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, drugs, 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, corresponding to the three parts of the course, due March 8, April 19, and May 20. Essays will focus on course readings and discussions, topics to be determined. There will be some choice of topics in all cases. The breakdown of your grade will be as follows: 20% for attendance, participation, and response papers, 80% for the three essays. (Optional: With permission in advance, you may waive the second essay and do a final research paper in place of the third essay; details to follow later)

Gene Cittadino
1 Washington Pl., Room 412
Office hrs: Tues. 10:30-12:30, Weds. 3:30-5:30
(all other times by appointment)
212-992-7774 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 NYU Classes site:

1) J. N. Hays, *The Burdens of Disease*, revised edition (Rutgers, 2009)—this edition only
2) *The Hippocratic Writings*, ed. G. E. R. Lloyd (Penguin, 1983)—this edition only

Full text electronic versions of the Hays and Rosenberg books are accessible online through the Bobst catalog (Bobcat). There will be additional supplementary reading selections, as indicated on the schedule that follows. These will be made available on NYU Classes.

A Note on the Reading. There is a fair amount of reading in this course. I try to keep it to a manageable level, but you should consult the syllabus regularly and plan ahead. For most weeks I will usually hand out a description of the readings in advance, along with questions for discussion and suggestions concerning which sections to emphasize.

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 Monday or Wednesday. 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 more casual than for a formal essay. I prefer a hard copy, but I’ll accept emailed responses up to one half hour before class. Note: 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. *There will be no response paper due the first week of classes or in weeks when an essay is due.*

Ground rules. *Attendance and etiquette.* I take attendance and expect you to attend every class. The class begins promptly at 2:00. 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. I will make exceptions for e-readers if they are used only for course readings. For obvious reasons, turn off cell 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’ll be more than happy to assist you. For the Gallatin School’s official statement on academic integrity and a full description of the academic integrity policy, please
consult the print version of the Gallatin Bulletin or the Gallatin Web site. Here is the link:  
http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/integrity.html

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

You should be prepared to discuss the readings listed on the date shown. We will try to keep to this schedule, but expect a few changes along the way. *Indicates supplementary readings on the NYU Classes site.

Part I

JAN 28  Introductions; “disease,” “civilization,” and NYC mortality statistics

JAN 30  Disease in contemporary society: why do plagues happen?  
*Wills, *Yellow Fever Black Goddess*, chaps. 1-3

FEB 4  Virus Ground Zero—containing the Ebola epidemic  
Video: *Ebola: The Plague Fighters*

FEB 6  African origins  
Shah, chap. 2; *Webb, “Malaria and the Peopling of Early Tropical Africa”

FEB 11  Body and mind in ancient Greece  

FEB 13  Environment, ancient epidemics, and the plague of Athens  

FEB 18  PRESIDENT’S DAY – NO CLASS

FEB 20  The classical legacy: disease, therapy, and medicine in the Middle Ages—leprosy and mistranslation; origins of the Black Death  
Hays, chap. 2, chap. 3 (pp. 37-46), *Boccaccio, Introduction, The Decameron*;  
*Dols, “Plague in Early Islamic History”

FEB 25  Understanding plague; long-term effects  
Hays, chap. 3 (pp. 46-60); *Wills, “Four Tales from the Decameron; optional; *Dols, “The Second Plague Pandemic and Its Recurrences in the Middle East”  
Video: *Epidemics: Products of Progress* (excerpt)

FEB 27  The plague of London, 1665-66, beginnings  
Defoe, *A Journal of the Plague Year*, pp. 3-58
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading/Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MAR 4</td>
<td>The plague of London: worst days, causes, endings</td>
<td>Defoe, <em>Journal</em>, pp. 148-57, 172-216</td>
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<td>Part II</td>
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<td>MAR 6</td>
<td>Transatlantic exchanges: migrations of people and microbes</td>
<td>*Crosby, &quot;Conquistador y Pestilencia;&quot; Hays, chap. 4</td>
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<td>Video, <em>Invisible Armies</em> (excerpt)</td>
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<td>FIRST ESSAY DUE: Friday, March 8, 6 p.m.</td>
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<td>MAR 11</td>
<td>Malaria, patterns of settlement, and the slave trade</td>
<td>Shah, chaps. 3 &amp; 4 (focus on pp. 34-73)</td>
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<td>MAR 13</td>
<td>The ambiguous transformation of science and medicine: smallpox and yellow fever</td>
<td>Hays, chaps. 5 &amp; 6 (focus on 6); *Jenner, &quot;An Inquiry into the Causes and Effects of the Variolae Vaccinae&quot;</td>
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<td>Note: Hays, chap. 5 is required background reading for this section of the course.</td>
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<td>MAR 18-22</td>
<td>SPRING RECESS</td>
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<td>MAR 27</td>
<td>Sanitation and disease: new insights</td>
<td>Rosenberg, Part II; *Dickens, &quot;New York&quot;</td>
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<td>APR 1</td>
<td>The Metropolitan Board of Health and the rise of the public health movement</td>
<td>Rosenberg, Part III; Hays, chap. 7; *Snow, “On the Mode of Communication of Cholera” (excerpt)</td>
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<td>APR 3</td>
<td>The culture of tuberculosis; sanatoria, hygiene, and the &quot;gospel of germs&quot;</td>
<td>Hays, chap. 8; *Koch, &quot;The Aetiology of Tuberculosis&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>APR 8</td>
<td>Medicine and Western imperialism</td>
<td>Hays, chap. 9; *Sean Hsiang-lin Lei, “Sovereignty and the Microscope”</td>
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<td>APR 10</td>
<td>Inventing “tropical medicine”: cinchona, malaria, and global public health</td>
<td>Shah, chaps. 5, 7, &amp; 8</td>
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<td>APR 15</td>
<td>Influenza, 1918—origins, effects, consequences, predictions</td>
<td>*Crosby, “United States Begins to Take Note” and “Spanish Influenza Sweeps the Country”; *Oldstone, “Influenza Virus, the Plague that May Return”</td>
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<td>APR 17</td>
<td>Premature triumph? infectious disease and medicine in the 20th century</td>
<td>Hays, chaps. 10 &amp; 11; *Orwell, “How the Poor Die”</td>
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SECOND ESSAY DUE: Friday, April 19, 6 p.m.

Part III

APR 22  AIDS: A return to the past?  
Note: Hays, chap. 12, is required reading for this section of the course; you should read it sometime over the next two or three weeks

APR 24  The Congo in transition: cut hunters, colonialism, prostitution, & the perfect storm  
Pepin, chaps. 4-9 (selections, TBA)

APR 29  Globalization, the blood trade, and the puzzle solved  
Pepin, chaps. 11-15 (chap. 10 is optional)

MAY 1  Two case studies: malaria in contemporary Africa; SARS in China  
Shah, chaps. 6, (9-optional), & 10; *Hanson, “Conceptual Blindspots, Media Blindfolds: The Case of SARS and Traditional Chinese Medicine”*

MAY 6  Biological warfare  
*Ed Regis, The Biology of Doom* (excerpts); Preston, *The Cobra Event*  
Video: *Bioterror* (excerpts)

MAY 8  Hopefully not the future: bioterrorism in New York  
Preston, continue reading

MAY 13  [final class]: Brainpox! Thoughts on the past and future of epidemics  
Preston, finish

MAY 20  FINAL ESSAY DUE [not a class day]