

RHODES COLLEGE  
FALL 2012  
**DISEASE AND EPIDEMICS IN HISTORY**  
HIST 105-02

Prof. Tait Keller  
[kellert@rhodes.edu](mailto:kellert@rhodes.edu)  
Office: Buckman Hall 211  
Office Hours: TR 12:30-2:30 and by appointment

Class Days: MWF 8:00 – 8:50  
Classroom: Buckman Hall 200

### **Course Description**

This course analyzes the influence of infectious disease on human history. Epidemics are causative (often caustic) agents in shaping society. Society's responses to disease reveal cultural values, social processes, political agendas, and evolving medical practices. Biological invasions of the body politic carry significant consequences on both a local and global scale. We will explore the historical interactions between humans and parasites, bugs, bacteria and viruses by focusing on a select group of diseases and epidemics, including the bubonic plague, small pox, cholera, influenza, and HIV/AIDS.

### **Course Objectives**

The learning objectives for the course are three-fold:

- As a writing-intensive course, the first objective is developing skill in expressing yourself in orally or in writing, with a focus on improving your written communication.
- The second objective is learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view, with a focus on sharpening higher level thinking skills.
- Learning about epidemiology fulfills the third objective, which is gaining factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, trend) and building your knowledge base.

### **Course Requirements and Grading**

Grades in the course will be based on several components. The first is spirited participation in the discussions, as well as leading one of them. The second component will be two analytical papers. The third will be two short news briefs. The last component is a research paper on the history of any disease or epidemic that may interest you.

#### *I. Participation*

The success of the course depends on your active participation, which also happens to make up a big part of your grade. I expect you to come to class prepared, having done the assigned reading and eager to participate in the discussion. Constructive and informed contributions to discussion are essential for satisfactory performance in this course. Unexcused absences will negatively impact your final grade. To test your mastery of the course material, I may give unannounced quizzes.

You will also be responsible for leading one of the Friday discussions. I ask that you meet with me at some point during the week before the Friday discussion to go over your ideas and the questions you intend to ask.

#### *II. Analytical Papers*

The two analytical papers will be based solely on the assigned readings and themes raised in class; no outside research is necessary. I will provide the topics and questions for each paper. The papers will be 1200 words in length, double spaced, and use Chicago-style citations as outlined in Turabian's *A Manual for Writers*. In no event should your essay be longer than 1300 words; I look for cogency, not length. You must have a title page with a creative and intriguing title, your name, and word count.

A writing style guide is available on Moodle to assist you. Be sure to follow the style guide and make note of typical mistakes undergraduates often make in their papers. Your grade will suffer if you commit these mistakes. No, this is not an English course, but you cannot do good history without writing competently.

As part of our focus on writing, the papers will go through a blind peer review. I will pair you up for each paper. You will submit to me the draft with your reader's comments together with your revised version. Your grade will be based on your final version, along with the comments you made as a reader. If you do not submit the paper to your reader, you will receive an 'F' on the paper. Likewise, you do not fulfill your responsibility as a reader you will fail the assignment. The due dates for the two papers are **September 14** and **October 12**.

### III. News Brief

To stay informed of current events, you will submit two analytical news briefs. I will assign the weeks for which you will write the briefs. You will find a current article, editorial, or interview from a respectable newspaper, magazine, or website that addresses that particular week's topic in some substantial way. You can choose an article from the RSS newsfeed on our Moodle course site. You will then write an analysis of your selected article and discuss how it relates to our course. Each brief is to be 400-500 typed words in length and is due at the start of class on the assigned day.

### IV. Research Paper

You will write a concise, literate, well-organized research paper on any historical aspect of any disease or epidemic that interests you. The papers will be 2500-3000 words in length, double-spaced, and use Chicago-style citations as outlined in Turabian's *A Manual for Writers*. If you are unsure of a topic, come talk to me and check out *The Cambridge World History of Human Disease*, which will be on reserve in the library. I ask that you meet with me by the beginning of October to discuss your ideas. I also ask that you submit a bibliography and 250-word abstract by **November 5**. The bibliography should contain at least ten scholarly sources. You will also give a fifteen-minute presentation on your research at the end of the semester.

The paper will be due **December 8**.

The final grade for the class will be established as follows:

Grading Scale:

Participation	25%	A Outstanding
Analytical Papers	30%	B Above Average/Very Good
News Briefs	10%	C Average/Good/Satisfactory
Research Abstract	5%	D Below Average/Poor
Research Presentation	10%	F Fail
Research Paper	20%	

A (93-100); A- (90-92); B+ (87-89); B (83-86); B- (80-82); C+ (77-79); C (73-76); C- (70-72) and so on. Any number below 60 will be marked as an F

**\*NOTE:** All assignments must be completed to pass the course. Failure to complete any of the course requirements by **December 8** may result in a final course grade of F.

### Required Texts (in order texts are read)

Mark Harrison, *Disease and the Modern World*

David Herlihy, *The Black Death and the Transformation of the West*

Steven Johnson, *The Ghost Map*

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*

James Webb Jr., *Humanity's Burden*

Gina Kolata, *Flu*

All of these titles are on sale at the bookstore and on reserve in the library. You can also find all these books used (read: much, much cheaper) at online bookstores.

## **Course Policies – read these all carefully**

**Special Needs and Accommodations:** I am strongly committed to accommodating students with disabilities, and ask your cooperation in making sure that I am aware of any such accommodation you might need. All accommodation requests are the responsibility of the student. For more information, please contact Student Disability Services (SDS) to alert them of any needs you may have.

**Food, Drink, Tobacco:** Drink is permitted in my classroom, but food and tobacco products of all kinds are prohibited.

**Moodle:** All students in the class are automatically registered for this course on Moodle. When you log on to Moodle and access the site for this course, you will find all course materials, including this syllabus, readings, and guidelines for assignments.

**Email:** All email correspondence will be sent to your Rhodes email account. It is your responsibility to check this account regularly. Emails are not text messages. When writing me, I expect your emails to be professional.

**Cell phones, Blackberries, ipods, and other such devices:** Turn them off!

**Sleeping in class is not permitted.** Those who fall asleep will be subject to a rude awakening.

**Honor Code:** I believe in the College's standards of academic honesty, and I enforce them vigorously and to the letter. Be aware of those standards, and observe them. Plagiarism and cheating are easy to detect; so are papers pulled off the internet. If I suspect that you have cheated or plagiarized another's work, I will discuss this matter with you. If I am not satisfied, I will report your case to the Honor Council for due process. I always recommend failure for the course when I submit a file. The bottom line is this: do your own work. You are spending your time and money to be here and learn. Don't waste either by plagiarizing or cheating.

### **A Word on Grading:**

Papers will be evaluated on four main criteria: thesis, organization, evidence, and style. In general, a paper that does a very good job in each category is a 'B'. A paper that almost does is a 'B-', and a paper that performs well in each category and goes beyond in one category is a 'B+'. A paper that is satisfactory but weak in one or two categories is a 'C'. A 'D' paper is weak in three or more categories, or omits one criterion completely. Papers without notes crediting sources and location quotations, paraphrases, and allusions will receive, at best, a grade of 'D'. An 'A' range paper performs outstandingly well in each category, and achieves something extraordinary in two or more categories.

Remember that a grade does not reflect process (it does not measure whether you worked hard) and it certainly does not reflect a value judgment about you as a person. A grade constitutes an evaluation of the quality and analytical rigor of the thesis, organization, evidence, and style of a single piece of work.

I will be delighted to discuss your papers with you. Be advised however that grades, once assigned, are not subject to change. I also will not communicate grades over email or the telephone. The most important part of the grading process is not the grade, but the comments you will find on your papers when you pick them up.

I do not give "I" (incomplete) grades. Late work, except in documented cases of bereavement, major injury, or catastrophic illness, will suffer a substantial and progressive reduction in grade. Therefore, please plan ahead and do your work on time.

**SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS**  
(subject to change)

Week/Theme	Day	Date	Lectures, Discussions, Readings, and Papers
WEEK 1: <i>Introductions</i>	Wed	Aug 22	Welcome!
	Fri	Aug 24	Approaching Disease in History <input type="checkbox"/> Charles Rosenberg “Introduction,” in <i>Framing Disease</i> , ed. C.E. Rosenberg and Janet Golden, pp. xiii-xxvi <input type="checkbox"/> Harrison, Introduction
WEEK 2: <i>Scourges of the Ancient World</i>	Mon	Aug 27	The Disease Pool
	Wed	Aug 29	Pestilence in the Age of Pericles <input type="checkbox"/> Harrison, ch.1, pp. 15-26
	Fri	Aug 31	The Loathing of Lepers <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Leviticus chapters 13-15</a> <input type="checkbox"/> Michael Dols, “The Leper in Medieval Islamic Society,” <i>Speculum</i> 58 (1983): 891-916
WEEK 3: <i>Medieval Maladies</i>	Mon	Sept 3	<b>No Class: Labor Day</b>
	Wed	Sept 5	Europe’s Black Death <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">The Black Death and the Jews</a> <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Report on the cause of the Plague</a> <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">The Florentine Chronicle</a>
	Fri	Sept 7	Disease and Deadlocks <input type="checkbox"/> Herlihy (all)
	Mon	Sept 10	Disease and Order *Writing discussion: style guide <input type="checkbox"/> Harrison, ch.2, pp. 40-50; ch.3; ch.6, pp. 128-133
WEEK 4: <i>The Plague and Modernity</i>	Wed	Sept 12	The Sick and the State <input type="checkbox"/> Carol Benedict “Policing the Sick,” <i>Late Imperial China</i> 14 (1993): 60-77
	Fri	Sept 14	Plague and Science <input type="checkbox"/> Video: <i>Secrets of the Dead: Mystery of the Black Death</i> (in-class)

**First analytical paper – due 11 AM Friday, September 14**

Topic – Religion and Science

Using material from weeks 1-4, analyze how religion and science shaped perceptions of disease. In what ways did religion and science differ in their approach to disease? Were there similarities? To what extent did science replace religion for understanding disease during the medieval and early modern era? Is this progress? You must use at least two sources in your paper.

Be sure to open by taking a position, and mention in passing the sub-topics you are going to address. Then deal with those sub-topics paragraph by paragraph, and end with a conclusion that sums up your argument. The topics are analytical; your paper must also be analytical. If you find yourself writing a narrative, you are probably doing something wrong.

WEEK 5: <i>The Pox of Conquest</i>	Mon	Sept 17	Transoceanic Exchanges *Writing discussion: making revisions <input type="checkbox"/> Harrison, ch.4
	Wed	Sept 19	Colonies and Health <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">The Journey of Alvar Nuñez Cabeza De Vaca</a> <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Brief Relation of the Gods and Rites of Heathenism</a> <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">The Martian Chronicles</a>
	Fri	Sept 21	Microbes and the Military <input type="checkbox"/> Elizabeth Fenn, <i>Pox Americana</i> , selections
WEEK 6: <i>Tropical Maladies</i>	Mon	Sept 24	Yellow Jack and Geopolitics
	Wed	Sept 26	Summer Fevers <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Kezia DePelchin's Diary</a>
	Fri	Sept 28	Science and State Intervention <input type="checkbox"/> Margaret Humphreys, <i>Yellow Fever and the South</i> , ch.2 <input type="checkbox"/> Marcos Cueto, "Sanitation from Above," <i>The Hispanic American Historical Review</i> 22 (1992): 1-22
WEEK 7: <i>Cities and Cholera</i>	Mon	Oct 1	The Miasma Paradigm <input type="checkbox"/> Harrison, ch.5, pp. 97-117 <input type="checkbox"/> Edwin Chadwick, <a href="#">Report on Sanitary Conditions</a> <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Observations on the filth of the Thames</a>
	Wed	Oct 3	Pathogens and Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Johnson, selections
	Fri	Oct 5	<b>Class Cancelled</b>
WEEK 8: <i>Majorities and Minorities</i>	Mon	Oct 8	Rights of the Infected <input type="checkbox"/> Mill
	Wed	Oct 10	Protecting the Healthy <input type="checkbox"/> Nadja Durbach "They Might as Well Brand Us," <i>Social History of Medicine</i> 13 (2000): 45-62 <input type="checkbox"/> Alan Kraut, <i>Silent Travelers</i> , selections
	Fri	Oct 12	Contagions and Migrations <input type="checkbox"/> Film: <i>Contagion</i> (in class)

**Second analytical paper – 11 AM Friday, October 12** (pick one and use at least two sources)

Topic #1 – Contagions and Class

Using material from weeks 5-8, analyze the relationship between social class and disease. In what ways does class shape how people view a disease like cholera or tuberculosis? Has this changed over time? In other words, what is the relationship between disease and discrimination?

Topic #2 – Individuals and the State

Using material from weeks 5-8, analyze the role of the state in protecting its citizens from disease. To what extent did disease increase the power of the state? Did the threat of disease justify the state's infringement on individual liberty?

**Fall Recess Oct 13-16**

WEEK 9: <i>Epidemics and Empires</i>	Wed	Oct 17	The Imperial and the Malarial *Writing discussion: the research paper <input type="checkbox"/> Film: <a href="#">Killer Number One</a> (in class)
	Fri	Oct 19	Germans and Global Health <input type="checkbox"/> Webb, selections
WEEK 10: <i>Soldiers, Sex, and Syphilis</i>	Mon	Oct 22	Women and War <input type="checkbox"/> Susan Grayzel, <i>Women's Identities at War</i> , selections <input type="checkbox"/> Harrison, ch.7
	Wed	Oct 24	Men and Morality <input type="checkbox"/> Allan Brandt, <i>No Magic Bullet</i> , ch.3 <input type="checkbox"/> Michelle K. Rhoades, "Renegotiating French Masculinity," <i>French Historical Studies</i> 29 (2006): 293-327
	Fri	Oct 26	Troubled Teens in Suburbia <input type="checkbox"/> Film: <i>The Lost Children of Rockdale County</i>
WEEK 11: <i>Influenza 1918</i>	Mon	Oct 29	Beginnings
	Wed	Oct 31	Pandemic Proportions <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">The Great Pandemic</a> <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">News articles</a>
	Fri	Nov 3	The Once and Future Flu <input type="checkbox"/> Kolata, selections

► **Research abstract (250 words) and bibliography due in class Monday, November 5**

Your research abstract should give the reader an overview of your topic. What do you intend to research? What is your initial hypothesis and argument? Your thesis will likely change during the course of your research, but you should still have a preliminary argument in mind. What have you found so far and what sort of sources are you using? I expect you to give serious thought to this assignment. A research abstract is not something to throw together at the last minute.

Your bibliography must contain at least ten (10) academic sources. Simply listing a bunch of websites will not suffice. You will actually need to go to the library and examine books and journals. Where possible, I would like for you to include as many primary sources as you can.

WEEK 12: <i>Poverty and Epidemiology</i>	Mon	Nov 5	Bodies, Blood, and Disease <input type="checkbox"/> Watch <a href="#">The Age of AIDS</a> (in class)
	Wed	Nov 7	Sex, Gender, Sickness <input type="checkbox"/> Watch <a href="#">The Age of AIDS</a> (in class)
	Fri	Nov 9	Race and Healthcare <input type="checkbox"/> Keith Wailoo, <i>Dying in the City of Blues</i> , selections
WEEK 13: <i>The Age of AIDS</i>	Mon	Nov 12	AIDS and Affluence <input type="checkbox"/> Watch <a href="#">The Age of AIDS</a> (in class)
	Wed	Nov 14	HIV in the Developing World <input type="checkbox"/> Watch <a href="#">The Age of AIDS</a> (in class)
	Fri	Nov 16	A Modern Plague? <input type="checkbox"/> Paul Farmer, <i>Infections and Inequalities</i> , selections

WEEK 14:	Mon	Nov 19	A Modern Plague?
<i>Plagues and</i>	Wed	Nov 23	Thanksgiving Break
<i>People</i>	Fri	Nov 25	Thanksgiving Break
WEEK 15:	Mon	Nov 26	Research Presentations
<i>Research</i>	Wed	Nov 28	Research Presentations
<i>Presentations</i>	Fri	Dec 30	Research Presentations
WEEK 16:	Mon	Dec 3	Research Presentations
<i>Research</i>	Wed	Dec 5	Research Presentations
<i>Presentations</i>			

**Research Paper**  
**Saturday, December 8**  
**5:30 PM**