

## SUBJECT TO CHANGE



### Disease in History *The irony is palpable* 506:321

Instructor: Tara Malanga

Instructor's Email: [tmalanga@rutgers.edu](mailto:tmalanga@rutgers.edu)

Class Meetings: TTh 5:40 – 7pm

Office Hours: Thursdays 1-4pm or By Appointment, via Zoom

#### Learning goals:

By the end of the semester, you will be able to:

- Analyze and examine the effect disease had on Europe's global expansion, colonialism, and imperialism.
- Explain how different diseases spread and how they were understood by the populations that encountered them in specific points in time.
- Investigate the connections between understandings of disease, the fear of disease, and how disease manipulates and is manipulated by human agency.
- Examine and assess primary sources, using context to determine what they are able to tell us and how they are limited by the context in which they were created.
- Relate past human experience with disease to the current world moment.

#### Course Description:

The COVID-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented experience in our lifetime, disrupting daily life in unimaginable ways. Yet, humans throughout history have had similar encounters with disease. From the Bubonic Plague in Medieval Europe to Smallpox in the Americas to the Spanish Flu, AIDS, and Ebola on a global scale, humans have always tried to understand and fight disease and epidemics. Disease has decimated populations, aided and hindered military campaigns, and spread silently and without discrimination throughout the world. In this course, we will explore how an historical understanding of the rhetoric surrounding disease can inform our understanding of the way disease is perceived and feared today. The way we understand and talk about disease has become an increasingly global phenomenon in the wake of HIV, Ebola, and now, COVID-19 and has spilled over into pop-culture with plays and movies like *Contagion*, *Philadelphia*, *RENT*, and *Outbreak*. In this class we will study excerpts of medieval and early

## SUBJECT TO CHANGE

modern texts that deal with disease, as well as modern-day representations in movies and shows. Disease can change the way we think and act, in turn, changing history.

### **Required Texts:**

Readings will be posted to Canvas in the weekly Modules. **Readings should be completed before weekly class discussion on Wednesday. (But are divided by “session” as they would have been in an in-person class to make them more manageable.)**

### **Course Requirements:**

#### **Grading:**

1. Midterm –Essay: 25%
2. Current Event Project: 25%
3. Final Paper: 30%
  - a. Proposal will be 10% of your Final Project grade
4. Attendance and Participation: 20%

#### **Projects and Dates:**

1. **MIDTERM:** This will consist of a 2-3 page essay answering an assigned question that will explore the themes of the course at the halfway point. Assigned on TBD. **DUE MIDNIGHT March 3<sup>rd</sup> via Canvas.**
2. **Current Events Presentation:** You will be required to select a current event article about disease, health care, public health policy, etc., which interests you. (THIS SHOULD NOT BE COVID-19 FOCUSED! There are other diseases still out there. – But may be tangentially related to the current pandemic. Meaning this should not be an article about what COVID-19 is, how it spreads, its symptoms, etc. This is because this is a history class, not a biology or epidemiology course. Therefore if your article concerns COVID-19, please be sure that the purpose of the article is focused on the sociopolitical context, access and disparities, politics of disease, healthcare and public health, the psychology behind blame in epidemics, religious explanations of disease, social contagion and mass hysteria, stigma and disease, etc.)

Keep in mind that the more outside the “typical” you go the better right now.

Each student will “present” their current event article. This will be done via a PowerPoint (or similar) presentation WITH voice over. (Remember a good PowerPoint does not include all the words the speaker is going to say.) Links that may help you with this are as follows:

<https://support.office.com/en-us/article/record-a-slide-show-with-narration-and-slide-timings-0b9502c6-5f6c-40ae-b1e7-e47d8741161c>

## SUBJECT TO CHANGE

<https://support.office.com/en-us/article/turn-your-presentation-into-a-video-c140551f-cb37-4818-b5d4-3e30815c3e83>

OR, if you know of another way or would like to be more creative feel free to use another method – for instance, if you are adept at making videos, feel free to present the information that way.

### **Content:**

You will be required to consider how this event is relevant to the course.

Questions that must be answered/information that must be covered:

What is the article/event about? Is it concerning a specific disease, vaccinations, public policy, the current health care system, etc.?

Describe the event, disease, problem, policy, etc. in detail.

How does this article/event relate to the themes that we have covered this semester?

How does what you have learned (so far) in the course inform your understanding of this article/event?

**DUE by MIDNIGHT on April 14<sup>th</sup>:** This is currently planned as an asynchronous activity. Therefore, presentations must be uploaded to the discussion thread designated for this activity and everyone will be required to comment on AT LEAST THREE (3) other presentations. (This can be in the form of a question and should not be a value judgement on the presentation but a discussion of the topic(s) at hand.) AND RESPOND TO AT LEAST ONE (1) comment on your own presentation. This must be done by **MIDNIGHT on April 21<sup>st</sup>.**

### **3. Final Project:** Final Project Options:

- A. Write an essay (5-7 pages) interpreting a primary source regarding disease in world history. Why is it a valuable source for evaluating how people understood disease at the time it was written? How was this source informed by ideas of imperialism, colonization, race, and environment in its contemporary context? What questions can it answer? What does it tell us and what can't it tell us? What we can learn from it and how it can be used in our study of disease?
- B. Choose a disease that has profoundly affected world history. (You are not limited to the diseases that have been discussed in the course but choosing one that has may make finding secondary sources easier.) Write an essay (6-8pages) following that disease through world history using BOTH primary and secondary sources. Explain the spread of the disease, the symptoms, what was thought about the disease at different times throughout history, what people knew about the disease at different points in time, what we know now about the disease, and most importantly, how it impacted imperialism, colonization, ideas and perceptions of races, disease, and environment. Lastly, explain what we can learn from the impact of the disease in history and how that can information can be used in our modern environment, where there is the constant threat of a new pandemic, such as COVID-19, but where we live in relative freedom from most diseases.

## SUBJECT TO CHANGE

- C. *This is mostly for pre-medical student who have the access the resources they would need to complete this project.* Choose a historic epidemic that has a sufficiently large set of primary documents associated with it (I can help with this): the plague, for example. Then, write an essay (6-8pages) evaluating the contemporary and current understandings of the epidemic. Using not only historical texts but medical research, use the primary documents to evaluate the disease that was responsible for the epidemic. (Act like a diagnostician!) Do you agree, after conducting your own research, that the epidemic was of the disease contemporary observers believed it was? Was it of the disease that current scholarship believes it to be? Why do you agree or disagree with current of contemporary observers?

**Proposal:** First, select which project you would like to do – and tell me in the proposal – write a paragraph or so on the disease or epidemic and what you already know about it. Next, identify and provide me with a full text copy of the primary source(s) you will be using. (This will be harder without access to the libraries, but not even close to impossible. – reach out if you need help!) Finally, identify the secondary scholarship that you will use to examine the sources and annotate these sources by explaining how you would use them and the information they contain. It is important to remember that proposals are composed of more questions than answers. **Due by MIDNIGHT on April 28<sup>th</sup>.**

**Paper: Due by MIDNIGHT on March 24<sup>th</sup>.**

#### **4. Attendance and Participation expectations**

Students will be expected to attend all (virtual) class sessions and view all “lectures.” There may or may not be pop-quizzes on lecture content. If you will not be in class, please notify me as soon as possible and make up any missed work. You will be allowed one (1) unexcused absence before points begin to deduct from your grade. You will be expected to actively participate in classroom discussions and activities. I should here your voice at least once a week.

## SUBJECT TO CHANGE

### Weekly Breakdown:

**NOTE: The professor reserves the right to alter the syllabus if and when she sees fit.**

**Readings should be complete before the class in which they are assigned.**

### UNIT 1: Intersections of Infectious Disease and History

#### Week 1 (Jan 18 – Jan 20)

##### Session 1 — What is disease?

Reading:

- Hare, Ronald. 1955. *Pomp and Pestilence: Infectious Disease, Its Origins and Conquest*. Ch. 4 “Miasmas or Microbes” pg. 114-133

**Thought Questions:** How do you define disease, epidemic, endemic, vector, virus, etc? How is disease classified? How does disease spread? Think about these terms and any others that you encounter in the readings that you don't fully understand and bring them to class.

##### Session 2 — The Plague and the rat, or flea, or whatever caused it.

Readings:

- Infectious Historians: Ep 2 – The Justinianic Plague (You can start about 3 minutes in and end about 3 minutes early... if your pressed for time.)  
<https://anchor.fm/infectioushistorians/episodes/Episode-2---The-Justinianic-Plague-ectt7b/a-a1va9pk>
- Procopius: The Plague, 542 <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/542procopius-plague.asp>
- Boccaccio: THE DECAMERON , "INTRODUCTION"  
<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/decameronintro.asp>

**Thought questions:** What was the Plague? Does it matter what killed the people in medieval/early modern Europe? Why or why not? What consequences did the Plague have in Europe and for the rest of the world?

#### Week 2 (Jan 25 – Jan 27)

##### Session 3 —Lecture: “Open up the gates! – The Columbian Exchange”

Readings:

- Crosby, Alfred W. 1993. “The Columbian Voyages, the Columbian Exchange, and Their Historians.” In, *Islamic and European Expansion: The Forging of a Global Order*. Ed. Michael Adas pg. 141-164

**Thought Questions:** Why did Europeans expand outward when they did? What did the societies they encountered look like before contact? Why were there so many diseases in Europe and so few in the Americas?

## SUBJECT TO CHANGE

### Session 4 -- “Smallpox – Conquest or Contagion”

Primary Source Readings:

- Las Casas, Bartolomé de. 1974. *The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account*, “New Spain” pg. 57-68
- Chimalpahuin’s Conquest. Chapter 104 “The Death Toll from Smallpox 245-246
- Lockhart, James, ed. 2004. *We People Here: Nahuatl Accounts of The Conquest of Mexico*. Ch. 29, pg. 180-185
- Hernán Cortés, *The Third Letter* p. 164-165

### Week 3 (Feb 1 – Feb 3)

### Session 5 — To Baptize or not to baptize, that is the question

Primary Source Readings:

- Townsend, Camilla, ed. 2009. *American Indian History: A Documentary Reader* Ch.5 Doc. 4 “Sir Jeffery Amherst Suggests the Smallpox pg. 76-80
- Greer, Allan, ed. 2000. *The Jesuit Relations: Natives and Missionaries in Seventeenth-Century North America*. Ch. 3 “Disease and Medicine” pg. 70-93
- Greer, Allan, ed. 2000. *The Jesuit Relations: Natives and Missionaries in Seventeenth-Century North America*. “The Huron Feast of the Dead” pg. 61-69

**Thought Questions:** Were the first encounters in North American similar to those in the Caribbean, Mexico and South America? Why or Why not? How do different cultures express grief differently? What can funeral and burial practices tell us about a society?

### Session 6 - For whom the Death Tolls – The great dying, or was it?

Readings:

- Brooks, Francis. “The Impact of Disease” in Raudzens, George. 2003. *Technology, Disease, and Colonial Conquests, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries Essays Reappraising the Guns and Germs Theories*. Ch. 5, pg. 127-160

**Thought questions:** To what extent was disease responsible for the conquests of the new world? What other non-human factors led to the depopulation of the Americas? Were the American people more susceptible to epidemics than the Europeans? If so, why or why not?

### Week 4 (Feb 8 – Feb 10)

### Session 7 – “European Death in the Caribbean and Non-European Medical Knowledge,”

Reading:

- Selections from *Mosquito Empire* TBD

### Session 8 — “‘The French Pox’ AKA Syphilis and other disagreeable STD’s,”

Readings:

- Paugh, Katherine. *Yaws, Syphilis, Sexuality, and the Circulation of Medical Knowledge in the British Caribbean and the Atlantic World*.

## SUBJECT TO CHANGE

**Thought questions:** How does sexuality, race, and otherness impact the way sexually transmitted diseases are talked about? In what ways are morality tied to conversations about disease?

### Week 5 (Feb 15 – Feb 17)

#### Session 9 — “You know everything Jon Snow”

Readings: TBD

#### Session 10 – “Typhoid Mary and The Fascination with Feces!”

Readings: TBD

- Keane, Mary Beth. *Fever: A Novel*

### Week 6 (Feb 22 – Feb 24)

#### Session 11 – “Snake Oil and Modernizing Healthcare and Medical Practice”

Readings: TBD

**Thought Questions:** How were public health reforms guided by ideas about race, class, and nationality? How were these reforms used to cement racial ideas into the way societies understood health and disease? How does Typhoid Mary fit into this discussion?

#### Session 12 - “The worst epidemic in modern history...until now?”

Readings:

- Janet Golden, "'The Ambulances are Running in Every Direction': A Patient's Experience of Influenza in a Military Camp, 1918": NHR Vol 28.12

**Thought Questions:** How can a war effect the impact of a disease? How was this epidemic different from previous epidemics we have looked at?

### Week 7 (Mar 1 – Mar 3)

#### Session 13 – “Vaccinations and the end of epidemics – or so we might have thought”

Readings:

- Biss, Sentimental Medicine

**Thought Questions:** How did “science” change healing? How has vaccination changed the way we live our lives and how we view disease?

#### Session 14 – No Class: MIDTERM DUE Via Canvas Assignments Tab

SUBJECT TO CHANGE

**Unit 2: Medical Ethics and Medicalization**

**Week 8 (Mar 8 – Mar 10)**

**Session 15 – The Nazi Doctors and the beginning of Medical Ethics**

Readings:

- Files on the Nuremberg Trials – see Canvas
- Henry Beecher, *Ethics and Clinical Research*

**Session 16 – The Tuskegee Experiment**

Readings:

- Susan Smith, *Neither Victim nor Villain*

**Week 9 (Mar 15 – Mar 10) – SPRING BREAK**

**Week 10 (Mar 22 – Mar 24)**

**Session 17 – The Case of Henrietta Lacks**

Readings:

- Rebecca Skloot, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* (Selections)
- Rebecca Kumar, "AN OPEN LETTER TO THOSE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES THAT HAVE ASSIGNED REBECCA SKLOOT'S THE IMMORTAL LIFE OF HENRIETTA LACKS AS THE "COMMON" FRESHMEN READING FOR THE CLASS OF 2016"

**Session 18 – No Class: Proposals due to Canvas.**

**Week 11 (Mar 29 – Mar 31)**

**Session 19 – Mental health in Institutions**

Readings:

- NELLIE BLY, *Ten Days In a Mad-House*, 1887
- Albert Q. Maisel, *Bedlam*, 1946: MOST U.S. MENTAL HOSPITALS ARE A SHAME AND A DISGRACE – If you want to see it in its original LIFE format, and perhaps think about the ads and other content it is with, see this:  
<https://books.google.com/books?id=BIUEAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA102&dq=life+magazine+1946+bedlam&ei=cscUTM7rNqm2zASJ2aHcCg&cd=1&hl=en#v=onepage&q=life%20magazine%201946%20bedlam&f=false>



## SUBJECT TO CHANGE

### **Session 20 – Defining Mental health**

Readings:

- Greenberg, Gary. 2010. *Manufacturing Depression: The Secret History of a Modern Disease*. New York: Basic Books. Pp. 253-285.
- Horwitz, Allan and Jerome C. Wakefield. 2007. *The Loss of Sadness. How Psychiatry Transformed Normal Sorrow into Depressive Disorder*. New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 27-52.

### **Week 12 (Apr 5 – Apr 7)**

#### **Session 21 – Cancer**

Readings:

- Selections from *The Emperor of All Maladies*

#### **Session 22 – Weight**

Readings:

- Gawande, Atul. 2001. “The Man Who Couldn’t Stop Eating.” *The New Yorker* (July 9, 2001) 66-75.

### **Week 13 (Apr 12 – Apr 14)**

#### **Session 23 – The beginning of life and end of life**

Readings:

- Jane Malenschein, Understanding Embryos in a Changing and Complex World: A Case of Philosophers and Historians Engaging in Society.
- Jacob Appel, *A Duty to Kill? A Duty to Die? Rethinking the Euthanasia Controversy of 1906*

#### **Session 24 – Current Event Projects Due (Presentations if class size permits)**

### **Week 14 (Apr 19 – Apr 21)**

#### **Session 25 – “‘a strange illness of unknown origin ...’ —Jacques Leibovitch, clinical immunologist, 1984”**

Readings:

- NYT Article <https://www.nytimes.com/1981/07/03/us/rare-cancer-seen-in-41-homosexuals.html?register=google>

#### **Session 26 – The Ever Present Elephant – Covid**

Readings:

- TBD

SUBJECT TO CHANGE

**Week 15 (Apr 26 – Apr 28)**

**Session 27 – Ending with a BANG or... at least a POP. As in POP culture – The pop culture of Disease**

**Pick a movie to watch from the list and report back about the way a contagious disease is portrayed:** Rent, Dallas Buyers Club, Angels in America, and The Normal Heart, Contagion, Outbreak, 12 Monkeys, And The Band Played On, The Stand, etc. It does not have to be about AIDS. Avoid horror, go for something with some sense of realism – although at this point, I'm not sure what that means! The goal will be to relate these movies and their representations of disease to one another, to the current world moment, to the realities we have discussed over the course of the class.

There will be a sign-up sheet for movies, so that we don't have everyone watching the same one.

**Session 28 – No Class Meeting: I'll have open office hours - Final Paper Due**

## SUBJECT TO CHANGE

### Policies

- Students are expected to abide by the University's code of student conduct while attending classes. Instances of misconduct, disruption, harassment, defamation, or other violations will be reported to administrators, and will be adjudicated in accordance with Rutgers policy. Please review section seven of the Rutgers University Code of Student Conduct: <http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu>.
- You must review and abide by the University's Policy on Academic Integrity. This can be found online at: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>.
- Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey abides by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments (ADAA) of 2008, and Sections 504 and 508 that mandate that reasonable accommodations be provided for qualified students with disabilities. If you have a disability and may require some type of instructional and/or examination accommodation, please register with the Office of Disability Services for Students, which is dedicated to providing services and administering exams with accommodations for students with disabilities. **The Office of Disability Services for Students can be contacted by calling 848.445.6800 and is located on the Livingston campus at the following address: 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Suite A145, Piscataway, NJ 08854.**
  - **If this applies to you, please let me know ASAP! Feel free to contact me via e-mail or in my office hours.**

### Finding Support At Rutgers

#### Academic Deans and the Office of Academic Services

- <http://sasundergrad.rutgers.edu>
- <https://sebs.rutgers.edu/academics/>
- <http://www.business.rutgers.edu/>
- <http://www.masongross.rutgers.edu/content/undergraduate-academic-advisors>
- [http://pharmacy.rutgers.edu/content/academic\\_services](http://pharmacy.rutgers.edu/content/academic_services)
- <http://soe.rutgers.edu/oas/advising>

#### Academic Integrity

- <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>

#### Center for Social Justice & LGBTQ Communities

- <http://socialjustice.rutgers.edu/>

#### Dean of Students

- <http://deanofstudents.rutgers.edu>
- Bias Prevention & Education Committee <http://deanofstudents.rutgers.edu/bias-prevention/>
- <https://undergraduate.rutgers.edu/for-students/student-resources/campus-deans>

#### Office of Disabilities Services

- <https://ods.rutgers.edu>

## SUBJECT TO CHANGE

### **Global/International Services**

- <http://globalservices.rutgers.edu/>

### **Public Safety**

- RUPD <http://publicsafety.rutgers.edu/rupd/>
- Department of Transportation Services <http://rudots.rutgers.edu/>

### **Rutgers Health Services**

- <http://health.rutgers.edu>
- Medical <http://rhsmedical.rutgers.edu>
- Counseling, Alcohol & Other Drug Assistance Program & Psychiatric Services (CAPS) <http://rhscaps.rutgers.edu>
- Pharmacy <http://rhspharmacy.rutgers.edu>
- Health Outreach, Promotion & Education (H.O.P.E.) <http://rhshope.rutgers.edu>

### **Office of Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance**

- <http://vpva.rutgers.edu>

### **Writing Program Writing Centers**

- <http://writingctr.rutgers.edu>