In collaboration with the Imperial & World History Seminar, University of London, we are pleased to announce a one-day conference to mark the centenary of H. G. Wells's *Outline of History*

GLOBAL HISTORY THEN AND NOW

Institute of Historical Research, London
26 September 2020

Keynote Speakers:
Prof. Sarah Cole, Columbia University, author of Inventing Tomorrow
Prof. Richard Drayton, King's College, London, author of Masks of Empire

CALL FOR PAPERS

'There can be no common peace and prosperity without common historical ideas.' H. G. Wells

H. G. Wells believed that a general account of the human story was 'a necessary part of any properly conceived education', yet he wrote his bestselling *Outline of History* at the end of the First World War because, as he claimed, nobody else was willing to do so. Although there are now hundreds of works offering (with varying degrees of success) to do what Wells once did, the possibility of reaching the global consensus of which he dreamed is under threat as never before. The public understanding of history, as revealed in political debates in Britain and elsewhere, is often as prejudiced and blinkered as it was in Wells's youth.

Wells's concern with universal history may be traced back to the biology teaching of T. H. Huxley. The result was a scientifically and anthropologically based narrative in which so-called prehistory is an important and even a dominant part of the human story. In the *Outline* and in his *Short History of the World* (1922) Wells aimed to write in a manner that would be acceptable to all countries and faiths, but his commitment to evolutionary science led to controversy around topics such as religion and creation. He acknowledged that history must be ideologically based, since 'You cannot stand on nothing and hold up a world'.

We welcome proposals for 20-minute papers in any of the following areas:

- the basic presuppositions of global history and its teaching: how can history help to bring peoples together? How do the lessons of 20th- and early 21st-century experience qualify or change the task as Wells conceived it?
- in what sense were Wells's *Outline of History* and *Short History of the World* pioneering achievements? How good a historian was Wells? What was the impact of his history and the controversies surrounding it? To what extent was Wells's readership truly global?
- how central is the idea of universal history to Wells's creative achievement from *The Time Machine* (1895) to *Mind at the End of Its Tether* (1945)?
- what are the links between historical understanding and utopian or dystopian future visions? Is it true that (as Wells insisted) we need historical knowledge to prepare us for 'The Next Stage in History'?
- how far is present-day history teaching adequate to the needs of our own time of automation and AI, renewed nationalism, and global climate emergency?

Proposals (max. 300 words) should be sent to Patrick Parrinder at j.parrinder064@btinternet.com and to Emelyne Godfrey at juststruckone@hotmail.com by 1 May 2020.