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## HIST 105-01, Disease and Epidemics in History, Spring 2009

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RHODES COLLEGE  
SPRING 2009  
**DISEASE AND EPIDEMICS IN HISTORY**  
HIST 105-01

Prof. Tait Keller  
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Office: Clough Hall 317  
Office Hours: Wednesday 1-2:30,  
Thursday 1-2:30, and by appointment

Class Days: MWF 9 AM

Classroom: Rhodes Tower 410

### **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 interactions between humans and parasites, bugs, bacteria and viruses by focusing on a select group of diseases and epidemics. Our case studies will include the bubonic plague, small pox, tropical diseases, cholera, influenza, syphilis, and HIV/AIDS.

### **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 three analytical papers to the weekly readings. The last component is a research paper on any disease or epidemic that may interest you.

#### *I. Attendance and Participation*

The success of the course depends on your active participation, which also happens to make up a big part of your grade. For this reason, your absence will be considered as noteworthy as mine. Constructive and informed contributions to discussion are essential for satisfactory performance in this course. I expect you to come to class prepared, having done the assigned reading and eager to participate in the discussion. Learning how to talk enthusiastically and intelligently about significant subjects is actually one of the most important skills you can learn in college, and this course is a great place to work on that skill. This is a skill necessary for success in college, and for whatever you decide to do after graduation. So not participating is not an option, and unexcused absences will negatively impact your final grade.

To encourage you to read closely the material and prepare adequately for class, I will periodically give unannounced short quizzes on the readings and lectures.

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. I will also designate someone to take notes during our discussions and then submit those notes to me.

#### *II. Analytical Papers*

The three analytical papers will be based solely on the required readings and themes raised in class; no outside research is necessary. I will provide the topics and questions for each paper. The papers are to be 3-4 pages (Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, 1 inch margins), double spaced, and use Chicago-style citations as outlined in Turabian's *A Manual for Writers*. In no event should your paper be more than 4 pages; I look for cogency not length.

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, each paper will go through a peer review. I will pair you up for each paper. It will be your responsibility to submit the paper to your reader well ahead to the deadline. At the bare minimum you should give your reader 72 hours to review your paper. And as a reader, you must return the paper to its author in time for her or him to make the revisions. You will then 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 three papers are as follows: **Wednesday, February 4; Wednesday, February 18; Wednesday, March 11.**

### III. Research Paper

You will write a concise, literate, well-organized 7-8 page research paper on any aspect of any disease or epidemic that interests you. Additional guidelines for the paper will be posted on Moodle. 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 submit an abstract and bibliography to me on **Monday, March 30**. The bibliography should contain at least ten sources, including at least three primary sources. As part of this assignment, you will give a ten minute presentation on your research at the end of the semester. The paper will be due **Friday, May 1 at the beginning of class.**

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

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Attendance and Participation | 25% |
| Analytical Papers            | 45% |
| Research Paper               | 30% |

Grading Scale:

|   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| A | Outstanding             |
| B | Above Average/Very Good |
| C | Average/Good            |
| D | Below Average/Poor      |
| F | Fail                    |

**\*NOTE:** All assignments must be completed to pass the course. Failure to complete any of the course requirements by **Friday, May 1** will result in a final course grade of F.

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

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

Molly Caldwell Crosby, *The American Plague: The Untold Story of Yellow Fever, the Epidemic that Shaped Our History*

Steven Johnson, *The Ghost Map: The Story of London's most Terrifying Epidemic and how it Changed Cities, Science, and the Modern World*

Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire*

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, including addall.com, alibris.com, amazon.com, and half.com. You are welcome to read these books in any edition, condition, or language.

## **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:** Turn them off! If I see you using your phone in class, I will confiscate it.

**Laptops:** The use of laptop computers or other screen-based devices is not permitted during lectures or discussions. If you have a medical reason for needing to use a laptop or other screen-based device, please let me know.

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

**Grades:** I do not give “I” (incomplete) grades. Late papers, except in documented cases of bereavement or catastrophic illness, will suffer a substantial reduction in grade. Therefore, please plan ahead and do your work on time. 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.

**Honor Code:** I believe in the College’s standards of academic honesty, and I do my best to 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.

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

|  |          |   |
|--|----------|---|
| <i>Introductions</i>   | W Jan 14 | Welcome!  |
|  | F Jan 16 | Approaching Disease in History<br><input type="checkbox"/> Charles Rosenberg "Introduction," in <i>Framing Disease</i> , ed. C.E. Rosenberg and Janet Golden, pp. xiii-xxvi   |
| <i>Parasites and Civilization</i>  | M Jan 19 | <b>No class: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day</b>  |
|  | W Jan 21 | The Evolution of Humans and Microbes<br><input type="checkbox"/> William McNeill, <i>Plagues and People</i> , chapter II  |
|  | F Jan 23 | The Disease Pool<br><input type="checkbox"/> William McNeill, <i>Plagues and People</i> , chapter III   |
| <i>Scourges of the Ancient World</i>   | M Jan 26 | The Lepers of Leviticus<br><input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Leviticus chapters 13-15</a>  |
|  | W Jan 28 | Pestilence in Classical Antiquity<br><input type="checkbox"/> Thucydides, <i>History of the Peloponnesian War</i><br><input type="checkbox"/> Procopius, <i>History of the Wars</i>   |
|  | F Jan 30 | <b>Class cancelled with my apologies</b>  |
|  |          |   |
| <p><b>Paper topic – due Feb. 4</b> – reading primary sources against the grain<br/>Every source, whether historical or from our own day, is written from a particular perspective. Even eyewitnesses see their own truth, and the historian, as a critical reader, must be alert to the bias of eyewitnesses. Choose one of the above primary sources and use its materials to construct, as carefully and as sympathetically as possible, a <i>different</i> story, different because from the perspective of a figure <i>not</i> of your source itself, but of someone he or she discusses. Some possibilities include:<br/>-a sick person (with leprosy or the plague)<br/>-a physician<br/>-a healthy citizen<br/>The best accounts will be those that pay closest attention to the text of the actual document, but by reading between the lines as well as using the information it conveys, constructing a different perspective.</p> |          |   |
| <i>The Great Mortality</i>   | M Feb 2  | Traveling Rats on the Silk Road<br>*Writing discussion: style guide   |
|  | W Feb 4  | Europe's Black Death<br>Film: <i>The Seventh Seal</i> (in-class)  |
|  | F Feb 6  | Disease and Deadlocks<br><input type="checkbox"/> Herlihy   |
| <i>The Plague and Modernity</i>  | M Feb 9  | The Return of Yersinia Pestis?<br><input type="checkbox"/> Myron Echenberg "Pestis Redux," <i>Journal of World History</i> 13 (2002): 429-449   |
|  | W Feb 11 | Plague and Science<br>Video: <i>Secrets of the Dead: Mystery of the Black Death</i> (in-class)  |
|  | F Feb 13 | The Sick and the State<br><input type="checkbox"/> Carol Benedict "Policing the Sick," <i>Late Imperial China</i> 14 (1993): 60-77<br><input type="checkbox"/> Ira Klein, "Plague, Policy and Popular Unrest in British India," <i>Modern Asian Studies</i> 22 (1988): <b>sections III and IV, 739-755 only</b> |

**Paper topic – due Feb. 18** – reading secondary sources against the grain

Imagine that you survived one of the plague pandemics. You decide to record your thoughts for posterity, commenting on the disease and its effect on society, culture, and the state. You argue (contrary to Herlihy and others) that the plague was not so beneficial, that it did not bring about progress to that great of a degree. Basing your account largely on the plague readings, but on anything else you may have learned from this course, what arguments would you make?

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| <i>The Pox of Conquest</i> | M Feb 16 | Transoceanic Exchanges<br>*Writing discussion: making revisions<br><input type="checkbox"/> Alfred Crosby, “Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation in America,” <i>The William and Mary Quarterly</i> 33 (1976): 289-299<br><input type="checkbox"/> David Arnold, “The Indian Ocean as a Disease Zone, 1500-1950,” <i>South Asia</i> 14 (1991): 1-21 |
|                            | W Feb 18 | Calculating Calamity  |
|                            | F Feb 20 | Germs and War<br><input type="checkbox"/> Elizabeth Fenn, “Biological Warfare in Eighteenth-Century North America: Beyond Jeffery Amherst,” <i>Journal of American History</i> , 86 (2000): 1552-1580   |
| <i>Cities and Cholera</i>  | M Feb 23 | Disease and Social Darwinism<br><input type="checkbox"/> Film: <i>The Painted Veil</i> (in-class)   |
|                            | W Feb 25 | The Struggle against Filth<br><input type="checkbox"/> Johnson  |
|                            | F Feb 27 | <b>Class cancelled with my apologies</b><br>You would be wise to begin reading Crosby   |
| <i>Tropical Maladies</i>   | M Mar 2  | Yellow Jack and Geopolitics   |
|                            | W Mar 4  | Fever in Memphis<br>Possible city tour/guest speaker  |
|                            | F Mar 6  | Sanitation from Above<br><input type="checkbox"/> Crosby  |

**Paper topic– due Mar 11** – comparative analysis

London and Memphis both suffered disease outbreaks in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that were devastating for many (but not all) of their citizens. Using Crosby and Johnson, compare the experiences of the two cities. You may want to analyze the impact disease had on social/racial relationships; did disease heal the divides or exacerbate them? You could chose to discuss the changes in urban infrastructure; did these disasters enable progress? Or you could choose a character from each book (such as John Snow and Walter Reed) and discuss what they tell us about attitudes toward disease and medical practices.

|                                  |          |   |
|----------------------------------|----------|---|
| <i>Contagions and Migrations</i> | M Mar 9  | Protecting the Healthy?<br><input type="checkbox"/> Nadja Durbach “They Might as Well Brand Us,” <i>Social History of Medicine</i> 13 (2000): 45-62 |
|                                  | W Mar 11 | The Wretched Refuse   |
|                                  | F Mar 13 | Nationalism and Nativism<br><input type="checkbox"/> Alan M. Kraut, <i>Silent Travelers</i> , chapters 3, 6, and 10                                 |

**March 16-20 Spring Break!**

|                                     |          |   |
|-------------------------------------|----------|---|
| <i>Epidemics and Empire</i>         | M Mar 23 | The Imperial and the Malarial<br>*Writing discussion: the research paper  |
|                                     | W Mar 25 | Regulating the World<br>☐ Levine, chapters 2 and 3  |
|                                     | F Mar 27 | Race, Gender and Germs<br>☐ Levine, select chapters   |
| <i>Soldiers, Sex and Syphilis</i>   | M Mar 30 | <b>Research abstract due</b><br>Men, Women, and War   |
|                                     | W Apr 1  | Policing Prostitutes<br>☐ Levine, chapter 6   |
|                                     | F Apr 3  | The Moral Battlefield<br>☐ Lutz D. H. Sauerteig, "Sex, Medicine and Morality during the First World War," in <i>War, Medicine and Modernity</i> , ed. Roger Cooter, Mark Harrison and Steve Sturdy, pp. 167-181 |
|                                     |          | ☐ Michelle K. Rhoades, "Renegotiating French Masculinity," <i>French Historical Studies</i> 29 (2006): 293-327  |
| <i>Influenza 1918</i>               | M Apr 6  | Beginnings  |
|                                     | W Apr 8  | Pandemic Proportions<br>☐ <a href="#">The Great Pandemic</a> sections: "Life in 1918," "The Pandemic," "Your State," and "Documents & Media."   |
|                                     | F Apr 10 | <b>Easter Break</b>   |
| <i>The Politics of Epidemiology</i> | M Apr 13 | The Arrival of AIDS<br>☐ Paul Farmer and Arthur Kleinman, "AIDS as Human Suffering," <i>Daedalus</i> 118 (1989): 135-160  |
|                                     | W Apr 15 | Pathogens and Politics<br>Watch <a href="#">The Age of AIDS</a> (in class)  |
|                                     | F Apr 17 | Persistent Plagues<br>☐ Paul Farmer, <i>Infections and Inequalities</i> , chapter 10  |
| <i>Research Presentations</i>       | M Apr 20 |   |
|                                     | W Apr 22 | <b>Presentations – schedule to be posted</b>  |
|                                     | F Apr 24 |   |
| <i>Research Presentations</i>       | M Apr 27 | <b>Presentations – schedule to be posted</b>  |
|                                     | W Apr 29 | <b>Presentations – schedule to be posted</b>  |
|                                     | F May 1  | <b>Research Paper due at the start of class</b>   |