

Course Syllabus

HY 393 History of Epidemics

Drs Tom Huddle & Andre Millard

This is an interdisciplinary class taught by faculty from the History Department and the School of Medicine. It is a history of our understanding of the science behind infectious diseases, and mankind's attempts to contain them, as well as providing the context for their impact on society. The course seeks an understanding of how global pandemics have both changed the course of history and illuminated the historical times and places in which they appeared.

TEXTS:

Charles E Rosenberg, [The Cholera Years](#)

- **Publisher:** Univ of Chicago Press, 1987
- **ISBN-13:**978-0-226-72677-9

- **Daniel Defoe**  (https://www.amazon.com/Daniel-Defoe/e/B00KQ4MWFQ/ref=dp_byline_cont_book_1), [A Journal of the Plague Year: Annotated edition](#)
- **Publisher:**Auroch Press (March 19, 2020)
- **ISBN-13:**978-1989862148

Paul Slack, [Plague: A Very Short Introduction](#)

Publisher: Oxford University Press, 2012

ISBN-13: 978-0199589548

John M Barry, [The Great Influenza](#)

Publisher: Penguin, 2005

- **ISBN-13** : 978-0143036494

Week 1 Jan 19 Intro

Why Epidemics?

A Introduction: Why epidemics; What's in a name?

“A disease does not exist as a phenomenon until we agree it does—until it is named.” (Charles Rosenberg)

B Humoral Medicine/Religious Medicine

Week 2 Jan 26 How Epidemics Change History—Justinian Plague

A Contemporary Ideas about Disease

B The Byzantine Empire and the Justinian "Plague."

Week 3 Feb 2 The Black Death

A The spread of infection, pattern of contagion, death rates.

B The Public Health response

Week 4 Feb 9 Defoe: Journal of a plague year

A Case study of a city (London) during an epidemic, who was Defoe and why did he write this book?

B London during the Restoration: “A delightful thing it is to see the town full of people again.” S Pepys

Week 5 Feb 16 How Epidemics Change History—Conquest of the Americas

A The consequences of the Columbian Exchange

B The Spanish in Central and South America: End of Aztec & Inca empires

Week 6 Feb 23

Mid term exam

Presentations of Projects

Week 7 Mar 2 Industrial Revolution

A How industrialization/urbanization encouraged disease

B Mortality and morality: disease and poverty in 1832 cholera outbreak

Scientific understanding of cholera contrasted with contemporary medical views.

Week 8 Mar 9 Case study of the US during the "Cholera Years"

A 1849 Cholera epidemic

B 1866 Cholera epidemic

Week 9 Mar 16 Wellness Day

Mar 18 Class Presentation of Research Project

Week 10 Mar 23 Science and Medicine: Beginnings

A Who were the physicians and what did they know?

B John Snow: The Ghost Map

B The Beginnings of Germ Theory

Week 11 Mar 30 Science and Medicine: Towards Modern Medicine

A The rise of the medical profession, from country doctor to research scientist.

B Medical research & its institutions: Johns Hopkins et al.

New scientific knowledge /new techniques

Week 12 Apr 6 Influenza Pandemic

A Historical context—The "Spanish flu" and America at war.

B Influenza in Birmingham: Primary Source documents

The public health response

Week 13 Apr 13 Explaining Epidemics

A From "God's judgement" (Defoe) to anti-semitism: "Jews, lice, typhus" (1941 Nazi poster)

B AIDS: A study in discrimination

WEEK 14 Apr 20

Class Presentations of Student Projects

April 27 Final Exam

April 29 Papers Due

GRADE ASSIGNMENT

MIDTERM 20%

FINAL 30%

PROJECT/PAPER 40% (includes presentations)

PARTICIPATION 10%

