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. For practical reasons, the emphasis in this course will be on infectious disease, and not on cancer, heart disease, mental disorders, etc., although I fully 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.

Learning goals: One can never predict what any given student may take away from a course, but if all goes well my hope is that exposure to and reflection on this set of ideas, concepts, explanations, and interpretations may lead to:

1) insights into the interplay of science, practice, culture, politics, and economics in shaping perceptions of the nature, treatment, and prevention of infectious disease
2) a sense of some of the major epidemiological events that have influenced the history of our species
3) a sense of how human cultural traditions and practices have influenced and modified the trajectory of epidemic disease
4) a reasonable background against which to filter and interpret the seemingly endless barrage of media attention given to nearly every disease outbreak anywhere on the globe.

Gene Cittadino
1 Washington Pl., Room 412
Office hrs: Tues. 3:30-5:30, Weds. 10:30-12, Thurs. 3-4
(all other times by appointment only)
212-992-7774  ec15@nyu.edu
Course requirements.

(1) Regular attendance, punctuality, and participation in discussions
(2) Regular forum responses on course readings
(3) Participation in one student-run class session (see below)
(4) Two shorter essays, 5-7 pages, due Oct. 9 and Nov. 13, based on a selection of topics relating to course readings
(5) A longer essay, 7-10 pages, due Dec. 18, which \textit{may} include outside sources. Details will follow later.

Basis for evaluation. The breakdown of your grade will be as follows: 25\% for attendance and participation, including forum responses and participation in a student-run session; 20\% for each of the 5-7 page essays; 35\% for the final essay.

Reading. The following books have been ordered at the NYU Bookstore and are on two-hour reserve in the Bobst Library (reserve books are now at the circulation desk, first floor):

J. N. Hays, \textit{The Burdens of Disease}, revised edition (Rutgers, 2009)—this edition only
\textit{The Hippocratic Writings}, ed. G. E. R. Lloyd (Penguin, 1983)—this edition only
Charles Rosenberg, \textit{The Cholera Years} (Chicago, 1987)
Sonia Shah, \textit{The Fever: How Malaria has Ruled Humankind for 500,000 Years} (Picador, 2010)
Richard Preston, \textit{The Cobra Event} (Ballantine, 1998)

There will be additional supplementary reading selections, as indicated on the schedule that follows. These will be made available on NYU Classes.

\textit{Attendance and etiquette}. I take attendance and expect you to attend every class. More than two unexcused absences will result in a reduction of your grade. The class begins promptly at 12:30. Please respect your classmates and arrive on time; late arrivals\textit{always} disrupt the atmosphere of a classroom, as do mid-class exits and re-entries. 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. \textit{Turn off cell phones} and store them before coming to class. \textit{Laptops, iPads, tablets, etc.} may be used ONLY for reading class materials.

\textit{Student-run sessions}. On the schedule below five class dates are designated as student-run sessions: Oct. 14, Oct. 28, Nov. 9, Nov. 18, and Dec. 2. Every student must participate in one of these sessions. In each case, a group of students will direct the class discussion on the topic and readings indicated for that date. Each group will have the option of deciding which of the readings to focus on and may also introduce short additional reading selections for the class to discuss, as well as possible video clips or other visual materials. Look ahead to the schedule and think about which of these sessions you would prefer to participate in. In a few weeks I will be asking you to indicate your first and second choices of sessions.
Forum responses. You are expected to make regular responses to the readings on the NYU Classes forum. Your responses should be about a paragraph in length. Feel free to probe, criticize, and speculate, but your forum posts should show serious reflections on the readings. There will be a forum set up for each class (except the first and last), and you must post your response by 11:30 on the day of the class so that the various forum posts can be taken into consideration for class discussion. Please note: Responses posted after 11:30 will not count. You are required to post to 21 of the 26 forums, so you may skip 5 over the course of the semester. Skipping a forum does not mean skipping the reading, of course, and you may feel free to post to all forums if you wish.

Late papers. Essays are due on the dates designated. Unless the paper is late due to documented illness or emergency, it will be downgraded one grade for each day late.

Documentation and plagiarism. Out of respect for yourself, your fellow classmates, your professor, and the academic enterprise, do your own work and always acknowledge the work of others with proper documentation. 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. Also, please review the official Gallatin statement on academic integrity: http://gallatin.nyu.edu/about/bulletin/undergrad/policies/integrity.html

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.

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.

W SEPT 2  Introductions: “disease,” “civilization,” and some vital statistics

M SEPT 7  NO CLASS – Labor Day

W SEPT 9  Virus ground zero: Ebola then and now
Preston, “The Ebola Wars” (handout from first class); Hays, The Burdens of Disease, Introduction  FIRST FORUM POST DUE
Video: The Plague Fighters

M SEPT 14  African origins (of both people and infectious human diseases)
Shah, The Fever, chaps. 1 & 2; *Webb, “Early Tropical Africa”

W SEPT 16  Disease and health in the ancient world, 1: ideas, concepts, principles
M SEPT 21  Disease and health in the ancient world, 2: environment, advice, and epidemics

W SEPT 23  Disease and health in the ancient world, 3: the plague of Athens and its aftermath
Hays, *Burdens*, chap. 1; *Thucydides, “The Plague”

M SEPT 28  Disease, therapy, religion, and culture in the Middle Ages: leprosy in Europe; plague in the Middle East
Hays, chap. 2, *Dols, “Plague in Early Islamic History”

W SEPT 30  The Black Death revisited
Hays, chap. 3; *Boccaccio, Introduction, The Decameron;* *Wills, “Four Tales From the Decameron”
Video: *Epidemics: Products of Progress* (excerpt)

M OCT 5  Economic, political, and cultural consequences of the Black Death
*Defoe, Journey of the Plague Year* (excerpt); *Herlihy, The Black Death and the Transformation of the West* (excerpts)

W OCT 7  Recurrence of plague in Europe and the Middle East; exonerating the rat?

F OCT 9  FIRST ESSAY DUE (not a class day)

M OCT 12  NO CLASS – Columbus Day

T OCT 13  (classes follow Monday schedule) The familiar story: transatlantic exchanges of people and microbes—the role of disease in the conquest of the “New World”
*Crosby, “Conquistador y Pestilencia;” *Crosby, *Germs, Seeds, & Animals* (selections); Hays, chap. 4 Video: *Invisible Armies* (excerpt)

W OCT 14  STUDENT-RUN SESSION 1: The less familiar story: malaria and patterns of settlement in the “New” and “Old” worlds
Shah, chaps. 3 & 4

M OCT 19  The (ambiguous) transformation of science and medicine: smallpox and yellow fever
Hays, chaps. 5 & 6; *Jenner, “An Inquiry into the Causes and Effects of the Variolae Vaccinae”

W OCT 21  Blaming the victim: poverty, morality, and the cholera epidemics
Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years*, Intro. & Part I

M OCT 26  Sanitation and disease: new insights
Rosenberg, Part II; *Snow, “On the Mode of Communication of Cholera”* (excerpt)
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W OCT 28</td>
<td>STUDENT-RUN SESSION 2: Assessing the conquest of cholera</td>
<td>Rosenberg, Part III; Hays, chap. 7</td>
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<td>M NOV 2</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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<td>W NOV 4</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>M NOV 9</td>
<td>STUDENT-RUN SESSION 3: Medicine and Western imperialism: tool of empire?</td>
<td>Hays, chap. 9; *Sean Hsiang-lin Lei, “Sovereignty and the Microscope”</td>
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<tr>
<td>W NOV 11</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>F NOV 13</td>
<td>SECOND ESSAY DUE (not a class day)</td>
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<td>M NOV 16</td>
<td>Premature triumph?</td>
<td>Hays, chaps. 10 &amp; 11; *Orwell, “How the Poor Die”</td>
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<td>W NOV 18</td>
<td>STUDENT-RUN SESSION 4: Disease &amp; power? the biomedical model in an international context</td>
<td>Hays, chap. 12; *Hanson, “Conceptual Blindspots, Media Blindfolds: The Case of SARS and Traditional Chinese Medicine”</td>
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<td>W NOV 25</td>
<td>NO CLASS – Thanksgiving holiday</td>
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<td>M NOV 30</td>
<td>The origins of AIDS revealed</td>
<td>Quammen, chaps. 14-25 (pp. 79-139)</td>
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<td>W DEC 2</td>
<td>STUDENT-RUN SESSION 5: Why malaria? The troubling persistence of an ancient disease</td>
<td>Shah, chaps. 6 &amp; 10</td>
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<td>M DEC 7</td>
<td>Biological warfare</td>
<td>*Regis, <em>The Biology of Doom</em> (excerpts); begin reading Preston, <em>The Cobra Event</em></td>
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<td>Video: <em>Bioterror</em> (excerpt)</td>
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<td>W DEC 9</td>
<td>Hopefully not the future; bioterrorism in New York</td>
<td>Preston, continue reading</td>
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<td>M DEC 14</td>
<td>Last class/closing thoughts: brainpox and the future of plagues</td>
<td>Preston, complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>F DEC 18</td>
<td>FINAL ESSAY DUE</td>
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