 1000 calories a day to get a 1000 calories of food that will become edible. It’s impossible to create large population centers. But if you have a surplus, agriculture can support people not directly involved in the process of food production, like, say, tradesman who can devote their lives to creating better farming equipment, which in turns make it possible for you to produce more food more efficiently, which in turn eventually makes it possible for a corporation in time to turn a profit on a 99cent cheeseburger.

Which is delicious by the way!!! Actually that’s just terrible and very cold. This could only be good if it was eaten in the first 2 minutes of being made. I seriously wish I had not eaten it. Can we just compare what I was promised and actually delivered. Yeah thank you. That was totally not it.

Some would say that large and complex corporations that can support cities and eventually inexpensive meat sandwiches is not actually necessarily beneficial to the planet or even necessarily its human inhabitants, although that is a bit of a tough argument to you , as I am a series of 1s and 0s, aka binary code ala the Matrix.

Advantage:

1. Agriculture can be practiced in many places all over the world, although in some cases and lots of places it

requires extensive manipulation of the environment; e.g., irrigation or controlled flooding or terracing.

Disadvantages:

1. Farming is hard: So hard that one is tempted to resort to ownership over other humans and then force them to till the land on your behalf – which is the kind of non-ideal social that tended to emerge again and again in agriculturalist societies.

Herding:

So why did agriculture happened when it –wait I haven’t talked about HERDERS, Herders man, always getting the short end of the stick. Herding is a very good and interesting alternative to foraging: Domesticate some animals, and then you take them on the road with you. The advantages of herding are obvious

1. You get to be a cowboy, the hat, the boots, riding horses.
2. Animals provide meat and milk but they also help by providing shelter and clothing by providing wool and leather.

On the downside, you have to move around a lot because your herds always need new grass to eat, and it’s hard to build cities when you’re constantly moving, unless you are the **Mongols.**

By the way, BTW to some of your, over the next 40 weeks you will frequently hear generalizations followed by the caveat “Unless you are the Mongols”.

But anyway, One of the main reasons herding only caught on in certain parts of the world is that there aren’t that many animals that really lend themselves to domestication; Like you have sheep, goats, cattle, pigs, horses, camels, donkeys, reindeer, water buffalo, yaks all of which have something in common. They AREN’T native to the Americas. Llamas are the only halfway useful herding animals native to the Americas.

 No not that llama that’s the Dali Lama. The other llama. Two L’s. Yes that llama.

Lots of animals just don’t work for domestication. Like hippos are large and provide lots of meat but they like to kill us, which makes them bad for herding. Zebras are too ornery; grizzlies’s have wild hearts that can’t be broken; elephants are too slow to bread. Which reminds me…it’s time for the open letter.

But first lets see what is in the secret compartment. Oh it’s another double cheeseburger. Thanks secret compartment. Actually no I really don’t like you. This is disgusting.

An Open Letter to Elephants:

*Hey Elephants,*

*You’re so cute and smart and awesome, why you gotta be pregnant for 22 months? That’s crazy! And then you only have one kid! If you were more like cows, you might have taken us over by now. Little did you know that the greatest evolutionary advantage…is being useful to humans. (Ask the polar bears). Like, here is a graph of cow population and here is a graph of elephant population.*

*Elephants, if you’d just inserted yourself into human life the way cows did, you could have used your power and intelligence and power to form secret societies conspiring against the humans and then you could have risen up against the humans and destroyed us and made an awesome elephant world with elephant cars and elephant planes. It would have been so great! … but noooooooo you’ve gotta have 22-month pregnancies with only one offspring and tusks that people want to kill you for. It’s so depressing.*

*Best Wishes,*

*Matthew Fosheim*

Women Discovered Agriculture:

Right so back to when the Agricultural revolution. Let us take a magical journey back in time and go all the way back to that Eureka moment.

Imagine that you are a hunter-gatherer. You return to a campsite you were at the previous year. When you arrive, you discover that crops you once searched and collected were growing abundantly in the center of your camping area in the area you once threw out your seeds. What do you think happened?

Well some might point out that farming is mainly woman’s work. Take the Native American population for instance. The men typically were the hunters in society and the women tilled the fields of corn. This patriarchal, male dominated, societal view tends to come from male historians. What of the woman’s perspective on history?

Fundamentally, if men are hunters in society and women are farmers. Then how do we have these two separate spheres of work? Did we live separate lives only to skiddlypoop at certain seasons like most animals? We will ignore that question but more importantly…

Did women invent Agriculture first out of a necessity to contribute to society instead of hunting? Or in the women’s world did they invent agriculture to feed themselves without the need of men? (Your textbook tends to lean towards that answer.)

 The oldest piece of artwork known to exist in the world is the Venus de Willendorf. It was found in Austria near an ancient farming village. Quick. Take a look at the statue. What do you find interesting about her? What conclusions can you draw about society from her?

Mother Earth…

Fertility…

Idolized Woman…

Woman Superior Food Collector…

Now is this supposed to be the image of woman that we are to believe was idolized during the Paleolithic Age? Or is it something more like Raquel Welch in One Million Years BC.? And does this idea continue all the way through to the Neolithic age?

The Venus of Willendorf implies numerous images to contemplate. Images of women, mostly figurines of the same type as the "Venus" of Willendorf, all dating to the Paleolithic period, far outnumber images of men. This has lead to speculation about the place of women in Stone Age society.

Archaeological evidence (studies of femur bones of men and women) suggest women were much more sedimentary than men during this time period allowing them a great amount of time inventing new technology (spears, ropes, nets, fishing lines, etc.). A spear can not only be used for hunting but also digging up potato roots. Why must it only be associated with male hunters?

Some have argued that these female figures and other evidence denote the existence during this period of a prominent female deity identified usually as the Earth Mother or the Mother Goddess. On the basis of this assumption, it has been suggested that, unlike today, women played a considerably more important, if not dominant, role in Paleolithic society; that possibly a matriarchy existed and women ruled. Just because men had tools does not necessarily mean they invented them.

Ladies…how did you become so subjected and inferior to men throughout history? If women were to be discovers of agriculture, inventors of tools, caretakers of children, and most importantly the real carriers of civilization. What happened? Well as agriculture became more important to society as a source of food the value of land became increasing important.

Who would this benefit most? …Men. The hunters, the warriors, those who could throw spears at moving targets instead of digging in the dirt.

Agricultural Revolution:

Right so but back to why the Agricultural Revolution occurred. Historians don’t know why for sure because we don’t have written records, but historians love to make guesses:

1. Maybe population pressure necessitated agriculture even though it was more work
2. Abundance gave people leisure time to experiment with domestication
3. Planting originated as a fertility rite for women
4. Or as some historians have argued – people needed to domesticate grains in order to produce more alcohol.

Charles Darwin, like most 19the Century scientists, believed agriculture was an accident, saying

“*A wild and unusually good variety of native plant might attract the attention of some wise old savage.”*

Off-topic, but you will come to note that the definition of ‘savage’ tends to be “not me”.

1. Maybe the best theory is that there wasn’t really an agricultural revolution at all but that agricultural came out of or was a part of an evolutionary desire to produce more to eat. After all, hunter gatherers know that seeds germinate and if climate permits knew how to grow crops. So when you find something that’s edible, you try to get more of it. Ifs, while otherwise preferring not to forage (since it’s less work, after all).

Unless, of course, it’s this food, a 99cent cheeseburger, which is disgusting. Which makes you want to do less of it.

So early farmers would take the most easily accessible seeds of einkorn and emmer wheat plans and plant them and experiment with them. Not because they were hoping that the results would become strains of wheat that were easier to eat but hey you know what would be awesome…MORE FOOD.

Like on this topic, for instance, We have evidence that as early as 13,000 years ago humans in southern Greece were domesticating snails for food. In a cave at Frankthi is a huge pile of snail shells. Most of them are larger than current snails, suggesting that people who ate them were selectively breeding them to be bigger and more nutritious. Snails, btw, make excellent domesticated food sources because:

 A) they are nutritious or caloric

B) they’re easy to carry, since they come with their own suitcases, and

C) you can imprison them just by scratching a small ditch around their living quarters.

That’s not exactly a revolution. That’s just people wanting to increase the number of available calories. But one non-revolution leads to another, and pretty soon you have this as far as the eye can see. No doubt that the impact of the discovery and the adoption of agriculture is probably the single most important thing to effect society. Bigger than cars, planes, facebook, twitter, jersey shore, etc.

But many historians argue that with complex civilizations and agriculture come many bad things like inequality, patriarchy, war, and unfortunately, famine. And as far as the planet is concerned, agriculture has been a big loser – without it humans never would have changed the environment so much, clearing forests, moving rivers, building dams to prevent floods, drilling wells for agriculture, and in the 20th and 21st centuries drilling for oil to process into fertilizer.

Many people made the choice for agriculture independently from each other, but does that mean it was the right choice? Maybe so, but maybe not. Regardless, It’s impossible to unmake that choice today, which is one of the reasons I think history is important to study and worth our attention; it reminds us that revolutions are not events so much as processes, that for tens of thousands of years people have been making decisions that irrevocably our world, just as today we’re making subtle, irrevocable decisions that the people of the future will remember as revolution.

So that concludes our history lecture today. And as we say in world history don’t forget to be awesome!