Very Short Introductions online

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Abolitionism: A Very Short Introduction  
Richard S. Newman

The abolitionist movement launched the global human rights struggle in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, redefining the meaning of equality throughout the Atlantic world. In the twenty-first century, it remains a touchstone of democratic activism—a timeless example of mobilizing against injustice. Abolitionism: A Very Short Introduction highlights the key people, institutions, themes, and events that shaped the antislavery struggle across the Atlantic world. Highlighting the activist exertions of abolitionists from the Caribbean and Great Britain to the United States and Iberian society, this short text shows that abolitionism was a potent social movement that ended the most profitable institution of the early modern era: racial slavery.

The Abrahamic Religions: A Very Short Introduction  
Charles L. Cohen

Connected by their mutual—if differentiated—veneration of the One God proclaimed by Abraham, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam compose a family of related traditions. The Abrahamic Religions: A Very Short Introduction explores their intertwined histories and the ways in which encounters among their adherents have helped construct their own independent religious identities from antiquity to the present. Those identities have not been fixed and static, but have rather reflected particular historical contexts. The political arrangements in which the religions emerged and intermingled—notably, their changing relationships to state power—have figured importantly in their development. The common heritages of the Abrahamic religions have both brought them together and divided them.

Accounting: A Very Short Introduction  
Christopher Nobes

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date: 01 September 2020
If you read the ‘business pages’ of a newspaper or if you listen to the financial news on the television or radio, you will often hear terms such as ‘liability’, ‘balance sheet’ or ‘earnings’. Accounting: A Very Short Introduction provides a guide to understanding and using accounting information. It examines the key concepts and the main types of accounting work, from bookkeeping and financial reporting to auditing and management accounting. It traces the development of accounting over the centuries; examines the building blocks of financial reports, such as assets and liabilities; and looks at how accounting differs between countries and the importance of international standards.

**Adam Smith: A Very Short Introduction**
Christopher J. Berry

Print Publication Year: 2018 Published Online: Oct 2018  
Publisher: Oxford University Press  
DOI: 10.1093/actrade/9780198784456.001.0001

In 1776, Adam Smith (1723–90) wrote The Wealth of Nations, the foundational book that led to him being called the ‘father of economics’. However, Adam Smith was far more than an economist. Adam Smith is introduced through an overview of his writings and moral philosophy. Adam Smith: A Very Short Introduction offers a balanced and nuanced view of this seminal thinker, embedding his fierce defence of free trade, competition, and assault on special interests in contemporary European history, politics, and philosophy. It outlines Smith’s central ideas and how his intellectual and social environment influenced his thinking. It also discusses Smith’s influence on subsequent generations, and the ways in which he has been interpreted.

**Adolescence: A Very Short Introduction**
Peter K Smith

Print Publication Year: 2016 Published Online: May 2016  
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Adolescence is a turbulent period to live through. Marking the transition from the world of childhood to adult life, the adolescent faces many challenges and opportunities, including puberty, cognitive changes, forming their own identity, relating to often conflicting demands from parents and peers, and negotiating first romantic relationships. Adolescence: A Very Short Introduction provides a guide to the classical research that has informed our knowledge on adolescence, as well as the results of modern research into the contemporary adolescent experience. It also examines a number of aspects of adolescence, including the cultural and historical context, the biological changes to the adolescent brain, and the controversies that adolescence brings.
Advertising: A Very Short Introduction
Winston Fletcher

Advertising: A Very Short Introduction dispels the myths surrounding the advertising industry. Advertising is a diverse entity, and campaigns work (or fail to work) in a plethora of ways. How does the advertising industry work? What part do all the key players (the advertisers, the media, and the agencies) play? Where does the public sit in the world of advertising? This VSI examines how advertisers determine whether they have been successful, how they know if the money they have spent has been wasted, and what the benefits of advertising are and what the future may hold for the industry.

Aerial Warfare: A Very Short Introduction
Frank Ledwidge

Aerial warfare has dominated war-making for over 100 years, and despite regular announcements of its demise, it shows no sign of becoming obsolete. Aerial Warfare: A Very Short Introduction looks at the history of aerial warfare, introducing the major battles, crises, and controversies where air power has taken centre stage, and the changes in technology and air power capabilities over time. Highlighting the role played by air power in the First and Second World Wars, it also sheds light on the lesser-known theatres where the roles of air forces have been clearly decisive in conflicts in Africa, South America, and Asia. It also considers whether there is a future for manned air power.

Aesthetics: A Very Short Introduction
Bence Nanay

Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy that explores the nature of art, beauty, and taste. It doesn’t just consider traditional artistic experiences such as artworks in a museum or an opera performance, but also everyday experiences. Aesthetics: A Very Short Introduction considers both Western and non-Western aesthetic traditions, and explores why it is sometimes misunderstood or considered to be too elitist—by artists, musicians, and even philosophers. The scope of aesthetics extends far wider than that of art, high or low, including much of what we care about in life. If an experience is worth having for you, it thereby becomes the subject of aesthetics.
African American Religion: A Very Short Introduction

Eddie S. Glaude Jr.

African American Religion: A Very Short Introduction explores the history and circumstances of African American religion through three examples: conjure, African American Christianity, and African American Islam. It argues that the phrase “African American religion” is meaningful only insofar as it describes how through religion, African Americans have responded to oppressive conditions. This bold claim frames the interpretation of the historical record of diverse religious experiences in the African American community. The common tendency to racialize African American religious experiences as an inherent proclivity towards religiousness is rejected and instead the focus is on how religious communities and experiences have developed in the African American community and the context in which these developments took place.

African History: A Very Short Introduction

John Parker and Richard Rathbone

African History: A Very Short Introduction looks at Africa's past and reflects on the changing ways it has been imagined and represented by examining the unity and diversity of African cultures, slavery, religion, colonial conquest, the diaspora, and the importance of history in understanding contemporary Africa. Africa has been known as ‘the cradle of mankind’, and its recoverable history stretches back to the Pharaohs. But the idea of study of ‘African history’ itself is new. Why is it still contested and controversial? Who invented the idea of ‘Africa’? How is African history pieced together, given such a lack of documentary evidence? How did Africa interact with the world 1,000 years ago?

African Politics: A Very Short Introduction

Ian Taylor

African Politics: A Very Short Introduction explores how politics is practised on the African continent, providing an overview of the different states and their systems. It considers the nature of the state in sub-Saharan Africa and why its state structures are generally weaker than elsewhere in the world. Exploring the historical and contemporary factors that account for Africa’s underdevelopment, it also analyses why some African countries suffer from high levels of political violence while others are spared. Unveiling the ways in which
African state and society actually function beyond the formal institutional façade, this VSI discusses how external factors—both inherited and contemporary—act upon the continent.

African Religions: A Very Short Introduction
Jacob K. Olupona

African Religions: A Very Short Introduction offers a wide-ranging look at the myriad indigenous religious traditions on the African continent, drawing on archeological research, historical evidence, ethnographic studies, and archival materials. African religious belief—exploring myths, gods and local deities, ancestor worship, rites of passage, festivals, and divination are considered and the role these religions play in everyday African life, from birthing and death, marriage and family dynamics, to diet, dress and grooming, health care, and even governance, is discussed. Christianity and Islam has spread throughout Africa, but the more extreme fundamentalist sects—which decry traditional religion as paganism—have driven a near total collapse of indigenous practice.

Ageing: A Very Short Introduction
Nancy A. Pachana

Ageing: A Very Short Introduction discusses the lifelong dynamic changes in biological, psychological, and social functioning involved in ageing. Increased lifespans have created an urgent need to find ways to enhance our functioning and well-being in the later decades of life. This is reflected in relevant policies and action plans from the WHO and the UN. Looking to the future, this VSI considers advancements in provision for our ageing populations, including revolutionary models of nursing-home care. Understanding the process of ageing is not only important for individuals but also for societies and nations if the full potential of those entering later life is to be realized.

Agnosticism: A Very Short Introduction
Robin Le Poidevin

Agnosticism: A Very Short Introduction asks if there is more to agnosticism than merely the absence of belief. What is agnosticism? Who were the first to call themselves ‘agnostics’? Agnosticism is something we encounter in science and ethics and should be considered as an historical and cultural phenomenon. It is not confined to the religious sphere. Some of
the preconceptions and assumptions amongst both believers and non-atheists are examined and the philosophical case for agnosticism is set out. Agnosticism is a more complex attitude than simply a failure to either commit to, or reject, religious belief.

Agriculture: A Very Short Introduction
Paul Brassley and Richard Soffe

Agriculture: A Very Short Introduction explains what farmers do and why they do it. Beginning with the most basic resource, the soil, it shows why it is important, and how farmers can increase its productivity, before turning to the plants and animals that grow on it, and tracing the connections between their biology and the various ways in which farmers work with them. It concludes by looking at some of the controversial issues facing contemporary agriculture: its sustainability; its impact on wildlife and landscape; issues of animal welfare; and the effect of climate change and the development of genetically modified organisms on farmers.

Albert Camus: A Very Short Introduction
Oliver Gloag

Albert Camus is one of the best known philosophers of the twentieth century, as well as a widely read novelist. Active in the first half of the twentieth century, his views contributed to the rise of absurdism philosophy, and his works have inspired numerous movies and are frequently referenced in contemporary politics. Albert Camus: A Very Short Introduction explores the life and work of a man full of contradictions, who occupied an ambiguous position in troubled and conflicted times. Following a broad chronological framework, it explores the major philosophical and literary works of Camus and analyses how the reception and popularity of these works are connected with contemporary political, social, and cultural issues.

Alexander the Great: A Very Short Introduction
Hugh Bowden

Alexander the Great: A Very Short Introduction demonstrates the profound influence the legends of Alexander's life have had on our historical understanding of him by focusing on the evidence from his own time. Aged just 20, Alexander the Great became king of
Macedon in 336 BC; he died aged 32. During his reign, he conquered the Achaemenid Persian Empire, the largest empire that had ever existed, leading his army from Greece to Pakistan, and from the Libyan desert to the steppes of Central Asia. He had a profound effect on the world he moved through and his achievements became legendary both in his lifetime and in the centuries that followed.

Algebra: A Very Short Introduction
Peter M. Higgins

Algebra marked the beginning of modern mathematics, moving it beyond arithmetic, which involves calculations featuring given numbers, to problems in which some quantities are unknown. Now, it stands as a pillar of mathematics, underpinning the quantitative sciences. Algebra: A Very Short Introduction explains algebra from scratch. Over the course of ten chapters, it offers a step by step approach for readers keen on developing their understanding of algebra. Using theory and example, it renews the reader’s acquaintance with school mathematics, before taking them progressively further and deeper into modern algebra, including groups, rings, fields, and vector spaces.

American Business History: A Very Short Introduction
Walter A. Friedman

American Business History: A Very Short Introduction looks at the rise of the American economy from its colonial and frontier beginnings. What made the United States an attractive testing ground for entrepreneurs? How did the United States come to have the largest business enterprises in the world by the early twentieth century? Why did business organizations gain a central place in American society? This VSI answers these questions through examining the formation of new organizational structures; the invention and commercialization of new technologies; the introduction of policymaking and regulatory frameworks; and the stories of entrepreneurs from around the world who embraced democratic capitalism in America.

American Cultural History: A Very Short Introduction
Eric Avila

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date: 01 September 2020
American Cultural History: A Very Short Introduction provides a chronological look at American culture—the values, attitudes, beliefs, and myths of a particular society and the objects through which they are organized—addressing literature, music, art, architecture, theater, film, television, and the Internet. In doing so, it emphasizes culture’s role in the shaping of national identity and how previous generations of Americans have imagined themselves, their nation, and their relationship to rest of the world. Across the lines of race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, generation, and geography, diverse Americans have forged a national culture with a global reach, inventing stories to underscore the problems and possibilities of an American way of life.