

## HONORS PROGRAM IN NON-AMERICAN HISTORY

### PLAGUES AND MEDICINE IN THE ISLAMIC MEDITERRANEAN

(21:510:396)  
SPRING 2015

Tuesday – Thursday, 11:30 am -12:50 pm  
Conklin Hall 352

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Office: Conklin Hall, Room 310  
Office Hours: By appointment only

#### READINGS

- Paul Slack. *Plague: a very short introduction*. Oxford, 2012. ISBN: 9780199589548
- John Aberth. *The Black Death: the great mortality of 1348-1350: a brief history with documents*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2005. ISBN: 9780312400873
- Miri Shefer-Mossensohn. *Ottoman Medicine: healing and medical institutions, 1500-1700*. SUNY, 2010. ISBN: 9781438425306
- Birsen Bulmuş. *Plague, quarantines, and geopolitics in the Ottoman Empire*. Edinburgh, 2012. ISBN: 9780748646593
- Sara Scalenghe. *Disability in the Ottoman Arab World, 1500-1800*. Cambridge, 2014. ISBN: 9781107044791
- Ellen J. Amster. *Medicine and the saints: science, Islam, and the colonial encounter in Morocco, 1877-1956*. Texas, 2013. ISBN: 9780292745445
- Justin K. Stearns. *Infectious ideas: contagion in premodern Islamic and Christian thought in the Western Mediterranean*. Johns Hopkins, 2011. ISBN: 9780801898730
- Kristina L Richardson. *Difference and disability in the medieval Islamic world: blighted bodies*. Edinburgh, 2012. ISBN: 9780748645077
- Peter E. Pormann & Emilie Savage-Smith. *Medieval Islamic Medicine*. Georgetown, 2007. ISBN: 9781589011618

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In this course, we will study the history of disease, disability, and healing in the Islamic world from the medieval through the modern period, with a particular view to exploring how health and illness have been socially and culturally constructed in Islamic societies. We will first examine the rise of Islamic medicine, with reference to its ancient Greek and Roman heritage, as well as to Prophetic medicine—a genre of literature that is based on the Qur’an and the *hadith*. This prolegomenon will be followed by examination of the basic tenets of Islamic medicine, with special reference to the theory of humors, concepts of contagion, and of the *miasma*. We will then focus on major pandemics that struck the old world of the Mediterranean—with a special emphasis on what became the Islamic world—in the pre-Islamic, medieval, and early modern contexts. The course will also introduce other health-related issues, including different diseases, mental health, and disability. Then, we will shift our attention to issues of healing and analyze the various responses produced by Islamic societies in the face of disease and disability, within the frameworks of medicine, religion, and magic. We will also address issues of gender in the context of health and healing. Medical knowledge, practice and institutions in the Renaissance period, in the West as in the East, will be studied with a comparative approach in order to emphasize the similarities at both ends of the Mediterranean, in opposition to a prevailing Eurocentric literature that emphasizes differences assumed to be culturally definitive. We will also discuss colonial encounters between the western and eastern Mediterranean in the context of disease, medicine, and health.

For the most part, the course will draw from recent secondary studies, in view of the fact that most primary documents are not available in English translation. Nevertheless, we will use the existing translated material (medical works, treatises) both from the Islamic and the Western worlds to establish a comparative perspective.

## **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 disease, disability, and medicine in Islamic history;
- demonstrate a basic level of competence in differentiating the major periods of the history of medicine 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 a topic you will decide in consultation with the instructor. For the paper, you are expected to use primary and secondary sources and relate your discussion to the general themes of this course. Detailed information about the paper will be posted

on Blackboard and discussed in class. The paper assignment will be submitted via Turn-it-in on Blackboard by May 12<sup>th</sup> 2015 - 2:45 pm. No other forms of submission will be accepted. *LATE AND/OR EMAILED PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.*

## **QUIZZES**

There will be several quizzes throughout the semester. The quizzes will assess your understanding of the readings. Be prepared to take a quiz on assigned readings at any time. Please follow the syllabus closely to keep track of what you are supposed to read for each class.

## **GRADING**

20% Quizzes  
20% Participation to class discussions  
20% 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.
- No electronics can be used in this class, without prior consent of the instructor. The use of portable electronic devices, such as cell phones during class in a manner not compliant with classroom conduct (phone conversation, texting, and others) will not be tolerated. Students may be warned for such behavior initially. If repeated, they may be asked to leave the classroom and marked absent for the day.
- 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). All students are required to sign the Rutgers honor pledge. You must include this pledge on all major course assignments submitted for grading: "On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this examination (assignment)."
- If you have questions or concerns about this class, come and talk to me in person. Please do not send email inquiries instead of asking questions in class. Before you send an email, you need to verify that you have checked the syllabus, Blackboard, and/or asked your fellow classmates but have not found an answer to your question. Remember that emails to the instructor should follow standards of professional etiquette.
- 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/>

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

**1/20 Introduction, review of syllabus, course material, and policies**

**1/22 An introduction to Islamic history**

READ: Hodgson, "The Role of Islam in World History" [Bb]

**1/27 Historiography of Islamic medicine, problems**

READ: Shefer, Introduction; Shefer, "A Tale of Two Discourses"; Brentjes & Morrison, "The sciences in Islamic societies (750 1800)," *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, vol.4, Ch.22, pp. 564-578, 629-639; Anawati, "Science" *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol.2b, Ch.10, pp. 741-750 [Bb]

Primary source: <http://www.1001inventions.com/>

**1/29 Disease, disability, and health in social and historical context**

READ: Porter, *The greatest benefit to mankind*, pp. 30-43; Rosenberg and Golden (eds.), *Framing disease*, pp. xiii-xxvi; Ranger and Slack (eds.) *Epidemics and Ideas*, 1992, pp. 1-20 [Bb]

**2/3-5 Constituents of Islamic Medicine**

READ: Savage-Smith, "Tibb," *EI*<sup>2</sup>; Ullmann, *Islamic Medicine*, Ch. 1, 2; Attewell, "Islamic Medicines," pp. 325-350 [Bb]

Primary source: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Medicine of the Prophet*

**2/10-12 Medieval Islamic Medicine**

READ: Pormann & Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, pp. 1-79; Ullmann, Ch. 4, 5, 7 [Bb]

Primary source: Dols, *Medieval Islamic medicine*, pp. 69-72, 89-98, 112-125

- 2/17-19**      **Notions of disease and disease transmission**  
 READ: Dols, “The leper in medieval Islamic society”; Ullmann, Chs. 4-6; Stearns, Chs. 1, 3 [Bb]
- 2/24-26**      **Plague in the Islamic Mediterranean – I**  
 READ: Paul Slack. *Plague*; Conrad, “The plague in the early medieval Near East,” pp. 83-119; Conrad, “Epidemic disease in formal and popular thought in early Islamic society”; Dols, “Plague in early Islamic history”; Little, “Life and Afterlife of the First Plague Pandemic,” pp. 3-32 [Bb]
- 3/3-5**      **Plague in the Islamic Mediterranean – II**  
 READ: Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East*, pp. 35-67; Stearns, Ch. 6; Dols, “The Second Plague Pandemic”; Varlik, “New Science and Old Sources” [Bb]  
Primary source: Aberth, *The Black Death* (selections)
- 3/10-12**      **Disability in the Islamic Mediterranean**  
 READ: Richardson, Chs. 1-4; Scalenghe, Chs. 1, 2 [Bb]
- 3/17-19**      **SPRING BREAK**
- 3/24-26**      **Madness in the Islamic Mediterranean**  
 READ: Scalenghe, Ch. 3; Dols, *Majnun* (selections) [Bb]
- 3/31-4/2**      **Medical practice and practitioners**  
 READ: Pormann & Savage-Smith, pp. 80-143; Shefer, Chs. 1, 4; Gadelrab, “Medical Healers in Ottoman Egypt, 1517–1805”; Pormann, “The Physician and the Other” [Bb]
- 4/7-9**      **Popular/folk healing**  
 READ: Pormann & Savage-Smith, pp. 144-161; Amster, Ch 1; Shefer, Chs. 2-3; Bulmus, Ch 4; Stearns, Ch. 4
- 4/14-16**      **Eastern and Western Mediterranean: encounters and interactions - I**  
 READ: Pormann & Savage-Smith, pp. 162-182; Ullmann, Ch. 3; Siraisi, *Avicenna in Renaissance Italy*, pp. 3-40 [Bb]

- 4/21-23 Eastern and Western Mediterranean: encounters and interactions - II**  
READ: Amster, Chs 2-4; Bulmus, Chs 5-8
- 4/28 Women and gender in Islamic medicine**  
READ: Amster, Chs. 5, 6; Scalenghe, Ch. 4
- 4/30 NO CLASS – instructor away at conference**
- 5/12 Final paper due** (to be uploaded on Turn-it-in/Blackboard by 2:45 pm)