

Epidemic Disease in America, 1492–2002

History 195S.11

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Office Hours: M/W, 1:45–3:15 p.m. and by appointment

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About the Course

This discussion-centered seminar will examine the impact of infectious epidemic disease on Americans and their history, from smallpox and cholera to influenza and AIDS. Themes to be addressed include (but are not limited to) the role of disease in the early depopulation of the Americas; the relationship between contagion and social upheaval; religious interpretations of pestilence; the social construction of disease; urbanization; the place of doctors and alternative practitioners; the quest for public health; prejudice and infection; the ethics of quarantine; and the tension between public good and individual rights.

Meeting time and place: Mon. and Weds., 3:55–5:10 p.m., North Building 306

Course web site: All students are required to use Blackboard (<https://courses.duke.edu>), where this syllabus, think pieces, and other class materials will be posted. On-line readings are accessible here under “Assignments.”

Readings:

► *Available at the university bookstore:*

Powell, John Harvey. *Bring Out Your Dead: The Great Plague of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia in 1793*. 1949. Reprint ed. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993.

Rosenberg, Charles. *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866*. Reprint ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Rothman, Sheila. *Living in the Shadow of Death: Tuberculosis and the Social Experience of Illness in American History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

Jones, James H. *Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment*. Revised ed. New York: Free Press, 1993.

Kolata, Gina. *Flu: The Story of the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918 and the Search for the Virus That Caused It*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999.

Shilts, Randy. *And the Band Played on: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic*. Penguin Books, 1988.

► **Available electronically:** Required articles are listed in the syllabus below. These readings are available on the class Blackboard site under “Assignments.” All articles should be downloaded and printed by our second class meeting.

► **Optional:** To give our discussions present-day relevance, students are encouraged to subscribe to the e-mail version of the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* published each week by the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, GA. Subscriptions are free at <http://www.cdc.gov/subscribe.html>. Be sure to subscribe to the Acrobat PDF file version. (The ASCII version does not include statistics—the most important part of the report!) You must have Adobe Acrobat Reader on your computer to read these reports.

Grades & Requirements

Readings: Please note that the reading load for this class is heavy and relentless. Do not take this course if you do not think you can keep up. Start *And the Band Played On* now! All readings are to be done *before* the class for which they are assigned. Please plan in advance in order to be prepared for discussions.

Grades:

- Attendance & participation (30%). Class participation constitutes a substantial part of your grade. Your grade will depend not just on the quantity of your participation but also on the quality of your participation, including the thoughtfulness of your reactions to the readings. In addition, there will be two field trips or service-learning opportunities during this course. The field trips are required. If you cannot attend at the mutually agreed upon time, you may visit these sites on your own and meet with me during office hours to discuss your experience.
- Think pieces (30%). Each student will prepare two, each worth 15% of your final grade. Think pieces are short essays in which you react to the readings and raise questions for class discussion. Your think piece should be thoughtful, well written, and carefully proofread. It should end with at LEAST three important questions provoked by the readings assigned for the day your think piece is due. These questions will be discussed in class. Each think piece should be approximately 3 double-spaced typed pages in length. The think piece schedule will be posted to Blackboard under “Assignments.” Please check here to confirm your dates!

PLAN AHEAD! Think pieces must be deposited on the course Blackboard “Discussion Board” 24 hours before the class in which they are due. Late think pieces will be graded downward. **Members of the class are responsible for reading each other’s think pieces ahead of time and responding to them in class. To do this, you must print each think piece from the discussion board before class meets. You are expected to bring a hard copy with you for our discussion.**

- Disease presentation (10%). Each student will prepare a brief (approximately 10 minute) oral presentation on the nature and current status of an infectious disease. At the very least, your presentation should answer the following questions: How is the disease spread? What are its symptoms? Can it be prevented? If so, How? What is its history? What is its current status? Is it emerging or receding? Why? The point of your presentation is to educate us all. It is quite likely that you will find the most

up-to-date information on the Internet, and you should feel free to use this resource in preparing your presentation. Among the most informative websites are those of the Centers for Disease Control (<http://www.cdc.gov/>) and the World Health Organization (<http://www.who.ch/>). The disease presentation schedule will be posted to Blackboard under “Assignments.” Please check here to confirm your date!

- Paper (30%). Due at the *beginning* of class Nov. 25. I am happy to accept papers delivered to the course drop box on Blackboard by 3:30 PM, but this must be your *entire* paper, including any graphics or supplementary materials. I will not accept these materials separately. If you cannot deliver the entire paper to the drop box, please give me hard copy in class instead. The paper itself is described at the end of this syllabus.

Policies:

- On-time attendance is *required*. The success of this course hinges upon in-class discussion: you cannot participate if you do not come. More than two absences will affect your grade.
- Cheating of any kind (including plagiarism) is not tolerated. All students should review the university honor code. If you are unsure of what constitutes plagiarism, *please* ask the professor for clarification. There is *never* a penalty for asking!

Dates to remember:

Oct. 14 – paper proposals due

Nov. 25 – papers due

Class Schedule (subject to change at the professor’s discretion)

1. Aug. 26 Introductions: Been Sick Lately?

- Assignment for August 28 class meeting: Read this syllabus! Also, please enroll on the class Blackboard site and download *all* the required articles assigned for this course. (They are listed in the syllabus below.) Let me know ASAP if there are any problems.
- Assignment for September 2 class meeting: Explore your personal disease history! Come to Monday’s class prepared to talk about your own (or your family’s) encounters with infectious disease. Call home if necessary and find out what diseases you’ve been vaccinated against. What contagious diseases did you have as a child? What diseases did you have more recently? Think broadly. Had any colds recently? Have you ever had “food poisoning”? What about others in your family? Ask about grandparents and great grandparents. *Special note regarding individual privacy: students should not feel obliged to reveal any information they would rather keep private.*

2. Aug. 28 The Great Disaster: Virgin Soil Epidemics and Indian Population Decline

- Readings: Crosby, Alfred W. "Virgin Soil Epidemics As a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation in America." *William and Mary Quarterly* 33 (1976): 289-99.
- Fenn, Elizabeth A. “A Revolutionary Continent Revisited: The Great North American

Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-1783.” (Typescript.)

3. Sept. 2 Family Disease Histories

- Readings: Please get started reading *And the Band Played On* for the end of term

4. Sept. 4 Discovering the Origins of Yellow Fever

- Readings: *Bring Out Your Dead*, 1-89.

5. Sept. 9 Public Responses to Epidemic Disease: The Great Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793

- Readings: *Bring Out Your Dead*, 90-139.

6. Sept. 11 Guided Tour of Duke Special Collections with Elizabeth Dunn

- Please meet in the Special Collections department (Dalton Brand Research Room) of Perkins Library. For a map, go to Blackboard and look under “Web Sites.”
- Readings: *Bring Out Your Dead*, 140-232.

7. Sept. 16 Ebola! (video)

- Readings: *Bring Out Your Dead*, 233-279.

8. Sept. 18 How Different Are We? Yellow Fever 1793/Cholera 1832/Ebola 1995

- Readings: *Cholera Years*, 1-81.

9. Sept. 23 John Snow and the Broad Street Pump

- Readings: *Cholera Years*, 82-172.

10. Sept. 25 God’s Justice or Human Injustice?

- Readings: *Cholera Years*, 175-242.

11. Sept. 30 Planning for Service Learning Day

- Readings: *Living in the Shadow of Death*, 13-74.
- Also read Hartsell, Julia. "Coming to Terms: Residents of a Local HIV/AIDS Family Care Home Make Peace with the Past." *Independent*, June 19-25, 2002.

12. Oct. 2 Tuberculosis: The Social Construction of Disease

- Readings: *Living in the Shadow of Death*, 77-127.

13. Oct. 7 How Do Epidemic Infections Spread?

- Readings: *Living in the Shadow of Death*, 131-175.

14. Oct. 9 Germ Theory and Public Health: Tuberculosis

- Readings: *Living in the Shadow of Death*, 179-252.

15. Oct. 14 PAPER PROPOSALS DUE! Be prepared to discuss your proposal in class.

16. Oct. 16 The Ethics of Quarantine I: Immigration and Contagion

- Readings: Markel, Howard. " 'The Eyes Have It': Trachoma, the Perception of Disease, the United States Public Health Service, and the American Jewish Immigration Experience, 1897-1924." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 74 (2000): 525-60.

17. Oct. 21 The Ethics of Quarantine II: "Typhoid" Mary

- Readings: Leavitt, Judith Walzer. " 'Typhoid Mary' Strikes Back: Bacteriological Theory and Practice in Early Twentieth-Century Public Health." *Isis* 83, no. 4 (1992): 608-29.

18. Oct. 23 Influenza: The First Global Pandemic

- Readings: *Flu*, ix-xi, 3-84.

19. Oct. 28 Influenza 1918 (video)

- Readings: *Flu*, 85-185.

20. Oct. 30 FIELD TRIP: Durham Cemetery (reschedule for the weekend?)

- Readings: *Flu*, 186-241.

21. Nov. 4 Epidemic Disease and Historical Amnesia

- Readings: *Flu*, 243-306.
- Look through the World Health Organization's *Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Plan*, available at <http://www.who.int/emc-documents/influenza/whocdscsre991c.html>.
- Optional: Listen to the Diane Rehm Show RealAudio interview with Gina Kolata at <http://www.wamu.org/ram/1999/r2991117.ram>. If the link has changed, you can search for the show at the NPR website (www.npr.org). I have copies of the audio tape for those who do not have RealAudio capabilities on their computers.

22. Nov. 6 A Paralyzing Fear: The Story of Polio in America (video)

- Readings: *Bad Blood*, 1-77.

23. Nov. 11 Race and Medicine

- Readings: *Bad Blood*, 78-150.

24. Nov. 13 The Tuskegee Syphilis Study

- Readings: *Bad Blood*, 151-219.

25. Nov. 18 The Emergence of AIDS

- Readings: *And the Band Played On*, xxi-xxiii, 3-112.

26. Nov. 20 Science and HIV

- Readings: *And the Band Played On*, 115-233.

27. Nov. 25 Prejudice, Perception, and the HIV Virus (PAPERS DUE AT START OF CLASS!)

- Readings: *And the Band Played On*, 234-402.

28. Nov. 27 NO CLASS! (Thanksgiving break)

- Readings: *And the Band Played On*, 405-621.

29. Dec. 2 Biological Terror in America

- Readings: Fenn, Elizabeth A. "Biological Warfare in Eighteenth-Century North America: Beyond Jeffery Amherst." *Journal of American History* 86 (March 2000): 1552-1580.
- Glass, Thomas A., and Monica Schoch-Spana. "Bioterrorism and the People: How to Vaccinate a City against Panic." *Clinical Infectious Diseases* 34 (Jan. 2002): 217-223.

30. Dec. 4 Course Wrap-Up & Discussion of Emerging Diseases

PAPER DESCRIPTION

Papers are due at the *beginning* of class on November 25. I am happy to accept papers delivered to the course drop box on Blackboard by 3:30 PM, but this must be your *entire* paper, including any graphics or supplementary materials. I will not accept these materials separately. If you cannot deliver the entire paper to the drop box, please give me hard copy in class instead.

Each student will write an 8- to 10-page research paper on one of the three topics described below. While you are welcome to draw upon the readings assigned in class, you are expected to use other sources as well. Each paper should have a bibliography, and each paper should be properly footnoted. PLEASE NOTE: Historians use footnotes or endnotes, NOT parenthetical, in-text citations. (See the examples at the end of this paper description.)

A 2-page paper proposal and a preliminary bibliography are due on October 14. Your proposal should describe your topic, the epidemic/s you will focus on, and the particular questions you believe are important. A preliminary bibliography should be attached to your proposal. Late papers and proposals are not accepted. Anyone who wants to hand in a paper proposal early may do so. Failure to turn in a paper proposal will lower your paper grade by one full grade.

Students are expected to meet with me during my office hours by October 11 to discuss paper topics and proposals.

Your paper grade will be based on the following:

1. The quality of your research.
2. The thoughtfulness of your arguments, insights, and observations.
3. Your use of specific details, quotations, and evidence.
4. Your organization, clarity, and writing. (Faulty footnotes, typos and spelling errors will all count against you.)
5. Your dedication.

PAPER TOPICS (THREE OPTIONS)

I. PAPER OPTION ONE: Write an 8- to 10-page case study that examines places your own family's experience with infectious disease in broader social and historical context. You may focus on a single outbreak of infectious disease (such as influenza, polio, or HIV/AIDS), or you may focus on the impact of several epidemics. Be aware that not everyone will have the resources necessary to pursue this topic. *The existence of a living relative who can describe past events may well be the deciding factor in this regard.*

Your paper should answer as many of the following specific questions about your family's experience as possible:

- Where did your family or ancestors live? What was your family's life like before disease struck?
- What contagious disease or diseases did your family contend with? What was their immediate experience of that disease? How did they perceive infectious disease and its causes?
- What was the family structure at the time the disease struck? How was it affected by contagious disease episodes?
- What consequences did the contagion have for your family? Were there economic consequences? Social consequences? Personal consequences? Psychological consequences? Others? Did the consequences differ along gender lines? Or generational lines?
- What long term consequences can you identify today?

You may not find answers to all of these questions. If you can't, that's okay. Raise the question in your paper, and explain that you do not have the documentation necessary to answer it.

Your paper should then answer the following more general questions as well:

- How does your family's experience connect to larger historical outbreaks of contagious disease?
- What were the consequences for others who experienced the epidemics in question?
- What about more general consequences? (e.g., political crises, economic slowdowns, military victories/defeats, xenophobia, immigration, sanitation improvements, etc.)
- In what ways was your family's experience similar to or different from the experience of others who lived through this epidemic?

II. PAPER OPTION TWO: Write an 8- to 10-page paper that focuses either on one discrete theme in a specific epidemic or on one discrete theme across several epidemics. The theme you choose is up to you. Here are a few examples: You might focus on political activism among HIV and AIDS patients, or you might compare the political activism of HIV/AIDS patients to the political activism

of polio patients and their families. You might examine the plight of orphaned children in the wake of the influenza epidemic of 1918, or you might compare and contrast the plight of orphaned children following several epidemics. You might write on cholera and xenophobia (fear of foreigners), or you might compare xenophobia and cholera to homophobia and HIV. Possible themes are almost limitless. Pursue something that interests you! Your paper should draw on both primary (firsthand) and secondary sources. (Primary sources are described in detail under paper option three below.)

III. PAPER OPTION THREE: Write an 8- to 10-page paper that focuses on a single primary source. What is a primary source? In most cases, it is something produced by an eyewitness or a participant in the events you are examining, usually (but not always) written at the time. Primary sources can include letters, diaries, memos, account books, newspaper stories, paintings, advertisements, photographs, memoirs, video and audio recordings, and more. One good way to find primary sources and documents is to trace the footnotes in the books we are reading. Some of you may even find suitable primary sources in the "archival" holdings—letters, diaries, photographs, etc.—of your own families. Be sure to pick a document that raises issues and questions you would like to pursue further. In your paper, you will "unpack" your source and explore the issues it raises. If you have questions, please ask me!

PROPER FOOTNOTE FORMS

BOOK—FIRST CITATION:

1. Charles Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (Reprint ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 92.

BOOK—SUBSEQUENT CITATIONS:

2. Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years*, 121.

MAGAZINE OR JOURNAL ARTICLE—FIRST CITATION:

3. Judith Walzer Leavitt, "Typhoid Mary' Strikes Back: Bacteriological Theory and Practice in Early Twentieth-Century Public Health," *Isis* 83 (Dec. 1992): 612-13.

MAGAZINE OR JOURNAL ARTICLE—SUBSEQUENT CITATIONS:

4. Leavitt, "Typhoid Mary," 620.

ARTICLE IN A BOOK—FIRST CITATION:

5. Kenneth F. Kipple and Brian T. Higgins, "Yellow Fever and the Africanization of the Caribbean," in *Disease and Demography in the Americas*, ed. John W. Verano and Douglas H. Ubelaker (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1992), 239.

ARTICLE IN A BOOK—SUBSEQUENT CITATIONS:

6. Kipple and Higgins, "Yellow Fever," 240-41.

MANUSCRIPT SOURCE:

7. Carla Jackson-Tate, Memorandum to the Executive Committee, Feb. 16, 1992, folder 7, box 19, in North Carolina Lesbian and Gay Health Project Records, 1983-1996, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University. (Hereafter cited as NCLG-Duke.)

MANUSCRIPT SOURCE—SUBSEQUENT CITATIONS:

8. Thomas J. Cooke to Susanna da Costa, June 19, 1988, NCLG-Duke, box 6, folder 11.

NEWSPAPER:

9. Lawrence K. Altman, William J. Broad, and Judith Miller, "Smallpox: The Once and Future Scourge?," *New York Times*, June 15, 1999, sec. D, 1, 4.