21:510:227 TOPICS IN HISTORY
PLAGUES AND SOCIETIES IN WORLD HISTORY
SPRING 2022

Monday 2:30 PM - 3:50 pm
Wednesday 1:00 PM - 2:20 pm
WRN - 313

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Office Hours: TBA

COURSE OVERVIEW
A survey of biopolitical, social, economic, and cultural aspects of epidemic diseases throughout world history.

In this course, we will study various epidemic diseases in world history, ranging from the pre-Neolithic to COVID-19 with a broad geographic focus. We will discuss different aspects of epidemic diseases, with a particular emphasis on social and cultural constructions of health and illness. We will examine the origins of epidemic diseases in world history, with a view to understanding the links between societies, environment, and diseases. We will review various conceptions of health and illness in history and explore the social and historical contexts in which societies construct their ideas about disease and develop responses to it.

The majority of the semester will be devoted to an examination of specific infectious diseases (i.e., plague, smallpox, cholera, influenza, and AIDS, as well as newly emerging diseases such as COVID-19) from the ancient to the modern era; a guiding theme will be entanglements between globalization and the expansion of pandemics. In this context, we will explore the relationship between epidemics and warfare, empires, trans-regional trade networks, and biological exchange across continents and between hemispheres. The sessions devoted to the study of individual diseases will outline the biological and environmental character of specific pathogens to understand how they interact with their surroundings (i.e., human and non-human hosts, vectors, and the larger environment). In particular, we will examine the social, political, economic, and cultural responses to epidemics globally, ranging from mass migration, flight, and quarantine to medicine and public health. The course will include a discussion of newly emerging diseases in the contemporary world, especially in the context of the current day COVID-19 pandemic.

We will draw from primary and secondary sources that will expose students to a wide array of historical and scientific literature, as well as audiovisual materials. The course will be of particular interest to students of history of science, medicine, technology, and the environment, as well as global studies.
LEARNING OUTCOMES
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, and be able to communicate this knowledge;
- demonstrate a basic level of competence in differentiating the major periods of the history of epidemic diseases and their significance in a global context;
- recognize the importance of cause and effect in history, and discuss the significance of change and continuity over time;
- demonstrate understanding of how historians use historical evidence and familiarity with different types of evidence;
- evaluate primary sources for both implicit and explicit content and context, and recognize how scholarly interpretations may have preserved source biases;
- critique historians’ analyses of key issues in global history of health and disease on the basis of primary sources;
- critically analyze historical evidence and articulate a synthesis with a thesis.

ASSIGNMENTS
During the semester, students will write four short papers and prepare a final project. Detailed information on assignments will be posted on Canvas and discussed in class. Please note that assignments can only be submitted via Canvas, and all are subject to plagiarism check through Turn-it-in. No other methods of submission (i.e., hardcopies, email attachments, etc.) will be allowed.

GRADING
10 % Participation in class discussions and presentations
15% Short paper 1
15 % Short paper 2
15 % Short paper 3
15 % Short paper 4
30 % Final project

GRADING STANDARDS
A 90-100
B+ 87-89
B  80-86
C+ 77-79
C  70-76
D+ 67-69
D  60-66
F 59 or less
COURSE POLICIES

Attendance at all regularly scheduled meetings of this class is expected.

You are expected to come to class having done the assigned readings and participate in class discussions.

Punctuality and courtesy at all times are expected.

In order to protect the health and well-being of all members of the Rutgers-Newark community, masks must be worn by all persons inside campus buildings when in the presence of others, and in buildings in non-private enclosed settings (e.g., common workspaces, workstations, meeting rooms, classrooms, etc.). Masks should securely cover the nose and mouth. Masks must be worn during class meetings. Each day before you arrive on campus or leave your residence hall, you must complete the brief survey on the My Campus Pass symptom checker self-screening app found at: myRutgers Portal.

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. 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).”

ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT STATEMENT

Rutgers University Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students and the University as a whole. RU-N has identified the following resources to further the mission of access and support:

For Individuals with Disabilities: The Office of Disability Services (ODS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter barriers due to disability. Once a student has completed the ODS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and reasonable accommodations are determined to be necessary and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be provided. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at ods.rutgers.edu. Contact ODS at (973)353-5375 or via email at ods@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Individuals who are Pregnant: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy. Students may contact the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance at (973) 353-1906 or via email at TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Absence Verification: The Office of the Dean of Students can provide assistance for absences related to religious observance, emergency or unavoidable conflict (e.g., illness, personal or family emergency, etc.). Students should refer to University Policy 10.2.7 for
information about expectations and responsibilities. The Office of the Dean of Students can be contacted by calling (973) 353-5063 or emailing deanofstudents@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Individuals with temporary conditions/injuries: The Office of the Dean of Students can assist students who are experiencing a temporary condition or injury (e.g., broken or sprained limbs, concussions, or recovery from surgery). Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury should submit a request using the following link: https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu.

For English as a Second Language (ESL): The Program in American Language Studies (PALS) can support students experiencing difficulty in courses due to English as a Second Language (ESL) and can be reached by emailing PALS@newark.rutgers.edu to discuss potential supports.

For Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance can assist students who are experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking. Students can report an incident to the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance by calling (973) 353-1906 or emailing TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu. Incidents may also be reported by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm. For more information, students should refer to the University’s Student Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment, Sexual Violence, Relationship Violence, Stalking and Related Misconduct located at http://compliance.rutgers.edu/title-ix/about-title-ix/title-ix-policies/.

For support related to interpersonal violence: The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance can provide any student with confidential support. The office is a confidential resource and does not have an obligation to report information to the University’s Title IX Coordinator. Students can contact the office by calling (973) 353-1918 or emailing run.vpva@rutgers.edu. There is also a confidential text-based line available to students; students can text (973) 339-0734 for support.

For Crisis and Concerns: The Campus Awareness Response and Education (CARE) Team works with students in crisis to develop a support plan to address personal situations that might impact their academic performance. Students, faculty and staff may contact the CARE Team by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNCARE or emailing careteam@rutgers.edu.

For Stress, Worry, or Concerns about Well-being: The Counseling Center has confidential therapists available to support students. Students should reach out to the Counseling Center to schedule an appointment: counseling@newark.rutgers.edu or (973) 353-5805. If you are not quite ready to make an appointment with a therapist but are interested in self-help, check out TAO at Rutgers-Newark for an easy, web-based approach to self-care and support: https://tinyurl.com/RUN-TAO.

For emergencies, call 911 or contact Rutgers University Police Department (RUPD) by calling (973) 353-5111.

Technology Resources for Students: https://mytech.newark.rutgers.edu/tlp
Contact information for OIT-Newark Help Desk:
https://mytech.newark.rutgers.edu/techsupport

REQUIRED READINGS

- Additional readings will be posted electronically.

REFERENCE WORKS


WEB RESOURCES

https://www.cdc.gov
https://www.who.int
https://wellcomelibrary.org
http://www.historyguide.org/ancient/death.html
http://classics.mit.edu/Browse/browse-Hippocrates.html
http://medhum.med.nyu.edu
https://harvardlibrarybulletin.org/contagion-project
ON COVID-19

JHU COVID-19 Dashboard by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE)
COVID-19 Vaccinations in the United States
IHME COVID-19 Projections
Nextstrain: Real-time tracking of pathogen evolution
COVID-19 Data Hub
Listings of WHO’s response to COVID-19
The COVID Tracking Project

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

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Jan. 19  Introduction to the study of epidemics; the COVID-19 pandemic
Discussion of course policies, assignments, and the syllabus; a general overview of why the study of past pandemics matters

Jan. 24  Historical epidemiology: methodologies & terminology
What is the origin of human diseases? What are the links between disease and human history? Why do we study the history of diseases on a global scale? Ecology of disease; paleopathology, molecular biology, ancient DNA studies; terminology


Watch: From mammoths to Neandertals, ancient DNA unlocks the mysteries of the past
Bring back the woolly mammoth!
Crossrail Archaeology: Great Plague DNA identified
Hendrik Poinar: Decoding the Black Death

Jan. 26-31  COVID-19 in historical perspective
How does COVID-19 compare to previous pandemics? What is similar? What is different? How does historical knowledge of past pandemics help us understand COVID-19 better?

Read: WHO Timeline - COVID-19
Visualizing the History of Pandemics
Nükhet Varlık, How do pandemics end? History suggests diseases fade but are almost never truly gone
Feb. 2  Newly emerging diseases; climate and disease ecology
Why pay attention; discussion of newly emerging pandemics; widespread fear; CDC & WHO, and pandemic preparedness; climate and disease ecology
Sonia Shah, “Breeding Ground”
Quammen, *Spillover*, Ch. 2, pp. 53-124

Feb. 7  Disease in social and historical context
How do definitions of disease change over time? What social and historical factors affect the perception of disease? What are the major disease theories in history?

Rosenberg and Golden (eds.), *Framing Disease*, pp. xiii-xxvi. (See Canvas: reading #6)
Quammen, *Spillover*, Ch. 5, pp. 211-59 (optional)

➢ Short paper #1  Due: Feb. 8, 2022 -- 11:59 pm

Feb. 9  Periodization of past pandemics
Why periodization matters; how did scientific knowledge of past pandemics change over time; how did this shape historical periodization, and why does this matter; reviewing and critiquing historical plague maps

Watch:  *Contagion* (2010; Steven Soderbergh, 106 minutes)
Quammen, *Spillover*, Ch. 6, pp. 263-310 (optional)

Feb. 14  What is plague: past, present, future; interactions between science and history; globalization of disease

Read: Paul Slack, *Plague*
Hammond, *Epidemics and the Modern World*, Ch. 1 (pp. 17-55)
Feb. 16-21  **Plague’s deep history**  
Just how old is plague? Late Neolithic Bronze Age plagues; why does it matter to understand plague’s deep history? How does it help us understand modern plagues?

**Read:**  
Mark Achtman *et al.*, “*Yersinia pestis*, the Cause of Plague, Is a Recently Emerged Clone of *Yersinia pseudotuberculosis*,” *PNAS* 96, no. 24 (1999): 14043–48  
Simon Rasmussen *et al.*, “Early Divergent Strains of *Yersinia Pestis* in Eurasia 5,000 Years Ago,” *Cell* 163, no. 3 (2015): 571–82  

**Watch:**  
Johannes Krause on Ancient Pathogen Genomes

Feb. 23-28  **First Plague Pandemic: Justinianic Plague and recurrent waves**  
What do we know; how do we know what we know; consensus and debates; why does it matter

**Read:**  
Lester K. Little, “Life and Afterlife of the First Plague Pandemic,” *Plague and the End of Antiquity*, 3-32 (See Canvas: reading #9)  
Monica Green, “When Numbers Don’t Count,” *Eidolon*  
Lee Mordechai, Merle Eisenberg, “Rejecting Catastrophe: The Case of the Justinianic Plague,” *Past & Present* 244:1 (2019): 3–50 (see Canvas: reading #10) or  
Marcel Keller *et al.*, “Ancient *Yersinia pestis* genomes from across Western Europe reveal early diversification during the First Pandemic (541–750),” *PNAS* 116 :25 (2019), 12363-72 (recommended)

**Primary sources:**  
Thucydides, “The Plague of Athens,” from *The History of the Peloponnesian War* (431 BCE), Book II, Ch.7  
Procopius on the plague in 542

**Watch:**  
Palaeogenetic Insights into the First Plague Pandemic (recommended)  
**Explore:**  
Justinianic Plague App
Short paper #2       Due: March 1, 2022 -- 11:59 pm

Mar. 2-9       The Black Death (1346-53)
The initial spread of the Black Death; consensus & debates

Monica H. Green, “The Four Black Deaths,” *The American Historical Review*

Primary sources:
Rosemary Horrox, *The Black Death*, docs. 1-6, 64, 68-75. (See Canvas: reading #3)
Jacme d’Agramont, *Regiment de preservacio a epidimia o pestilencia e mortaldats*

Spring Break

Short paper #3       Due: March 22, 2022 -- 11:59 pm

Mar. 14-16

Short paper #3       Due: March 22, 2022 -- 11:59 pm

Mar. 21-23       Second Plague Pandemic: toward a global narrative
History and historiography; methodology; biases; debates; Africa, Asia, Ottoman Empire

Read:          Monica H. Green, “Taking ‘Pandemic’ Seriously”
Monica H. Green, “Genetics as a Historicist Discipline: A New Player in Disease History”
Gérard Chouin, “Reflections on plague in African history (14th–19th c.)”
The Black Death may have transformed medieval societies in sub-Saharan Africa
Nükhet Varlık, “Conquest, Urbanization and Plague Networks in the Ottoman Empire, 1453-1600,” in *The Ottoman World*, edited by Christine Woodhead (New York: Routledge, 2011), 251-63 (see Canvas: reading #16)
Listen: Podcast (Disease and Landscape in Medieval and Early Modern Europe)
Watch: Monica H. Green, “What Happens When We Expand the Chronology and Geography of Plague's History?”

Mar. 28-30  Second Plague Pandemic: ‘end of plague’ narratives
Plague of London; Plague of Marseille; Persistence vs. re-introductions; quarantine; cases of Russia, the Middle East, and Central Asia

Read: Ann G. Carmichael, “Plague Persistence in Western Europe: A Hypothesis”
Namouchi et al., “Integrative approach using Yersinia pestis genomes to revisit the historical landscape of plague during the Medieval Period,” PNAS 115:50 (2018): e11790–97.
Nükhet Varlık, “The plague that never left: restoring the Second Pandemic to Ottoman and Turkish history in the time of COVID-19,” New Perspectives on Turkey 63 (2020): 176-89

Apr. 4-6  Third Plague Pandemic
What do we know; how did knowledge drawn from the Third Pandemic inform twentieth-century historians’ vision of past plagues; why does this matter?


Explore: Visual Representations of the Third Plague Pandemic
Apr. 11  The Columbian Exchange
What is the Columbian Exchange; how does it help us understand globalization of diseases?

Read: Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange*, pp. 35-63. (See Canvas: reading #19)
Hammond, *Epidemics and the Modern World*, Ch. 2 (57-102)
What Wiped Out the Aztecs? Scientists Find New Clues

➢  Short paper #4  Due: April 12, 2022 -- 11:59 pm

Apr. 13  Smallpox
History of smallpox; controversy, debates; global smallpox eradication campaign

Read: Hammond, *Epidemics and the Modern World*, Ch. 3 (105-45)

Apr. 18  Cholera
Overview of cholera pandemics; historical context; debates

Read: Hammond, *Epidemics and the Modern World*, Ch. 5 (pp. 191-231)
Richard J. Evans, “Epidemics and Revolutions: Cholera in Nineteenth-Century Europe,” in Ranger and Slack (eds.), *Epidemics and Ideas*, 149-73. (See Canvas: reading #21)
David Arnold, “The Indian Ocean as a Disease Zone, 1500-1950,” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 14, No. 2 (1991), 1-21. (See Canvas: reading #22)

Apr. 20  Influenza: past, present, future
Overview of influenza pandemics, the pandemic of 1918-1920; future of influenza

Read: Hammond, *Epidemics and the Modern World*, Ch. 8 (pp. 315-45)
Alfred Crosby, *America’s Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918*, xi-xiv, 3-69, 264-328. (See Canvas: reading #23)
“The ‘Spanish’ Influenza in Egypt” by Christopher Rose

Listen: Pandemic: The Story of the 1918 Flu
Apr. 25  AIDS/HIV
Overview of HIV/AIDS pandemic; its effects

Read: Hammond, *Epidemics and the Modern World*, Ch. 11 (pp.427-62)
Susan Sontag, *Illness as metaphor; and, AIDS and its metaphors*. (See Canvas: reading #25)

Apr. 27  Emerging and reemerging diseases: SARS, MERS, Ebola

Laurie Garrett, *The Coming Plague: Newly Emerging Diseases*, pp. 30-52, 100-152. (See Canvas: reading #28)

May 2  Future of global health

Ed Yong, “How the Pandemic Defeated America”

➢ Final project due:  May 9, 2022 – 11:59 pm