

## Lecture 3 - Historiographic Theories

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**What did you think of the reading?**

This is a good opportunity to go over the big terms from the reading: High, Awakening, Unraveling, Crisis, Prophet, Nomad, Hero, and Artist, and how they apply in the most recent cycle (30's, 50's, 60-70's, 80-90's, Silent, Boom, 13th, Millennial).

**What are the generational conflicts happening now?**

The presidential election is a clear generational conflict. Consider:

**John McCain** born 1936, so Silent Generation (1925 - 1942)

**Hillary Clinton** born 1947, so Boom Generation (1943- 1960)

**Barack Obama** born 1961, so 13th Generation (1961 - 1981)

Before this, Bush Jr. (1946) and Clinton (1946) were from the Boom Generation. Before them, Bush Sr. (1924), Reagan (1911), Carter (1924), Ford (1913), Nixon (1913), LBJ (1908), and JFK (1917) were all from the G.I. Generation (for 32 years of their rule). We have never had a president from the Silent Generation.

**A related and older theory of cyclical history comes from Hegel.**

Hegel held that underneath all history was one repeating cycle. The Hegelian cycle starts with a High (to use Fourth Turning terminology) when a single paradigm reigns supreme, the thesis. The existence of this unipolar world makes alternative paradigms flourish at the fringe (the Awakening). One, the antithesis, will gain strength because it best encompasses the needs neglected by the thesis, and the world grows more opposed (the Unraveling). Finally, the thesis and antithesis will necessarily come into conflict (the Crisis), out of which will arise a synthesis of the two paradigms, which will create a new unipolar thesis.

**Are we in a fourth turning? What distinguishes it?**

The Fourth Turning precipitating crisis was probably 9/11. This polarized the American population, and at least half began strongly supporting increased social constriction from the government.

However, this cohesion fell apart. While not discussed during the class, the economic crisis appears to be a new catalyst for the fourth turning.

**Who are the Millennials, and what distinguishes them?**

Generally, the students of the class are Millennials, having been born between 1982 and 2001.

The former Dean of Admissions, Marilee Jones, wrote a controversial article on the Millennial and how the group would change MIT (and how MIT should change to accommodate it).

Like the G.I.'s, the Millennials may define the next century. The pragmatic 13th generation will lead us through the crisis, helping to deliver a new world into the hands of its new heroes.

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