

History 295.02
The Social History of Disease and Public Health in Europe
Tuesdays, 10-11:50, Thursdays 10-10:50
ARH 120

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:30-3:30; Fridays, 9-10:45; also by appointment.

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Course Webpage: <https://pioneerweb.grinnell.edu>

(Log in and click on “S08 SPTP:Disease/Pub Hlth/Eu His SEC02”)

Course Overview:

This course examines how diseases helped shape European history. As disease microbes exploited everyday life as well as the chaos of war, famine, and poverty, they did more than determine who lived and died. Diseases stimulated the creation of new technologies and institutions and shaped cultural values and beliefs. In turn, cultural values and beliefs shaped the way humans experienced disease. These disease-human interactions changed over time, as people continually modified their societies, environments, and behavior and interacted in new ways with diseases, plants, and animals. This course will examine this process in a series of case studies from the Black Death to HIV/AIDS.

The lectures, discussions, and readings for this course will focus on a number of themes:

- 1) How the different characteristics and cultures of different diseases depend on their origin and transmission, geographic and demographic distribution, symptoms, complications, morbidity and mortality rates, and how these characteristics changed over time.
- 2) Competing theories regarding the causation and treatment of disease.
- 3) The relationship between disease and the development of political and social institutions.
- 4) The prevailing ideas of class and race and how they intersected with ideas surrounding disease at various times and places in European history.
- 5) The relationship between disease and war.

Required Reading:

Texts available at the bookstore:

Mark Harrison, *Disease and the Modern World, 1500 to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004).

Terrance Ranger and Paul Slack, eds., *Epidemics and Ideas: Essays on the Historical Perception of Pestilence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

For each class meeting you will also be responsible for reading a selection of articles, primary sources, and/or chapters from larger works. The assignments for each class are listed on the detailed reading schedules handed out periodically throughout the semester. Class participation is essential in this course. The questions on the syllabus will help you analyze each set of readings. Be prepared to discuss the readings in class either in small groups or in whole-class discussions.

Course Requirements and Policies:

Class Discussion: You **must** read the assigned primary sources, secondary sources, and textbook passages before coming to class and participate actively in class discussions. Your participation grade is primarily based on your willingness to engage in class discussion in a constructive and consistent manner.

Attendance: You cannot participate in class discussion if you do not attend class! Class meetings are mandatory. You may miss two meetings for any reason (I do not need to know the reason). Any further failure to attend will have a negative impact on your participation grade unless this absence occurs due to a medical condition or a family emergency.

Extensions and Late Assignments: If you turn in an assignment late, your grade will drop by a third of a letter grade (for example from a 'B' to a 'B-') for every 24-hour period for which it is late. You must submit both a hard and electronic copy of your late work.

Accommodations: If you have specific physical, psychiatric or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Dean for Student Academic Support and Advising, Joyce Stern, who is located on the third floor of the JRC (x3702).

Assignments and Grading:

You will receive more information about these assignments in handouts later in the course.

*Class Participation (25%)

*3 short papers (20% each): **Due 14 February, 13 March, and 1 May.**

*Take-Home Final Exam (15%): **Due 16 May at 2pm in my office, Mears 214.**

Brief Topic Schedule:

You will receive detailed reading assignments periodically throughout the semester.

22 January, Tuesday: Introduction to course

Introduction to the history of disease and health

24 January, Thursday

Why study disease? How can we study disease through the lens of history?

The Black Death and the Plague:

The Theory and Experience of Disease in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period

29 January, Tuesday

How can disease be an agent for social and political change? How did Europeans at the time try to make sense of their experiences with the Black Death?

Syphilis

31 January, Thursday

5 February, Tuesday

What is the relationship between disease and social mores? How does a sexually transmitted disease such as syphilis created new problems for Early Modern societies?

Smallpox and the Controversy Over Vaccinations

7 February, Thursday

12 February, Tuesday

How had the cultural ideas surrounding disease changed by the time of the smallpox epidemics? What obstacles did those people pushing for vaccinations have to overcome?

Disease and War, Part I: The Crimean War

14 February, Thursday - 1st Short Paper due in class.

19 February, Tuesday

What is the relationship between disease and war as understood at the time? How did Florence Nightingale agitate for reform? How was Mary Seacole's experience of the Crimean War similar or different to Nightingale's?

Cholera and the Rise of the Public Health System

21 February, Thursday

26 February, Tuesday

How did modern public health systems in cities and countries in Europe arise? What were some of the arguments both for and against public health systems in the 19th century?

Gender and Disease in the Nineteenth Century

28 February, Thursday

4 March, Tuesday

Why were women at the forefront of the campaign to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts in Britain? What were the prevailing ideas about venereal disease and its relationship to men and women? How did the regulation of prostitution in France compare with Britain's official response to prostitution?

Tuberculosis and "The Beautiful Death"

6 March, Thursday

11 March, Tuesday

How did perceptions of tuberculosis change from the late 18th century to the 1940s? Why was tuberculosis ever considered a "beautiful death"? How sanatorium treatment change over time?

13 March, Thursday

Film screening

2nd Short Paper due in class.

Spring Break: 15-30 March

Colonial Medicine and Disease

1 April, Tuesday

3 April, Thursday

How did European colonial officials view the environment they encountered in tropical colonies? How was disease control and public health a means for colonial officials to maintain control over colonized people? How did attempts to control disease also signal, for white colonial officials, societies "out of control?"

Disease and War, II: The First World War

8 April, Tuesday

*****10 April, Thursday: No class!*****

15 April, Tuesday

How did disease contribute to the environmental conditions of WWI? Conversely, how did the environmental conditions of fighting in WWI contribute to the evolution of diseases?

The Influenza Epidemic of 1918-19: Economic and Social Changes

17 April, Thursday

22 April, Tuesday

How did the influenza epidemic of 1918-19 impact European societies? What was the demographic impact of this epidemic? How was it different than previous influenza epidemics? How did the epidemic impact the war efforts of European powers?

Disease and War, III: The Second World War and the Holocaust

24 April, Thursday

29 April, Tuesday

What is the connection between civilian and military medicine? Are there different sets of ethical problems? What, if any, historical antecedents to these medical experiments have we encountered?

HIV/AIDS and European Society

1 May, Thursday – 3rd Short Paper due in class.

6 May, Tuesday

What implications did the rise of AIDS have for traditional public health systems and perspectives? How does AIDS compare and contrast to previous global pandemics discussed in this course?

Implications for the Future: Bird Flu and other Potential Pandemics in the 21st Century and Beyond

8 May, Thursday

*****Final Take-Home Exam Due Friday, 16 May At 2pm In My Office (Mears 214).*****