HONORS PROGRAM IN NON-AMERICAN HISTORY

PLAGUES AND SOCIETIES IN WORLD HISTORY

(21:510:491)

HIST491
SPRING 2012

M.W. 6:00-7:20PM
CPS-105

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Office: Conklin Hall, Room 310
Office Hours: M. W. 5:20-5:50 pm and by appointment

REQUIRED READINGS:
- Susan Sontag, Illness as metaphor; and, AIDS and its metaphors, Picador, 2001.
- Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard.
REFERENCE WORKS:

WEB RESOURCES:
- http://www.cdc.gov/
- http://www.who.int/en/
- http://library.wellcome.ac.uk/
- http://classics.mit.edu/Browse/browse-Hippocrates.html
- http://web2.bium.univ-paris5.fr/livanc/?intro=galien&statut=charge
- http://www.bium.univ-paris5.fr/ishm/eng/debut.htm

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course is a survey of social responses to the presence of various epidemic diseases throughout world history. We will study political, social, economic, and cultural aspects of epidemic diseases, with a particular emphasis on a myriad of perspectives about the social and cultural construction of health and illness.

Roughly speaking, the course is divided into three unequal parts.

(I). We will first elucidate the origins of epidemic diseases in world history, with a view to understanding the links between societies and disease.

(II). Then, we will delve into various ideas of health and illness in history and explore the social and historical contexts in which societies construct their ideas of disease.

(III). The majority of the semester will be devoted to an examination of specific diseases (leprosy, plague, smallpox, typhus, syphilis, cholera, yellow fever, malaria, tuberculosis, polio, influenza, and AIDS) from the ancient to the modern eras, with an underlying theme of globalization and the expansion of pandemics on a global scale. In this context, we will explore the relations between epidemics and warfare, empires, trans-regional trade networks, and biological exchange between the hemispheres. The sessions devoted to the study of individual diseases will outline social, political, economic, and cultural responses to epidemics (western as well as non-western). The course will conclude with a presentation of newly emerging diseases and bio-terrorism in the contemporary world.
Although primary sources will be utilized when translations are available, mostly the course will draw from secondary literature in books and journals.

This course may be of special interest to students of world history, non-western history, the history of science and medicine and perhaps biology.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- name and identify individuals, events, themes, and issues of major importance related to epidemic diseases in world history,
- demonstrate a basic level of competence in differentiating the major periods of the history of epidemic diseases and their significance on a global context,
- recognize the importance of cause and effect in history, and discuss the significance of change and continuity over time,
- develop an understanding toward the use of historical evidence by historians and display some familiarity toward different types of evidence,
- critically analyze historical evidence and articulate a synthesis with a thesis.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**
You are expected to make presentations in class on the readings and write a research paper (15 pages), on an epidemic disease of your own choice. For this research paper, you are expected to use primary and secondary sources and relate your discussions to the general themes of this course. Detailed information about the research paper will be posted on Blackboard.

**GRADING:**
- 30% Participation to class discussions
- 30% Class presentations
- 40% Paper

**GRADING STANDARDS:**
- 90-100% A (a genuinely outstanding achievement)
- 80-89% B (above average achievement)
- 70-79% C (comprehension of the subject at an appropriate university level)
- 60-69% D (unsatisfactory performance, barely passing)
- Below 60% F (failure)

**COURSE POLICIES:**
- Attendance at all regularly scheduled meetings of this class is expected. Rutgers catalog states that “the recognized grounds for absence are illness requiring
medical attention, curricular or extracurricular activities approved by the faculty, personal obligations claimed by the student and recognized as valid, recognized religious holidays, and severe inclement weather causing dangerous traveling conditions." More than 4 (four) UNEXCUSED absences will automatically result in your failure so it is your responsibility to come to class and see that you are marked present for the classes you attend. In the event that you have a medical, legal, or family-related problem that might lead to an extended absence, you need to meet me in person and bring necessary documentation as evidence for your problem. Only then, we can discuss whether your absence can be excused or not. An email message explaining your problem will NOT be considered as an excuse of your absence. Ultimately, it will be the instructor’s judgment to decide whether an absence can be excused or not. If you miss a class due to a reason that you cannot document, please do not contact me to explain your case. Instead, consider it as one of your unexcused absences. Please remember that any student who misses 8 (eight) or more sessions through any combination of EXCUSED and UNEXCUSED absences will not earn credit in this class. Such students should withdraw to avoid getting an F.

- You are expected to come to class having done the assigned readings and participate in class discussions. We will be using the assigned books and Blackboard readings in class; therefore, please bring the relevant readings to class. Any student who does not have the readings may be asked to leave the classroom and marked absent for the class.

- Punctuality and courtesy at all times are expected.

- Academic dishonesty of any sort will not be tolerated. It is your responsibility to comply with the university's policy on academic integrity. To review the policies go to [http://history.newark.rutgers.edu/index.php?content=rn_integrity](http://history.newark.rutgers.edu/index.php?content=rn_integrity). You are also expected to sign the plagiarism agreement on Blackboard.

- If you have questions or concerns about this class, come and talk to me in my office hours. Please do not send email inquiries related to your absence or class materials. It is your responsibility to find out about the subjects covered in your absence and study them.

- If for any family or medical reason you find it absolutely necessary to miss an examination, you must contact me before the exam and have my consent to your absence. Failure to do so will result in a zero for the assignment. With the exception of extreme cases there will be no early or make-up exams! As with all other exams, you must contact me in advance should an extreme emergency arise.

- Rutgers abides by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments (ADAA) of 2008, and Sections 504 and 508 which mandate reasonable accommodations be provided for qualified students with disabilities and the accessibility of online information. If you have a
disability and may require some type of instructional and/or examination accommodation, please contact me early in the semester so that I can provide or facilitate in providing accommodations you may need. If you have not already done so, you will need to register with the Office of Disability Services, the designated office on campus to provide services and administer exams with accommodations for students with disabilities. The Office of Disability Services is located in the Robeson Student Center. I look forward to talking with you soon to learn how I may be helpful in supporting your academic success in this course. For more information on disability services at Rutgers, go to [http://disabilityservices-uw.rutgers.edu/](http://disabilityservices-uw.rutgers.edu/)

This syllabus is subject to amendment or change at the discretion of the instructor.

1/18 Introduction, review of syllabus, course material, and policies

1/23-1/25 Introduction to the study of epidemics
What is the origin of human diseases? What are the links between disease and the history of human societies?

  o Roy Porter, *The greatest benefit to mankind*, pp. 14-30. (See Blackboard)
  o Jared Diamond, *Guns, germs, and steel*, pp. 195-214. (See Blackboard)

1/30- 2/01 Disease in social and historical context
How do definitions of disease change? What social and historical factors affect the perception of disease? What are different views of disease?

  o Roy Porter, *The greatest benefit to mankind*, pp. 30-43. (See Blackboard)
  o Rosenberg and Golden (eds.), *Framing disease*, pp. xiii-xxvi. (See Blackboard)
  o Ranger and Slack (eds.), *Epidemics and ideas*, pp. 241-268.

**EPIDEMIC DISEASE IN THE ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL WORLD**

2/06-2/08 Leprosy

  o Michael Dols, 'The leper in medieval Islamic society', *Speculum*, 58 (1983). (See Blackboard)
2/13-2/15 Plague
  o Thucydides, “The Plague of Athens,” from The History of the Peloponnesian War (431 BCE), Book II, Chap.7  
    http://classics.mit.edu/Thucydides/pelopwar.2.second.html
  o **Film**: The plague (History Channel) 2005

2/20-2/22 Globalization of disease
  o Sheldon Watts, Disease and medicine in world history, pp. 85-99. (See Blackboard)
  o William McNeill, Plagues and peoples, pp. 94-207.
  o **Film**: The plague

2/27-2/29 The Black Death (1347-51) and its aftermath
  o Michael Dols, The Black Death in the Middle East, pp. 35-67. (See Blackboard)
  o Nukhet Varlik, “Plague in the Islamic World (1500-1850),” in Encyclopedia of Pestilence, Pandemics, and Plagues. (See Blackboard)

THE COLUMBIAN EXCHANGE
3/05-3/07 Smallpox
  o Alfred Crosby. The Columbian Exchange, pp. 35-63. (See Blackboard)
  o Sheldon Watts, Epidemics and history, pp. 84-121.
  o **Film**: History’s mysteries: Smallpox deadly again?

3/19-3/21 Cholera

3/26  **Syphilis**

- Allan Brandt, *No magic bullet: a social history of venereal disease in the United States since 1880*.

3/28  **Typhus**

- **Film:** *Typhoid Mary: The Most Dangerous Woman in America*

4/02-4/04  **Tropical diseases: Yellow Fever and Malaria**

- Roy Porter, *The greatest benefit to mankind*, pp. 462-480. (See Blackboard)
- Margaret Humphreys, *Yellow fever and the south*, 45-76, 113-147. (See Blackboard)

4/9-4/11  **Tuberculosis and Polio**

- Thomas M. Daniel, *Captain of death: the story of tuberculosis*. (See Blackboard)
- **Film:** *The People's Plague: TB in America*

**GLOBAL THREATS TO HEALTH**

4/16  **Influenza**

- Alfred Crosby, *America's forgotten pandemic: the influenza of 1918*, pp. xi-xiv, 3-69, 264-328. See Blackboard or go to: [http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.03212](http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.03212)
- **Film:** *1918: The Great Influenza Epidemic*

4/18  **AIDS**
Susan Sontag, *Illness as metaphor; and, AIDS and its metaphors.*

**Film:** Aids in America

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**4/23** Guest lecture on AIDS --

**4/25-4/30** Newly emerging diseases (SARS, Ebola, Avian flu) and bio-terrorism

- Paul Farmer, *Infections and inequalities: the modern plagues*, p. 18-58. (See Blackboard)
- Laurie Garrett, *The coming plague: newly emerging diseases*, pp. 30-52, 100-152. (See Blackboard)
- **Film:** Microparasites