

## SUBJECT TO CHANGE



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

Professor: Tara Malanga

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

Class Meetings: TTh 2 – 3:20pm MU-212

Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:30-1:30pm, Thursdays 9am-12pm or by appointment, via Zoom unless otherwise requested.

#### **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,

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Philadelphia, RENT, and Outbreak. In this class we will study excerpts of medieval and early 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. Unit Capstone Essays: 15% each
2. Final Museum Project: 60%
  - a. Proposal will be 10% of your Final Project grade.
  - b. Source list will be 10% of your Final Project grade.
  - c. Peer Review and Rough Draft will be 10% of your Final Project grade.
3. Attendance and Participation: 10%

#### Projects and Dates:

1. **UNIT CAPSTONES:** This will consist of a 2-3 page essay answering an assigned question that will explore the themes of the course in each unit. **In person or online TBD.**
  - a. **Unit 1 Capstone Sept 28<sup>th</sup> (In class)**
  - b. **Unit 2 Capstone Oct 31<sup>st</sup> (online)**
2. **Final Museum Project:** See Project Sheet for instructions.
  - a. **Three Project Ideas Due: Sept 21st**
  - b. **Proposal Due Date: Oct 12th**
  - c. **Sources Due Date: Nov 2nd**
  - d. **Rough Draft Due Date: Nov 21st**
  - e. **Presentation/Peer Review Due Date: Nov 21st**
  - f. **Final Draft Due Date: Dec 15<sup>th</sup>**

#### 3. Attendance and Participation expectations

Students will be expected to attend all class sessions. There may or may not be pop-quizzes on readings and 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 2 unexcused absences, no questions asked.

You will be expected to actively participate in classroom discussions and activities. I should hear your voice at least once a week.

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### 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 (Sept 5 – Sept 7)

##### 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 (Sept 12 – Sept 14)

##### 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?

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### **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

**Thought Questions:** How and why did the two cultures view the disease differently?

### **Week 3 (Sept 19 – Sept 21)**

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

Primary Source Readings:

- 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:** How do different cultures express grief differently? What can funeral and burial practices tell us about a society?

#### **Session 6 - “European Death in the Caribbean and Non-European Medical Knowledge,”**

### **THREE POSSIBLE PROJECT TOPICS DUE 12PM SEPT 21<sup>st</sup>**

Reading:

- McNeill, John Robert. *Mosquito Empire*, pg.1-11, 91-136.

**Thought Questions:**

### **Week 4 (Sept 26 -Sept 28)**

#### **Session 7 – “‘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*.

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

#### **Session 8 – Unit 1 Capstone Essay - IN CLASS – Open Book**

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### UNIT 2: Public Health and Ethics

#### Week 5 (Oct 3 – Oct 5)

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

Readings:

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

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

Readings:

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

**Thought Questions: See Below!**

#### Week 6 (Oct 10 – Oct 12)

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

Readings:

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

**Thought Questions:** FOR NOVEL! 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?”

### PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE 12PM OCT 12<sup>th</sup>

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 influence the impact of a disease? How was this epidemic different from previous epidemics we have looked at?

#### Week 7 (Oct 17 – Oct 19)

##### 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?

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### Session 14 – Tuberculosis – The forgotten disease

Readings:

- *The Phantom Plague* TBD

### Week 8 (Oct 24 – Oct 26)

### Session 15 – WWII and the beginning of Medical Ethics

Readings:

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

### Session 16 – 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"

## UNIT 3: Medicalization

### Week 9 (Oct 31 – Nov 2)

### Session 17 – Unit 2 Capstone Essay - ONLINE – Open Book

### Session 18 – Mental health in Institutions

## SOURCES FOR PROJECT DUE 12PM NOV 2<sup>nd</sup>

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=BLUEAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA102&dq=life+magazine+1946+bedlam&ei=cscUTM7rNqm2zASJ2aHcCg&cd=1&hl=en#v=onepage&q=life%20magazine%201946%20bedlam&f=false>
- Possible Selections from *The Women They Could Not Silence* TBD

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### Week 10 (Nov 7 – Nov 9)

#### Session 19 – 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.

#### Session 20 – Cancer

Readings:

- Selections from *The Emperor of All Maladies*
- Gideon Lewis-Kraus *When Dying Patients Want Unproven Drugs*

### Week 11 (Nov 14 – Nov 16)

#### Session 21 – Opioid Epidemic

Readings:

- Selections from *Empire of Pain*

**Thought Questions:** How do we reconcile the good that pharmaceuticals can do, with the damage?

#### Session 22 – Weight

Readings:

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

### Week 12 (Nov 21) THANKSGIVING BREAK

#### Session 23 – PEER REVIEW FOR PROJECT – Possible Asynchronous Class Activity **ROUGH DRAFT OF PROJECT DUE 12PM NOV 21<sup>st</sup>**

### Week 13 (Nov 28 – Nov 30)

#### Session 24 – 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*.

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- Jacob Appel, *A Duty to Kill? A Duty to Die? Rethinking the Euthanasia Controversy of 1906*

### **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>
- Michael Hobbes *AIDS Hit the United States Harder Than Other Developed Countries: Why?*

### **Week 14 (Dec 5 – Dec 7)**

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

Readings:

- TBD

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

### **WATCHING PHILADELPHIA IN CLASS**

**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.

### **Week 15 (Dec 12) FINAL PROJECT DUE DEC 15**

#### **Session 28 – Finishing PHILADELPHIA**

#### **Movie Discussion Day**

### **Friday December 15<sup>th</sup> FINAL PROJECTS DUE 12PM**



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### 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>

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### **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>