

## [We need to talk about Cosmos...](#)

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I've been watching with interest as the history of science community, particularly on Twitter, has reacted with consternation to the historical components of Neil deGrasse Tyson's *Cosmos* reboot. To a large extent I agree with these criticisms. It is troubling that the forums in which the public gets the most exposure to history of science also tend to be those in which it is the least responsibly represented.

But part of me also wants to play devil's advocate. First, *Cosmos* is a fantastic artifact of scientific myth making and as such provides a superb teaching tool when paired with more responsible historical presentations and perhaps some anthropological treatments of similar issues like Sharon Traweek's *Beamtimes and Lifetimes*.

Second, I don't know that we, as a community, have adequately made the case that the scholarly view of history we advance is, in fact, more useful for current cultural and political discourse than the naïve view scientists advance. One thing we often see in our research, and parallel work in philosophy of science, is that "right" is often not the same thing as "useful." I'm interested in generating some discussion in why and how, if at all, we can make the case that "useful" and "right" are and should be the same thing in this case for reasons other than internal professional ones.

Joe