This seminar will review the development of human societies from around 13,000 years ago projected a couple of decades into the future. Gauguin’s famous painting provides our three main questions. The painting also suggests that the answers are linked—that our understanding of where we are going is grounded in an appreciation of where we are and where we have been.

There are advantages in using this long time frame. We are able to tease out connections that are often obscured when we are fixated on the immediate; we can propose interdisciplinary orientations to political and economic problem solving; and we might be in a position to construct contexts for understanding the major challenges facing us as individuals and as citizens.

The reading for this seminar is accessible but challenging. No apologies here: Effective reading of important texts is a skill Honors College seminars are designed to develop. Our major texts will include: Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*; Tony Judt, *Ill Fares the Land*; and Amanda Ripley, *The Smartest Kids in the World*. There will be a number of other important readings identified in the Class Schedule. These will be either on reserve, or on the web, or they will be handed out in class.

All our seminar assignments aim to further what Karl Mannheim called “democratic education.” For Mannheim, the term means “learning the essential things and taking a stand.” This combination is remarkably difficult to bring off, but in my opinion it forms the basis for independent thinking. There are four major seminar assignments. The first is to come to class prepared to discuss the readings and associated issues. The second is to take a short answer examination toward the end of the semester. (There will be no “final examination.”) The third is to write a series of two to three papers on issues arising from our readings and discussions. There are a number of options; each seminar member will write five of these short papers. The final assignment is to write an independent paper which further develops themes raised in our seminar. The final version is due at the end of the semester; milestones are due during the semester as indicated in the Class Schedule.

I would be pleased to discuss details and to answer questions from anyone who might be interested in taking this seminar. My email is furniss@indiana.edu. I can be reached before October 9th and after October 25th.

Norman Furniss