This course explores the history of epidemic disease through an examination of selected episodes from plagues in antiquity to the Black Death, cholera, and smallpox, to AIDS, Ebola, SARS, and influenza in our time. We will approach the problem of understanding the role of disease in human history from two different, but interrelated, perspectives: an ecological perspective, making use of a combination of environmental, biological, and cultural factors to help explain the origin and spread of epidemics, and a cultural/social history perspective, emphasizing the interaction of cultural values, religious beliefs, scientific knowledge, medical practice, economics, and politics in shaping perceptions of the nature, causes, cures, and significance of various diseases. Much of the emphasis in the course will be on the various ways in which personal experiences, scientific knowledge, and social/cultural factors have interacted in the past and interact today to produce changing explanations for epidemic disease and changing perceptions of the role of disease in human history. For practical reasons, the emphasis in this course will be on infectious disease, and not on cancer, heart disease, mental disorders, etc., although I realize that recent research sometimes blurs distinctions between these categories of disease. The format will be discussions based on assigned readings supplemented by brief, informal lectures and occasional films and videos.

This is not a course on the history of medicine as such, although we will certainly review many episodes dealing with changes in medical theory and practice, and it is not a course on epidemiology, although we will read about and discuss both contemporary and historical examples of epidemiological theory and practice. Rather it is a course that explores the role that disease has played, and still plays, in human civilization. To get at this rather complex (and huge!) set of issues one needs to understand how scientific knowledge and medical practice interact with cultural and environmental factors in terms of both shaping perceptions of the nature and causes of disease and determining preventive measures, and one also needs to know how various means of disease prevention—quarantines, travel restrictions, sanitation practices, hygiene, vaccination, etc.—have themselves become major factors in shaping historical change.

Course requirements. (1) Regular attendance, punctuality, and participation in discussions; (2) weekly response papers on course readings; (3) three formal essays, 6-8 pages each, topics to be determined. There will be some choice in essay topic; some may involve optional readings and/or films or videos. The breakdown of your grade will be as follows: 20% for attendance, participation, and response papers, 80% for the three essays.

Gene Cittadino
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ec15@nyu.edu
**Reading.** The following books have been ordered at the NYU Bookstore and are on reserve in the Bobst Library. You will find the link to the reserve books on the course Blackboard site:


There will be additional supplementary reading selections either available on Blackboard or handed out in class.

**Response papers.** You will be expected to write one response paper on the readings each week. With few exceptions, you will have a choice of bringing in a response paper on Tuesday or Thursday. Each should be one typed page (single-spacing is fine), due at the beginning of the class corresponding to the reading. These should be thoughtful reflections on the readings. Feel free to speculate, question, challenge, and probe. Your prose can be looser than for a formal essay, but something more disciplined than free association or an internet blog. I prefer a hard copy, but I accept emailed responses up to one half hour before class. Response papers must be turned in on time to receive full credit; late response papers turned in by 5 p.m. Friday will receive half credit; later than that, no credit.

**Ground rules. Attendance and etiquette.** I take attendance and expect you to attend every class. The class begins promptly at 11:00. Please respect your classmates and arrive on time; late arrivals always disrupt the atmosphere of a classroom, as do mid-class exits and re-entries. Expect to remain for the full 75 minutes. The success of this class depends upon open discussions. Feel free to speak your mind, but also be prepared to listen and respect the opinions of others. **Turn off laptops.** If you bring a laptop, please do not turn it on or use it during class time. For obvious reasons, turn off cellular phones before coming to class. **Late papers.** Papers are due on the dates designated. A paper that is not turned in on time is late, regardless of the reason. Having work due in other classes is not an acceptable excuse. Unless the paper is late due to illness or an emergency, it will be downgraded. **Documentation and plagiarism.** I will assume that all written work is your own and that you understand the basic rules for acknowledging your sources. If you don’t, please ask; I be more than happy to assist you. The following is the Gallatin School’s official statement on academic integrity:

"As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website [www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html] for a full description of the academic integrity policy."
SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

We will try to stick close to this schedule, but expect changes along the way. Readings listed immediately under each topic should be completed by the date shown. *Indicates supplementary readings on Blackboard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JAN 24</td>
<td>Introductions; global infectious disease statistics and NYC mortality</td>
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<tr>
<td>JAN 26</td>
<td>Disease in contemporary society: why do plagues happen?</td>
<td>*Wills, Yellow Fever Black Goddess, chaps. 1-3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Video: The Plague Fighters</td>
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<td>FEB 2</td>
<td>African origins</td>
<td>Webb, chaps. 1 &amp; 2</td>
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<td>FEB 7</td>
<td>Body and mind in ancient Greece</td>
<td>Hays, chap. 1; Hippocratic Writings, The Oath, The Canon, Tradition in Medicine, and The Nature of Man, pp. 67-86, 260-76</td>
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<td>FEB 9</td>
<td>Environment, ancient epidemics, and the plague of Athens</td>
<td>Hippocratic Writings, *Airs, Waters, Places, pp. 148-69; *Aphorisms, pp. 148-69, 206-16 (also look over a few of the physician’s case notes in the section on Epidemics, pp. 87-138); *Thucydides, The Plague</td>
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<td>FEB 14</td>
<td>The classical legacy: disease, therapy, and medicine in the Middle Ages leprosy and mistranslation</td>
<td>Hays, chap. 2</td>
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<td>FEB 16</td>
<td>Origins of the Black Death</td>
<td>*Boccaccio, Introduction, The Decameron; *Wills, Four Tales from the Decameron; Hays, chap. 3</td>
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<td>Video: Epidemics: Products of Progress (excerpt)</td>
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<td>FEB 21</td>
<td>Aftermath of the plague</td>
<td>Review Hays, pp. 49-61; Defoe, A Journal of the Plague Year, pp. 3-58</td>
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<td>FEB 28</td>
<td>Transatlantic exchanges: migrations of people and microbes</td>
<td>*Crosby, &quot;Conquistador y Pestilencia;&quot; Webb, chap. 3; Hays, chap. 4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Video, Invisible Armies (excerpt)</td>
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<td>FIRST ESSAY DUE</td>
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MAR 1 The ambiguous transformation of science and medicine: smallpox and yellow fever
Hays, chap. 6 *Jenner, "An Inquiry into the Causes and Effects of the Variolae Vaccinae" [note: read Hays, chap. 5, as background reading; we will focus on 6]

MAR 6 Blaming the victim: poverty, morality, and the cholera epidemics
Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years*, Intro. & Part I

MAR 8 Sanitation and disease: new insights
Rosenberg, Part II; *Dickens, "New York"

MAR 12-16 SPRING RECESS

MAR 20 The Metropolitan Board of Health and the rise of the public health movement
Rosenberg, Part III; Hays, chap. 7

MAR 22 The culture of tuberculosis; sanatoria, hygiene, and the "gospel of germs"
Hays, chap. 8; *Koch, "The Aetiology of Tuberculosis"

MAR 27 Inventing "tropical medicine": cinchona, malaria, and global public health
Webb, chaps. 4 & 5

MAR 29 Medicine and Western imperialism
Hays, chap. 9; *Sean Hsiang-Lin Lei, "Sovereignty and the Microscope"

APR 3 Influenza, 1918 — origins, effects, consequences, predictions
*Crosby, "United States Begins to Take Note" and "Spanish Influenza Seeps the Country;" *Oldstone, "Influenza Virus, the Plague that May Return"

APR 5 Premature triumph? infectious disease and medicine in the 20th century
Hays, chaps. 10 & 11; *Orwell, "How the Poor Die"

SECOND ESSAY DUE April 7 [not a class day]

APR 10 AIDS: A return to the past?

APR 12 The Congo in transition: cut hunters, colonialism, and prostitution
Pepin, chaps. 4-6

APR 17 Legacies of colonial medicine
Pepin, chaps. 7-9

APR 19 Globalization, the blood trade, and the puzzle solved
Pepin, chaps. 11-15 (chap. 10 is optional)
APR 24  Two case studies: resurgence of malaria in Africa; SARS in China
Webb, chaps. 6 & conclusion; *Hanson, "Conceptual Blindspots, Media Blindfolds: The Case of SARS and Traditional Chinese Medicine"

APR 26  Biological warfare
*Ed Regis, *The Biology of Doom* (excerpts); Preston, *The Cobra Event*
Video: *Bioterror* (excerpts)

MAY 1  Hopefully not the future: bioterrorism in New York
Preston, continue reading

MAY 3  [final class]: Brainpox! the future of epidemics
Preston, finish

MAY 10  FINAL ESSAY DUE [not a class day]