

SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

HIST 100 WORLD HISTORY [Sections 1-15]
SYLLABUS: Fall Semester 2004

Lectures & Discussion groups: Lectures: MW 12-12:50: ENS280 Discussion Groups: meet one hour each week
Instructor: David Christian Room: AH 4190 Phone: 594-2821
Email: dgchrist@mail.sdsu.edu Office Hours: Monday, 2:00-4:00



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START UP INFORMATION

Class Times: Lectures will be at 12:00-12:50 on Mondays and Wednesdays in ENS-280. Attendance is compulsory. Discussion groups will meet for one hour each week. For section times and rooms see Class Schedule.
Text: David Christian, Maps of Time: An Introduction to "Big History" (University of California Press, 2004). The text is essential for this course. You can purchase it from the Aztec bookstore.
Approach: This course offers a new approach to World History. It describes the history of human beings as part of the larger history of our planet and our Universe. We hope you will enjoy this novel approach.
The Web Site: The course web site contains this syllabus and other useful information for the course. Log in using the information on p. 10

WHAT THIS COURSE IS ABOUT

Unlike most World History courses, this course tries to understand the past *as a whole*. This means starting well before the appearance of human beings on earth, and trying to understand how human history fits into the history of the earth and the Universe as a whole. So the early parts of the course cover topics such as the origins of the Universe, of the Earth and of Life—topics that are not normally studied in a world history course. We hope you will appreciate this approach to the study of the past, and see how, like a traditional Creation Story, it can help you get a better sense of how you fit into the Universe of which you are a part. Because this is a *modern* Creation Story, it will use the information of modern science. Science has made astonishing progress in the last century, so we can now tell a modern, scientific creation story in remarkable detail.

In an article first published in 1991, I described this approach to the past as ‘Big History’. [*The Case for “Big History”*’, *The Journal of World History*, 2, No. 2 (Fall 1991): 223-38] For better or worse, the label seems likely to stick! I hope you find ‘Big History’ as exhilarating and thought-provoking as I have. For another article on Big History, go to <http://www.bu.edu/historic/hs/november02.html#hughes-warrington>, and click on the link to ‘Big History’.

COURSE STRUCTURE & ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

Your main goal in this course is to understand the ‘modern creation story’. This is a complex story, but you will be helped by approaching it from four directions: 1) in lectures, 2) in weekly discussion groups, 3) through the main text, and 4) in your own writing. You will be expected to attend all lectures, and also to attend your discussion group each week. (If you do not attend regularly, you will receive lower grades for Weekly Summaries and Participation—see below.) You will also be expected to keep up with the reading. The discussion groups are a chance for you to play a more active role in the educational process, and to raise questions about any issues you do not fully understand.

KEY DATES

We expect assignments to be submitted on time (see ‘An Informal Contract’, on p. 6). Late submissions will have to be accompanied with explanations of why they are late. If these reasons are inadequate (‘not enough time’, for example), we will deduct marks for lateness.

DATE	WEEK SEMESTER	WHAT’S HAPPENING?
Mon 30 Aug:	1 st week begins	1 st day of classes
Mon 6 Sep:	2 nd week “	Labor Day (classes from Tuesday on)
Mon 13 Sep:	3 rd week “	
Mon 20 Sep:	4 th week “	Last day to add/drop classes:
Mon 27 Sep:	5 th week “	FIRST ESSAY DUE: SUBMIT IN DISCUSSION GROUPS
Mon 4 Oct:	6 th week “	
Mon 11 Oct:	7 th week “	
Mon 18 Oct:	8 th week “	MID-TERM EXAM: Wed 20th in Lecture
Mon 25 Oct:	9 th week “	
Mon 1 Nov:	10 th week “	
Mon 8 Nov:	11 th week “	
Mon 15 Nov:	12 th week “	SECOND ESSAY DUE: SUBMIT IN DISCUSSION GROUPS
Mon 22 Nov:	13 th week “	Thanksgiving Recess: Thur 25-Sun 28: No Classes this week
Mon 29 Nov:	14 th week “	
Mon 6 Dec:	15 th week “	Last Day of Classes, Fri Dec 10 th
11-18 Dec:	Finals week	FINAL EXAM: Wed Dec 15 10:30-12:30
Jan 2004:		Grades available on GradeLine

COURSE OBJECTIVES

We have constructed this course in the hope that, by its end, you will be able to:

1. **UNDERSTAND YOUR PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE:** Explain how human history fits in to the modern creation story, so as to get a better understanding of how you fit into the scheme of things
2. **UNDERSTAND PARTS OF THE MODERN CREATION STORY IN GREATER DETAIL:** Explain in greater detail some of the particular stories within this course, including stories such as the origins of Life, that are not normally part of a World History course
3. **USE EVIDENCE TO ANALYZE IMPORTANT HISTORICAL QUESTIONS:** Explain the types of evidence available in different areas of historical knowledge and assess the reliability of the types of evidence used to construct the modern creation story
4. **WRITE A GOOD HISTORICAL ESSAY:** Prepare a well-constructed, well-written, evidence-based historical argument (a basic skill for many different types of employment)
5. **ACQUIRE THE INTELLECTUAL DISCIPLINE NEEDED TO ANALYZE AND EXPLAIN COMPLEX PROBLEMS:** Learn how to listen, research and write with discipline, through active participation in the teaching process (another basic skill in many different areas of employment)

CONTENT: Meeting the first two objectives means learning modern answers to basic questions about how our Universe, our planet and today's world were created. The text and lectures are designed to help you do this.

COMPREHENSION & WRITING SKILLS: Meeting the third and fourth objectives means practicing thinking and writing. So many of the assignments require short essays based on your reading and class discussions.

DISCIPLINE & PARTICIPATION: We will help you meet the fifth objective by encouraging you to participate actively in this course, but *you* will have to take the crucial decisions about the level of discipline you put into this course. We can only play the role of coaches; if you do not do your work in a disciplined way, you will get much less out of this course.

ASSESSMENT AND ASSIGNMENTS

The assessment tasks in this course are intended to support the course's teaching objectives. They should help you:

1. **CONTENT:** Learn the factual information contained in the modern creation story [assessed in exams, weekly summaries, essays and final exam]
2. **COMPREHENSION, ANALYSIS & WRITING SKILLS:** Learn to use evidence, to analyze and to write clearly [mainly assessed in the essays and final exam]
3. **DISCIPLINE, ORGANIZATION & PARTICIPATION:** Acquire the self-discipline needed to become an independent learner [assessed on the basis of weekly chapter summaries and course participation]

1) Weekly Chapter Summaries: 15% of course grade; due each week in discussion groups.

Each week you will be asked to submit a careful, one page summary of the week's readings. Describe what you thought were the four or five most important points in the reading, and list any points you did not fully understand.

Doing this will give you practice in writing and help you keep up with the course material. If you attend each week's discussion and submit your summary, you will automatically earn 1% of your grade each week. If you obviously haven't read the assigned readings, or if the summary is careless, you may get 0.5%, or even 0%. We do not accept late submission of weekly papers. We will get other students to read your summaries and comment on them as a way of giving more feedback on your writing.

2) First Essay: 15% of course grade; due week beginning Mon 27 Sep (5th week of the course).

A three-four page essay on one of the questions from Weeks 1-4 (for example: '*How did Life appear on Earth, and how has it evolved?*'). Discussion group leaders will discuss essay writing strategies the week before the essay is due. The essay is intended to test and develop your basic research, analysis and writing skills and your comprehension of the course material. Marks will be deducted if the essay is submitted late, and also if you have not carefully read the material in the section on 'Writing History Essays' (below, p. 7), which explains what we expect from a first year history essay. The emphasis will be on:

- Content: your understanding of the topic and the relevant evidence
- Comprehension & Writing skills: the clarity and precision of your writing
-

Organization:
the clarity and
logic with you

organize and
present your
ideas

3) Mid-term Exam: 20% of course grade; Wed 20 Oct (Week 8) in lecture.

This will cover the first half of the course. It will consist of ID questions (asking you to define and explain the significance of particular terms).

4) Second Essay: 20% of course grade; due week beginning Mon Nov 15 (12th week of the course).

A five-six page essay on one of the questions from Weeks 5-13.

5) Final Exam: 20% of course grade; Wed Dec 15 10:30-12:30 (16th week of the course).

The Final is intended to assess your comprehension of the course material and your writing skills. It will be two hours long and will cover the entire course. There will be 3 questions: 1) an ID question, 2) an essay question on weeks 2-7, and 3) an essay question on weeks 8-13.

6) Participation: 10% of course grade; discussion groups & lectures.

You will learn much better and will enjoy this course much more if you commit to taking an active role in this course. So regular attendance in discussion groups and lectures is required. 10% of your course grade will be based on your participation in class discussions and attendance at lectures. Note that this can make the difference between two grades.

LIST OF LECTURES, READINGS AND DISCUSSION TOPICS FOR EACH WEEK

Note: **Your Essay Questions will be chosen from the italicized questions below.** All Readings are from the main text.

Week 1: 30 Aug-1 Sep: Finding your place in the Scheme of Things: *‘What is “Big History”? Why is it important?’*

READINGS: Text, ‘Introduction’

LECTURES: 1) Mon 30 Aug: Administrative issues: What is ‘Big History’? A new approach to world history: a modern ‘creation story’. Scales in time and space: Finding your place in the Universe
2) Wed 1 Sep: Origins of the Universe: Big Bang Cosmology.

Week 2: 7-10 Sep: The Beginnings of Everything *‘How was the Universe created?’*

READINGS: Text, Chs. 1 and 2

LECTURES: 3) Wed 8 Sep: Galaxies and Stars and their place in the modern Creation Story

Week 3: 13-17 Sep: The Solar System and the Earth *‘How was our Earth created and how has it evolved?’*

READINGS: Text, Ch. 3

LECTURES: 4) Mon 13 Sep: The creation of the Solar System
5) Wed 15 Sep: The creation and evolution of our Earth

Week 4: 20-24 Sep: The Origins and Evolution of Life *‘How did Life appear on Earth, and how has it evolved?’*

READINGS: Text, Chs. 4 and 5

LECTURES: 6) Mon 20 Sep: Evolution
7) Wed 22 Sep: Origins of life on Earth

Week 5: 27 Sep-1 Oct: The Evolution of Human Beings *‘How and when did human beings evolve?’*

READINGS: Text, Ch. 6

LECTURES: 8) Mon 27 Sep: A Brief History of Life on Earth
9) Wed 29 Sep: Hominines: the origins of our closest ancestors

FIRST ESSAY DUE

Week 6: 4-8 Oct: The Beginnings of Human History *‘How did the first humans live?’*

READINGS: Text, Ch. 7

LECTURES: 10) Mon 4 Oct: ‘Homo Sapiens’, and the breakthrough to human history
11) Wed 6 Oct: Paleolithic societies and migrations around the world

Week 7: 11-15 Oct: The Transition to Agriculture *‘What is agriculture, and how can you explain its appearance in human history?’*

READINGS: Text, Ch. 8

LECTURES: 12) Mon 11 Oct: Explaining the Origins of Agriculture and the first agrarian societies
13) Wed 13 Oct: The origins of simple power structures

Week 8: 18-22 Oct: Cities and States *'How and when did the first cities and states appear?'*

READINGS: Text, Ch. 9

LECTURES: 14) Mon 18 Oct: Larger power structures: towards cities and states
15) Wed 20 Oct: **MID-TERM EXAM**

Week 9: 25-29 Oct: The Evolution of agrarian civilizations *'What were the main long-term trends in the era of agrarian civilizations, from 3,000 BCE to 1,000 CE?'*

READINGS: Text, Ch. 10

LECTURES: 16) Mon 25 Oct: Agrarian civilization in Afro-Eurasia: Long Trends
17) Wed 27 Oct: Agrarian civilization in the Americas: Long Trends

Week 10: 1-5 Nov: Explaining Modernity *'What is meant by "the Modern Revolution"?''*

READINGS: Text, Chs. 11 and 12

LECTURES: 18) Mon 1 Nov: Models of the 'Modern Revolution'
19) Wed 3 Nov: Preparing for modernity: the World, 1,000-1,700 CE

Week 11: 8-12 Nov: Break-through to Modernity *'How did the modern revolution spread through the world?'*

READINGS: Text, Ch. 13

LECTURES: 20) Mon 8 Nov: The Industrial Revolution
21) Wed 10 Nov: The spread of Industrialization

Week 12: 15-19 Nov: The Twentieth Century *'What were the most important changes during the 20th century?'*

READINGS: Text, Ch. 14

LECTURES: 22) Mon 15 Nov: The Twentieth Century
23) Wed 17 Nov: The Twentieth Century: Relations with the Environment
SECOND ESSAY DUE

Week 13: 22-26 Nov: THANKSGIVING BREAK: NO CLASSES THIS WEEK

Week 14: 29 Nov-3 Dec: Looking at the future *'What predictions can we make about the future?'*

READINGS: Text, Ch. 15

LECTURES: 24) Mon 1 Dec: Thinking about the future: the next 100 Years
25) Wed 3 Dec: The distant future

Week 15: 6-10 Dec: Overview and Revision

READINGS: Text, Appendices on Time and Complexity

LECTURES: Mon 6 Dec: The Modern Creation Story in One Shot: A Storyteller's version
Wed 8 Dec: Review Session

Week 16: 12-20 Dec: FINAL EXAM: Wed Dec 15 10:30-12:30

THE INSTRUCTORS

David Christian was born in the USA, and brought up in Nigeria and Britain. He did his BA and DPhil at Oxford University, then taught Russian and Soviet history for many years in Sydney, Australia, before coming to SDSU in January 2001. His research focused, at first on the material life of 19th century Russian peasants (he once wrote a history of the role of vodka in Russian life). He has also written a history of Russia and the Soviet Union, and a history of Inner Asia from prehistoric times up to the time of the Mongol Empire. In the last 15 years, he has become interested in looking at the past on very large scales. This has meant asking questions like: When did history begin? Is there a single history that is shared by all human beings? Is there a modern equivalent of the great Creation Stories of the past, a story that tells about the origins of everything in our Universe, of humans, animals, the earth and even the Universe? These questions eventually led him to start teaching one of the first modern courses in 'Big History'.

Discussion Group Leaders: [brief biographies will be available on the course web site]

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

An Informal Contract

Learning is a two-way street. Your instructor's role is like that of a coach. We will try our best to create an environment which encourages you to learn, to set tasks that help you learn, and to give you whatever help you may need during the course. But *you* have to do the learning. And that requires some self-discipline. How hard and how efficiently you work is a choice you must make. We cannot make it for you, just as we cannot do the work for you.

But it's worth making the effort. Learning self-discipline in a course like this is a great preparation for life outside the University. The analytical, research and writing skills you will acquire will also be invaluable when seeking employment. You will also find that learning, like any other skill, is enjoyable *if* you approach it with a basic level of self-discipline. It may help all of us if we imagine there is an **informal contract**, which goes something like this:

A) *Our side of the Contract:* We expect to be disciplined in preparing the structure of the course, in preparing lectures, in managing classes and returning and grading your work. We will also try to make ourselves available for consultations, and through email.

B) *Your side of the Contract:* We expect you to show discipline by attending classes regularly, keeping up with the reading, and submitting work on time. In lectures and discussion groups, everyone will learn more effectively if we observe basic rules of courtesy. Please arrive on time; don't talk in class; turn off mobile phones. If you make your class time productive (take good notes, ask questions, participate in discussions), that will save you time out of class.

Having said that, we also hope you will enjoy this course! When approached in the right spirit, learning is not just useful; it is also enjoyable and exciting.

Grades and What they Mean

In the General Catalog (p. 429), Grades for Undergraduate Students are defined as follows:

Grade A: Outstanding achievement; available only for the highest accomplishment

Grade B: Praiseworthy performance; definitely above average

Grade C: Average; awarded for satisfactory performance; the most common undergraduate grade

Grade D: Minimally passing; less than the typical undergraduate achievement

Grade F: Failing

Here's our interpretation of the different grades:

Grade A: Understands the question fully and answers it precisely; plenty of detailed information to support its main thesis; well written, logically organized, perhaps with some striking and original touches

Grade B: Understands the question and answers it well, but may need a bit more research to support its case, and more care with writing, organization and logic; there may be some errors of fact, the argument may occasionally be muddled or imprecise, and the paper may lack a clear central thesis

Grade C: May only partly understand the question; the writing, research and organization may be poorer than for a B paper; may lack a logical argument and a clear central thesis; may contain many errors of fact and grammar

Grade D: May misunderstand the question, needs much more attention to writing, organization and research, probably lacks a clear central thesis, and contains far too many errors of fact and grammar

Some Advice on Writing History Essays

Advice in this section is relevant both for the main essay and for the exam essays. But it should also help you writing other assignments. Try not to think of assignments as chores. They will not necessarily be easy, but if you work in a disciplined way, you will find that writing and thinking can be immensely satisfying.

When submitting your main essay, make sure to keep a copy of the essay and your notes. I strongly advise you to read and use the advice below on writing essays. Also use some of the many good guides on Study Techniques. Some of the most original are by Tony Buzan. Try Tony Buzan, Use Your Head, which is all about using 'Mind Maps' for brain storming, sorting out your ideas, taking notes and revising material.

History Essays: What graders are looking for

In writing essays, you are learning skills that will be immensely valuable in any career path you may take up. You are trying to do two main things:

- 1) to understand a topic or a problem, and
- 2) to explain that topic or problem to someone else

Understanding the problem means getting the facts right, understanding the relevant evidence, seeing the links between different parts of the problem, and seeing the whole story clearly. To do that you must do careful research.

Explaining your answer to someone else means finding the best way of presenting your understanding of the problem to someone else. That means presenting your ideas clearly, defining and explaining all complex terms that someone else might not understand, writing grammatically and logically. A good essay generally has a central idea, which is explained clearly and backed up with evidence. It must also be organized simply and logically. You will find it is generally a helpful idea to imagine that you are trying to explain the topic to a smart 10-year old child. This will force you to write simply, clearly and logically.

Advice on Good Writing

Good writing is *immensely* important. With a bit of care, you can write clearly and persuasively; and you can even turn boring sentences into things that wriggle. Once you learn to write well, people will sit up and take notice of what you say. Perhaps the simplest way of improving your grades is just to proofread your essay before submission; polishing the style, spelling and grammar.

One of the best and shortest introductions to good writing is: Strunk & White, *The Elements of Style*, 4th ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2000). More complex, but very good, is Joseph M. Williams, *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace*, 6th ed. (New York: Longmans, 2000). G.V. Carey, *Mind the Stop*, is a superb short guide to punctuation. A good general guide on writing and presentation is Ann Raimes, *Keys for Writers*, 4th ed. (Boston/New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004). You might also find Carol Berkin and Betty S. Anderson, *The History Handbook* (Boston/New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2003) helpful on study methods.

The most important ways I know to improve your writing are:

1) *Start early and revise often.* Most good writing is the product of frequent rewriting and revising. So write at every opportunity. The more you write, the better you'll write. Write something (anything) *even before* you start researching, and your later writing will be easier as it will consist of revision. Revising a rough draft is much easier than starting from scratch. Besides, writing is *the best single way* of clarifying your ideas. By starting early, you help your brain. Writing gets your brain moving; reading feeds it with information. Once you've given it a start, it will work even when you're doing other things (even sleeping). And you'll be surprised to will find that good ideas start popping out when it comes to preparing a final draft of your essay. If you start the night before, your brain has had no chance to 'compost' the material; and you will be starting out cold. That's not fair on your brain!

2) *Think about the needs of your reader.* When you write, you know the subject well, so you may think that what you are saying is clear enough. But often it is not. If you read over your own work after a day or two, this will often be obvious. This is why it helps to imagine you are writing for a reader who is i) very intelligent (i.e. if you write rubbish they will notice); but ii) very ignorant (so that everything needs to be explained very logically and carefully). If you write like this, even the reader who *does* know the stuff already (for example, your instructor!), will find your writing clearer and easier to read. Doing this will force you to write very clearly, to take arguments step by step, and to avoid technical jargon, explaining things, instead, in simple, clear language of your own.

Some Important Steps in Writing a History Essay

1. **Preparing to Write**

1. Choose your question
2. Study the question and figure out what terms need to be defined
3. Draw up a preliminary plan by making an outline, mind map, or by clustering
4. Start gathering relevant information
5. Organize information by making an outline, mind map, or by clustering
6. Create a thesis statement:
 - i. The thesis should answer your question with precise language
 - ii. The thesis is the controlling idea of the paper. It will guide the writing process. It will

determine which information you will use in the paper and what you will leave out.

iii. The thesis informs readers where the paper will take them

2. **Writing**

1. A paper should have three main sections: an introduction, body, and conclusion.

i. The Introduction should explain the question, engage the reader, and present the thesis.

ii. Body paragraphs should develop the thesis with specific details, evidence and examples

iii. The conclusion should summarize the main points of the paper and preemptively answer the question, 'so what?' [i.e. why is this conclusion important?]

2. Each paragraph should begin with a topic sentence. The topic sentence should relate directly to your thesis. The rest of the paragraph should be dedicated to elaborating the idea presented in the topic sentence.

3. **Revising** [perhaps the most important stage of all!]

1. Write a first draft that no one else will see; then revise it; then, if possible, revise it again. At each stage, you should be able to pick up some of the things that a grader would see, and correct them *before* the grader sees them!

2. Proofread your paper [one of the easiest ways of improving your grades]

i. Try reading it out loud to see if it flows. You may hear mistakes you did not see

ii. To find grammatical errors, try rading it backwards sentence by sentence. When reading a paper from beginning to end, sometimes the flow will pull you through, making mistakes hard to see.

iii. As someone else to read it. Since we already know what we are trying to say, sometimes we do not realize that the language we have chosen is vague or confusing

Plagiarism: a Warning:

Plagiarism means presenting the work of others as your own. If you quote from someone else, word for word, you *must* put the quotation in quotation marks, and give the exact source.

Plagiarism is dishonest, and warps the learning process. In the end, you are cheating on yourself. You are teaching yourself dishonesty; and you are missing out on opportunities for *genuine* learning. So plagiarism is *very bad karma*.

For these reasons, we will regard work that contains *any plagiarism at all* as valueless. We reserve the right to give such work *no marks at all*. **There will be no right of resubmission for work that contains any plagiarism. This is in line with University policy. See p. 440 of the 2003-2004 General Catalog.**

HOW TO LOG IN TO THE HIST100 WEBSITE

All students are encouraged to enroll in the course web site. This will contain

1. Announcements
2. All the information in the syllabus
3. Lecture summaries and focus questions for each week's main topics
4. Discussion Boards for group discussions, general discussions and any questions you may have about the course
5. It will also provide a convenient way of communicating with your instructors

NOTE: All Blackboard accounts are now the same as official SDSU ID and PIN numbers. For account information go to the SDSU e-Services website <https://sdsu.edu/e-services>

Logging in to Blackboard

- Go to <http://blackboard.sdsu.edu>
- Enter your user name and password (this is your university ID and PIN number)
- Click the **Login** button
- You will be taken to the **My SDSU** page
- From here you can enter your Blackboard courses, send email and check grades
- If you do not see any courses listed on the page, click the **Reload** or **Refresh** button
- The **My Courses** module will appear
- Only courses where the instructor has chosen to use Blackboard will be visible
- Note: If you do not know your PIN number, go to the SDSU e-Services website <https://sdsu.edu/e-services>
- For more information on using Blackboard, check out the *Moving Around Blackboard* and *Frequently Asked Questions* links on the left side of the **My SDSU** page

Changing Your Personal Information

- Go to <https://sdsu.edu/e-services>
- Click on the **Student** link
- Follow the instructions on screen
- Your Blackboard information (password, email) will be updated within 8 hours

Adding Optional Modules to the My SDSU page

- Click on the **Content** button in the upper right of the page
- Choose any of the modules from the list on the left and by highlighting them, you can **Add or Remove** them to either the right or left panel
- You can also change the order of modules within each panel by using the “up” and “down” arrows to the right of the panel field
- Click on the **Submit** button to save your changes

Personalizing Your Colors

- Click on the **Colors** button at the upper right side of the **My SDSU** page
- Click on the **Pick** button next to each item
- Select a color from the chart
- Click the **Submit** button

More Information

If you have additional questions regarding Blackboard, please contact the Help Desk at Student Computing Services.

Phone: (619) 594-3189 Email: scc@rohan.sdsu.edu (use email if you have a question that doesn't need an immediate response) Web Site: <http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~scc>