

**History 79-383:  
Epidemics and Public Health  
Spring 2013**

Room: BH 235A

Time: Tuesday, Thursday 9:00 – 10:20

Instructor: Caroline Jean Acker

Office hours: By appointment

Office: Baker Hall 240C

Campus phone: 412-268-6040

email: [acker@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:acker@andrew.cmu.edu)

This course employs the concept of changing ecology of disease to examine the spread and control of disease in human populations. We will look at epidemics in different times and places (primarily in the U.S.), considering their biological and other (social, economic, cultural) causes and examine human efforts to end them or limit their impact. Thus, we will examine human beings in a biological as well as social environment. The course focuses on the U.S. from the early nineteenth century to the present day. In doing so, we will examine changing ideas about the cause of disease and how best to treat or prevent it. In particular, we will assess the impact of germ theory as it has been operationalized since the late nineteenth century. An important theme of the course is the relationship of infrastructure to public health.

Texts:

Margaret Humphreys. *Yellow Fever and the South*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.

Alan M. Kraut. *Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the "Immigrant Menace."* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.

Allan Brandt. *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States since 1880*. Oxford University Press, 1987.

Warwick Anderson. *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines*. Duke University Press, 2006.

Keith Wailoo. *Dying in the City of the Blues: Sickle Cell Anemia and the Politics of Race and Health*. University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers. *A Pocket Style Manual*. 6<sup>th</sup> edition. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008.

Additional readings will be posted to Blackboard.

**POLICIES:** Class discussions form an integral part of the course; therefore, consistent and punctual attendance is essential. You are expected to have read the day's reading and understood it so that discussion can build from that understanding. Class is most rewarding for all when everyone has done the reading and has something to say about it. You are entitled to three unexcused absences over the course of the semester. These allow you to miss class for interviews, sporting events, or whatever else you choose.

Each additional unexcused absence will result in your class participation grade dropping by a third (for example, from B- to C+). Absences are excused in the case of illness or family emergencies requiring that you be with your family at a class time. Absences are excused upon presentation of a note from a health care provider.

Quality of writing is central to assignment grades. Writing commits you to a line of argument, and your writing should develop that argument logically, with clear evidentiary support. Moreover, your writing will be judged for clarity, coherence, and eloquence. Broadly speaking, the following criteria determine letter grades for assignments: D: Problems of content and organization; failure to capture the essential argument of the readings; problems of grammar and style. C: Adequate summary of relevant points from the readings; development of your own perspective on the theme of the assignment. Some problems of organization, grammar, and style. B: Excellent summary of relevant points from the readings; development of clear analytical perspective of your own; some original thinking of your own; minor problems of organization and clarity; few errors of grammar and style. A: Excellent summary and critical assessment of relevant points from the readings; original and thoughtful argument of your own from a clear analytical perspective; writing that is clear and sometimes elegant; no significant problems of content or organization; very few, very minor errors of grammar and style.

**CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM:** All students are responsible for reading and understanding Carnegie Mellon's Cheating and Plagiarism Policy, which can be located at the university's web site. Also read section 40 in Hacker & Sommers.

**ASSIGNMENTS:** Written assignments will consist of two short essays (no more than two double-spaced pages); five essays of about 1,000 words (about 4 double-spaced pages); and a 10-12 page research paper that draws on primary source research. All assignments should be posted to the Digital Dropbox in Blackboard by 5:00 pm on the due date.

**GRADING:** Course grades will be based on the following formula: short essays, 10% (5% each); 1,000-word essays, 50% (10% each); research paper, 25%; class participation (attendance and discussion, including asking questions), 15%.

#### WEEK 1: Jan. 15 and 17

Jan. 15: Introduction. Discussion of public health terms and concepts (list posted to Blackboard).

Jan. 17: Günter B. Risse, "Epidemics and History: Ecological Perspectives and Social Responses." Charles E. Rosenberg, "Disease and Social Order in America: Perceptions and Expectations." Both in *AIDS: The Burdens of History*, edited by Elizabeth Fee and Daniel M. Fox. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988. Posted to Blackboard.

**Jan. 18: Short essay due.**

#### WEEK 2: Jan. 22 and 24

Jan. 22: Humphreys, 1-44.

Jan. 24: Humphreys, 45-112.

WEEK 3: Jan. 29 and 31

Jan. 29: Humphreys, 113-82.

Jan. 31: Humphreys presentations (no reading assignment).

WEEK 4: Feb. 5 and 7

Feb. 5: Kraut, 1-49. **Humphreys essay due.**

Feb. 7: Kraut, 50-104.

WEEK 5: Feb. 12 and 14

Feb. 12: Kraut, 105-65.

Feb. 14: Kraut, 166-225.

WEEK 6: Feb. 19 and 21

Feb. 19: Kraut, 226-75.

Feb. 21: No reading; discuss research paper assignment. **Kraut essay due.**

**Feb. 22: Screening of film Danube Hospital, 6:30 pm.**

WEEK 7: Feb. 26 and 28

**By Feb. 25: Visit and take notes on the exhibit Imperfect Health at the Miller Gallery. Pay special attention to the relationship of the exhibit items to infrastructure.**

Feb. 26: Discussion of Danube Hospital and Imperfect Health.

Feb. 28: Brandt, 3-51. **Short essay on Danube Hospital and Imperfect Health due.**

WEEK 8: Mar. 5 and 7

Mar. 5: Brandt, 52-121. **Preliminary research paper topic statement and bibliography due.**

Mar. 7: Brandt, 122-160.

**Mar. 12 and 14: No class; spring break.**

WEEK 9: Mar. 19 and 21

Mar. 19: Brandt, 161-204. **Brandt essay due.**

Mar. 21: Anderson, 1-44.

WEEK 10: Mar. 26 and 28

Mar. 26: Anderson, 45-103. **Research paper topic statement and bibliography due.**

Mar. 28: Anderson, 104-129; 158-179. (Pp. 130-49 are optional.)

WEEK 11: Apr. 2 and 4

Apr. 2 Anderson, 180-234.

Apr. 4: Wailoo, 1-54. **Anderson essay due.**

WEEK 12: Apr. 9 and 11

Apr. 9: Wailoo, 55-106.

Apr. 11: Wailoo, 107-64.

**Apr. 11, 5:00 pm: Research paper outline due.**

WEEK 13: Apr. 16 and 18

Apr. 16: Wailoo, 165-96.

Apr. 18: NO CLASS

WEEK 14: Apr. 23 and 25

Apr. 23: Wailoo, 197-234.

Apr. 25: Student research presentations. **Wailoo essay due.**

WEEK 15: Apr. 30 and May 2

Apr. 30: Student research presentations.

May 2: Student research presentations.

**May 10: Research paper due.**