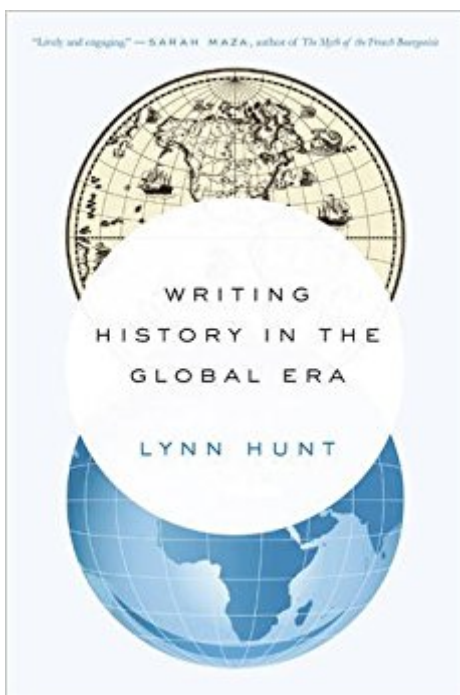


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# Writing History In The Global Era



## Synopsis

Leading historian Lynn Hunt rethinks why history matters in today's global world and how it should be written. Globalization is emerging as a major economic, cultural, and political force. In *Writing History in the Global Era*, historian Lynn Hunt examines whether globalization can reinvigorate the telling of history. She looks toward scholars from the East and West collaborating in new ways as they share their ideas. She proposes a sweeping reevaluation of individuals' active role and their place in society as the keys to understanding the way people and ideas interact. Hunt also reveals how surprising new perspectives on society and the self offer promising new ways of thinking about the meaning and purpose of history in our time.

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## Customer Reviews

"Hunt has the most reliable eye for new trends in the American historical profession, and what she considers important always amounts to more than the sum of her current enthusiasms. She has a preternatural sense of the new new thing being touted by historians to study old things." - Samuel Moyn, *The Nation*

"No one has a better nose for historical trends than Lynn Hunt. Her short, sharp book offers an inspiring declaration of interdependence for historians to understand the global present collaboratively, using all our tools to unscramble the entangled past." - David Armitage, author of *Foundations of Modern International Thought*

"With characteristic concision and lucidity, Lynn Hunt takes on the methodological dilemmas facing all historians today. A thought-provoking snapshot of where historians stand now and where they might be headed. Lively

and engaging, this book will help both budding and seasoned historians understand the current state of their discipline. • - Sarah Maza, author of *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie*

Lynn Hunt is Distinguished Research Professor at UCLA, former president of the American Historical Association, and author of numerous works, including *Inventing Human Rights* and *Telling the Truth about History*. She lives in Los Angeles.

*Writing History in the Global Era*, 2014, by Lynn Hunt, Distinguished Research Professor at UCLA. This is, as she says, "A short book about a big subject" (p. 1). Anyone who reads history will profit from her orientation about this field. I have read history ever since I was a young adult, embarrassed about my ignorance. At age 85 I still find it fascinating. My impression is that historians in the 21st-century are doing a much better job than in the 20th century--better intellectual quality, more thorough studies of sources, and even better notes. What I did not realize was that behind the scenes the paradigms that have shaped history writing and still do. Hunt has filled me in on this aspect of history writing. Hunt is blunt about history writers, as well as readers: "humans look for a logic in their stories that is related to their own goals." (p. 127). She identifies four paradigms (over-arching accounts of metanarratives of historical developments) along with goals, in the post World War II period: Marxism (eventual withering of the state) modernization (social progress) Annales school (long term social histories) and identity politics (social movements). In the period of 1960 to 1990s criticism of these paradigms arose: cultural studies, post structuralism, post modernism and post colonials. In the 21st-century, globalization themes are pursued in historical narratives, especially in response to Marx and 20th century modernization aging enthusiasts. When you pick up a history study, it is well to know the sequence of events! And to check out your own goals before throwing down a volume in disgust. Why can't history be more scientific? Hunt addresses this issue. The problem: the impossibility of separating analysis and causal explanation from narrative. We all are storytellers, and our conscious and unconscious goals may warp what we perceived and conclude. There is no escape from this. Solution: recognition the major narratives are tied to a particular moment in time. Hunt emphasizes that history has no set course from which a story, especially about the future, can be grounded. She recommends starting from a particular moment and researching the history of the past. Trends can be discovered, but they are not arrows to determine straight-way the future. And there can be various arrows discerned. "history has no preordained end points" (p.128). As I read her book, philosopher Philip Kitcher's ethical-project concept came to my mind. He has concluded no external reality can be a base for

what is good or bad. We have to have a conversation in our present moment and hopefully arrive at a consensus, or at least a peaceful compromise or tolerance. Kitcher is hopeful for ethical progress from our present moment and dismissive of speculative programs to future times. What can we do now to make the world a little more peaceful, rather than set a goal for world peace. Please no more wars on drugs and crime, but what can we do now to reduce drug use and crime, at least somewhat. Then things need conversation and working together, as well as historical research. First research the history of the ethic. Don't propose utopias to aim at, but rather assess the present moment for modest goals for the near future through conversation, not external guidance by experts or divinities. But first talk about how we got our present values and notions. Read some history.

As "global studies" becomes an increasingly common framework for history education at both the secondary and college level (including entire departments of Global Studies on some campuses), Lynn Hunt offers a timely consideration of the relevance of globalization for historians, reviewing key paradigms and also looking forward in an engaging way. I tried the kindle, paperback, and Audible versions. All were useful. 5 stars for the book. 2 stars for the narration "performance" -- I wish the Audible performance by Suzanne Toren did not sound so aloof, affected, and self-satisfied -- it seemed like an impersonation of a professor from a century ago (few contemporary academics actually sound like that, and if they do, it's annoying), so it distracted the listener from the book's content.

Good historical writing in a vitally important field

Well written.

Good idea; insufficiently developed

Item practically new, fast delivery

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