HIS 383W/483:  
Disease and Society from Antiquity to the Present  

Tuesdays, 2:00-4:40 p.m., Rush Rhees 456  

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Research: Finding a topic; beginning research.  

Week 2. January 27. Disease as an agent of historical change.  

Reading:  
Alfred W. Crosby, Jr., The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1972), pp. 35-63;  

Research: Field trip to Miner Library, Rare Books and Serials.  

Week 3. February 3. Framing disease: AIDS.  

Reading:  

Research: Resources in Rush Rhees, Rare Books and Special Collections  

Reading:
Hippocrates, *Epidemics*, Book 1: 1-10;

Research:
*Initial survey; primary sources. You will hand in a copy of an article from a scholarly encyclopedia (or the equivalent) pertaining to your topic and will present to the group a primary source to be used for your research.*

*Students should schedule an individual conference with the instructor this week or next week.*

Week 5. February 17. Leprosy in the medieval world.

Reading:
Ritual of Separation of a Leper, from the Old Sarum Rite;

Research:
*Diagrams. You will make a presentation in which you will diagram your research topic for the class.*


Reading:

Research:
*Diagrams, continued.*

*Prospectus for the research paper due February 24 in class: bibliography of primary sources, major secondary sources, and a general description of the project (see instructions).*

Reading:

Research:
Close readings. You will make a presentation offering a close reading of a key passage or passages from a primary source. Make copies of the passage for the class, or get an original to me by Tuesday at noon.


Reading:

Research:
Close readings, continued.


Aberth, *Plagues in World History*, “Tuberculosis,” pp. 89-100;
Research:

Historiography. Make a presentation in which you outline the historiography on your topic and demonstrate the ways in which your research makes a contribution to or overturns some existing interpretation. (This is the "hook" that will draw readers into your paper. Look at a couple of good articles as model compositions to see how other historians have hooked their readers, and look over the handout How to Get a Handle on Historiography.) Historiography paper due in class on March 24.


Reading:
Bynum, History of Medicine, pp. 118-56.

Research:

Historiography, continued.

Week 12. April 7. Influenza.

Reading:
Laurie Garrett, “Flu Season,” Foreign Policy, January 5, 2012 (http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/01/05/flu_season);

Research:

Thesis and evidence. You will make a brief presentation outlining the argument you will make in your paper and showing some of the ways in which you will prove your thesis. This is a trial run for the paper draft, so don't make a presentation "in search of a thesis," i.e., laying out all the neat things you found without making a clear argument. Think about logical structures and ways of presenting evidence. Notice that you will have to have a working outline of the paper and a good sense of the thesis for which you wish to argue in order to make a successful presentation.

**Research: Drafts due to instructor and to peer reader (via email) by Sunday, April 19, at 5 p.m.**


Bring in a news item or web site relating to the Ebola outbreak (or some other disease in the news).

Research:
Workshop on drafts.

Week 15. April 28. Final presentations.

**Final papers due by 5 p.m. on Friday, May 8, in the history department.**

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**Books to purchase:**


**Course requirements:**

- Attendance at all weekly discussions.
- Completion of all reading assignments. *All readings except for the Aberth and Bynum books are available on Blackboard.*
- A 1 to 2-page reading response, to be handed in on the day each reading assignment is discussed. I will grade these responses on a 10-point scale. I am looking for: 1) a brief summary of all the assigned reading(s) (0-7 points); 2) some critique of the reading, a comparison with another reading or a current situation, and/or some question(s) for discussion that arises from the reading (e.g., "I think McNeill overstates the case for disease's role in history because . . . ." or "The experiences of leprosy and plague seem very similar in that . . . ." or "Do you think leprosaria would work for Ebola patients?") (1-2 points); and 3) brief quotations and specific examples from the readings to back up your points (1 point). One paper is due per week of discussion, even when there are multiple readings; the point is to put the readings into dialogue, not to write a separate response to each reading. **Late papers will be penalized one point (out of ten) for every calendar day late. I do not accept emailed papers except by prior arrangement and only in the most extenuating of circumstances.**
- A paper (4-6 pages) discussing the historiography on your chosen topic.
• Students will also research a topic in the history of disease (ranging from antiquity to 1995) chosen in consultation with the instructor, culminating in a paper that asks a significant historical question, situates it within a body of scholarship, answers it with a clear thesis and a logical argument, supports it with both primary and secondary sources documented according to the standards of the Chicago Manual of Style, and articulates its points in clear and artful prose with the grammar and spelling associated with formal composition. Undergraduate papers should be at least 20 pages in length; graduate student papers should be of publishable length (25-40 pages) and quality. Papers should be submitted in Times or Times New Roman font, 12 point, double-spaced, with standard margins. You may use footnotes or endnotes, but whichever you choose you MUST follow University of Chicago style (Turabian/humanities style) for text and references. Emailed papers will not be accepted without prior permission.

• We will have weekly progress reports on the research projects. You may work on any topic you choose within the chronological limits, provided it somehow deals with the relationship between disease and society. In addition to the resources at Miner Library’s and Rush Rhees’s Rare Books and Special Collections rooms, there are fine collections of primary sources relating to the history of disease available online through Harvard University Libraries (http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/contagion/), the National Library of Medicine (http://collections.nlm.nih.gov/muradora/ and http://www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/ihm/index.html), the Medical Heritage Library (http://archive.org/details/medicalheritagelibrary), and the University of Michigan (http://www.influenzaarchive.org/), to name a few.

• This is a discussion-based seminar course. Your attendance and participation in discussions is a crucial aspect of the course. Three unexcused absences will lower your final grade by 5%. Five unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for the course. (Three tardies constitutes one absence.)

Grading:

- Reading responses----20%
- Participation in discussions----10%
- Research prospectus----5%
- Meeting intermediate deadlines as listed on syllabus----10%
- Historiography paper (4-6 pages)----15%
- Final research paper----40%

Grading scale:

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Learning objectives: At the end of this course, students will be able to
• Read and understand primary sources as products of specific historical contexts
• Discuss ways in which disease can be said to have affected historical events
• Discuss ideas about disease and its treatment as products of specific historical and cultural contexts
• Identify the thesis and analyze the argument of secondary sources relating to the history of disease
• Present historical analysis and arguments in a clear written form, including the ability to construct an argument by marshaling evidence in an appropriate and logical fashion.
• Write a research paper that asks a significant historical question, situates it within a body of scholarship, answers it with a clear thesis and a logical argument, supports it with both primary and secondary sources documented according to the standards of the Chicago Manual of Style, and articulates its points in clear and artful prose with the grammar and spelling associated with formal composition.

Students with disabilities: The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL, 1-154 Dewey Hall, 585-275-9049) offers a variety of disability services for undergraduates and graduate students in Arts, Sciences & Engineering. These services aim to provide an inclusive experience and equal access to academic content and program requirements. They can help you to request accommodations for your success in this class. You can learn more at: www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/undergraduate/disability. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me as well.

Classroom etiquette: Please turn off cell phones or set them to a silent alert. In the rare event you must enter late or leave class early, please let me know in advance.

Academic honesty: All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester's Academic Honesty Policy. Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses and will be treated as such. Anyone who engages in such activities will be turned over to the College Board on Academic Honesty for disciplinary action, as outlined at http://www.rochester.edu/College/honesty/.

Disclaimer: The instructor reserves the right to change topics and assignments on the syllabus at any point in the semester.