

HIST-469-001/669-001
Spring 2015

Professor Alan M. Kraut
Office: 143 Battelle Tompkins
Hours: MTH 4:00-5:00 pm & by appt.
(T) 885-2410; akraut@american.edu

T.A. Mr. Gavin Frome
gf0851a@american.edu

HISTORY OF MEDICINE IN THE UNITED STATES: AMERICAN SOCIETY'S RESPONSE TO EPIDEMICS

Physical diseases are biological realities -- a pathogen invades our bodies and destroys vital organs; a vital substance is missing from our diet and our energy evaporates. Still, there is often a lack of agreement in our diverse society and culture about how to define diseases, how to treat them, and how much the community may infringe upon individual rights to protect the public's health.

Sometimes diseases become epidemics. Defining aspects of an epidemic are an episodic quality, fear, and sudden widespread death. As historian Charles Rosenberg has observed, "A true epidemic is an event, not a trend. It elicits immediate and widespread response. It is highly visible and unlike some aspects of humankind's biological history, does not proceed with imperceptible effect until retrospectively "discovered by historians and demographers." There are several recent examples of epidemics, e.g. HIV-AIDS, influenza, SARS, and, most recently, Ebola. Every society responds differently to the wars of humankind and microbes even as they do to wars among nations.

This semester we will study the history of American medicine through the lens of epidemics. We will explore how throughout American history, our society and culture have responded to epidemics. In a society grounded in individual liberty and democracy, do public officials have the right to impose quarantine, require vaccination, close schools, churches, and theaters? In other words, this course treats the perennial tension between individual liberty and the public's interest in the health and well-being of the broader community. Of course how a society responds to an epidemic very much depends upon the economic and political climate at any given time as well as the state of scientific understanding of medicine.

Finally, discussions of epidemics inevitably have international implications, especially in our global age. And, if we would understand how and why the U.S. deals with epidemics as it does, we must understand how other societies deal with the delicate balance between individual and community well-being.

TEXTS:

Roy Porter	<i>Blood and Guts, A Short History of Medicine</i>
Patrice Bourdelaise	<i>Epidemics Laid Low: A History of What Happened in Rich Countries</i>
Elizabeth Fenn	<i>POX AMERICANA, The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82</i>
Charles Rosenberg	<i>The Cholera Years, The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866</i>
Alan M. Kraut	<i>Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the “Immigrant Menace”</i>
Alfred Crosby	<i>America’s Forgotten Pandemic</i>
Alan M. Kraut	<i>Goldberger’s War, The Life and Work of a Public Health Crusader</i>
David Oshinsky	<i>Polio: An American Story</i>
Abraham Verghese	<i>My Own Country, A Doctor’s Story</i>
David Quammen	<i>Ebola: The Natural and Human History of a Deadly Virus</i>

Most of the texts are on reserve at the Bender Library in addition to being available at the bookstore. There may also be several items of required reading on Blackboard. This material is not available in the bookstore and is marked with an asterisk (*).

REQUIREMENTS AND OTHER INFORMATION

A. Each student will be responsible for a midterm examination (all essays), a 25 page research paper, and a final examination. **FINAL EXAM IS MONDAY, MAY 4TH FROM 2:35 TO 5:05 PM.**

B. **Research papers.** Each student is required to write a 25 page term paper on a subject decided upon after consultation with the instructor. Three-page proposals are due on **Thursday, February 5th**. Primary sources must be used and citations in the form advised by the Chicago Manual of Style (most recent edition). Please use end notes. **PAPERS ARE DUE ON THURSDAY, APRIL 9TH.**

C. Grades:

Midterm Examination	25%
Research Paper	30%
Class participation	5%
Final Examination	40%

There will be a penalty of ½ grade per day for each day late papers are submitted.

D. Graduate Students: There will be special sections for graduate students three times during the semester. There will be three assigned readings, one for each seminar.

GROUND RULES:

A) Students are requested to come to class on time. Late arrival distracts your classmates and the instructor.

B) Cell phones must be turned off when class begins. Computers are banned from the classroom unless the student presents a request from the Office of Learning Services for accommodation of a learning disability.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

All students are responsible for having read the assigned materials on schedule. Prompt completion of assignments should maximize the amount of informed discussion.

Week of:

January 12: Introduction: What is an Epidemic?
Porter, *Blood and Guts*, pp. 1-20.
Bourdelaïs, *Epidemics Laid Low*, pp. 1-45.

January 19: **No class on Monday, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday**
On Thursday, January 22 we will discuss remainder of Porter.

January 26: "The Breath of Other People Killed Them," the Columbian Exchange
Kraut, *Silent Travelers*, pp. 1-30.
Fenn, *Pox Americana*, 1-134.

February 2: The American Revolution and the Founding Fathers
Fenn, finish the book.

Benjamin Rush, a paper on race and disease read in 1792

February 9: Cholera

Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years*, entire book
Bourdelaís, *Epidemics Laid Low*, pp. 47-66.

February 16: Epidemics in the Age of Mass Migration

Kraut, pp. 31-104
Film: "Island of Hope, Island of Tears" DVD 4864
"Forgotten Ellis Island" DVD 6028

February 23: Epidemics and Sanitation

Kraut, pp. 105-254
Bourdelaís, *Epidemics Laid Low*, pp.67-108.
Film: "Temple of Moloch" (in class)

March 2: **MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

March 9: **SPRING BREAK**

March 16: Epidemic in a World at War: Influenza

Crosby, *America's Forgotten Pandemic*

March 23: Epidemics in Dixie: Yellow Fever, Pellagra, and Syphilis

Kraut, *Goldberger's War*
Film: "A Way in the Wilderness" (in class)
Film: "Deadly Deception" (YouTube)

March 30: Polio in the Age of Vaccination

Bourdelaís, *Epidemics Laid Low*, pp. 109-127.
Oshinsky, *Polio: An American Story*
Film: "A Paralyzing Fear: The Story of Polio in America" (VHS
5520)

April 6: The Decline of Infectious Disease in American Life

Bourdelaís, pp. 128-149

April 13: AIDS

Verghese, *My Own Country, A Doctor's Story*

Film: *Sei Met Ko* (in class)

April 20: Sars and Ebola

Quammen, *Natural and Human History of a Deadly Virus*

April 27: The Future of Infectious Disease or Why We Quarantine Astronauts.

May 4: **FINAL EXAMINATION: 2:35-5:05 pm**