

Disease, Medicine, and Society

HIST 615-002 / 635-002

Syllabus

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Office hours by appointment

Fall 2016
Th 4:30-7:10pm
Thompson Hall 2022

Course overview

The experience of illness and health, whether physical or mental, is familiar to all of us, as are concerns related to germs, hygiene, and sanitation. Beginning with our commonly held assumptions about these shared aspects of modern life, this seminar will explore the history of medicine as it has intersected with other political, social, and cultural developments, focusing on Europe and the U.S. from the late 18th to 20th centuries. How have understandings of health and disease both reflected and shaped changing ideas and attitudes about modern society and culture? How does scientific knowledge construct and produce its object of study? How are medical ‘truths’ translated into practice and diffused into local cultures? Discussion topics will include the historical and social constructions of disease and wellness; cultural components of illness; politics of public health and hygiene; social determinants of health; medical technologies and their ethical, social, and cultural implications.

Course requirements

Grade breakdown:

Class participation 20%

Response papers 20%

Book review 25%

Final paper 35%

1. *Class participation:* As a graduate seminar, this class will be primarily based around group discussions. You are expected to come to class each week having read the assigned texts and prepared to discuss them with your classmates. Each week, one to two students will work together to lead the discussion. Discussion leaders should spend approximately 15 minutes at the start of class providing some historical and historiographical context on the reading, and highlighting key topics they would like the class to reflect on together.
2. *Response papers (7):* To facilitate discussions and help you prepare your thoughts on the readings, you will write seven 1-2 page response papers over the course of the semester, to be submitted by 9pm each Wednesday prior to the seminar meeting. These papers should not be summaries of the texts, but critical reflections on issues, themes, and methods that emerge from the readings. In your papers, you should frame at least 2 questions that can serve as prompts for class discussion. These questions will be shared online with your classmates in advance of the seminar.
3. *Book review (4-5 pages), due 10/20:* During the first few weeks of the semester, you will each select a book published in the past 5-8 years on the history of medicine, which you think relates to the theme(s) of the course. You will write a book review of your selection, conforming to the standards of a professional historical journal (*American Historical Review*, *Journal of Social History*, etc), and

prepare a short presentation on it for our meeting on 10/20. You and your classmates will then choose one of these books to read and discuss together for the 12/1 meeting.

4. *Final paper* (12-15 pages), due 12/16 by 5pm: The final assignment will be a historiographical essay on 5 recent publications, through which you will reflect on the changing (or enduring) themes, methods, and approaches of the history of medicine. Two of the books reviewed may come from the course syllabus. You will be asked to prepare a brief paper proposal (250 words) and a preliminary bibliography by 11/10. During the last two class sessions, you will each give an oral presentation on your work-in-progress.

Reading assignments

The following books are available for purchase at the university bookstore:

- Charles Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (1962)
- Bruno Latour, *The Pasteurization of France* (1984)
- Cynthia Russett, *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (1989)
- David Barnes, *The Making of a Social Disease: Tuberculosis in Nineteenth-Century France* (1995)
- Roy Porter, *Bodies Politic: Disease, Death and Doctors in Britain, 1650-1900* (2001)
- Linda Nash, *Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge* (2006)
- Robert Aronowitz, *Unnatural History: Breast Cancer and American Society* (2007)
- Greg Mitman, *Breathing Space: How Allergies Shape Our Lives and Landscapes* (2007)
- Allan Brandt, *The Cigarette Century: The Rise, Fall, and Deadly Persistence of the Product That Defined America* (2007)
- Jan Goldstein, *Hysteria Complicated by Ecstasy: The Case of Nanette Leroux* (2009)
- Elena Conis, *Vaccine Nation: America's Changing Relationship with Immunization* (2015)

Other texts on the syllabus will be shared online through Blackboard.

Course policies

- *Academic integrity:* The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. GMU has an Honor Code (<http://www.gmu.edu/academics/catalog/9798/honorcod.html>) with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using MLA or Chicago format. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.
- *Course communication:* Mason uses only Mason e-mail accounts to communicate with enrolled students. Students must activate their Mason e-mail account, use it to communicate with their department and other administrative units, and check it regularly for important university information including messages related to this class.

- *Attendance and conduct:* You are expected to attend and participate in every class session. For justifiable absences (such as illness or other emergencies), you may be asked to provide official documentation. You should e-mail me in advance if you know of an upcoming conflict. Repeated absences will impact your participation grade. Please refrain from eating or sleeping during class.
- *Use of technology:* Cell phones and other communicative devices must be switched off or put on silent (not vibrate) mode during class hours. If you are seen using your phone during class time, it will be confiscated until the end of the class. As this is a discussion-based seminar, I also ask that you not use laptops/tablets in class (unless you require special accommodations; see below). You should bring a hard copy of the week's readings to class, as we will frequently look at the texts together.
- *Late assignments:* For all written work, lateness will be penalized by 1/3 of a letter grade (for example, A to A-) for every 24-hour period beyond the deadline. Weekly response papers will not be accepted late. If you have extenuating circumstances, you should always get in touch with me directly.
- *Special accommodations:* If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services at 703.993.2474 or ods.gmu.edu. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Weekly schedule

- 9.1 Introduction
Erwin H. Ackerknecht, "A Plea for a 'Behaviorist' Approach in the Writing of the History of Medicine," in *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 22, no.3 (1967): 211-214.
- 9.8 Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years* (1962)
Erwin H. Ackerknecht, "Anticontagionism between 1821 and 1867: The Fielding H. Garrison lecture," *International Journal of Epidemiology* 38, no.1 (2009): 7-21.
- 9.15 Latour, *The Pasteurization of France* (1984)
Ludmilla Jordanova, "The Social Construction of Medical Knowledge," in *Locating Medical History: The Stories and Their Meanings* (2004)
- 9.22 Russett, *Sexual Science* (1989)
Barbara Duden, *The Woman Beneath the Skin: A Doctor's Patients in 18th-Century Germany* (1991), chapter one ("Toward a History of the Body")
- 9.29 Barnes, *The Making of a Social Disease* (1995)
Due: Book review selection
- 10.6 Porter, *Bodies Politic* (2001)
Roy Porter, "The Patient's View: Doing Medical History from Below," in *Theory and Society* 14, no.2 (March 1985).
- 10.13 Nash, *Inescapable Ecologies* (2006)

Charles Rosenberg, "The Therapeutic Revolution: Medicine, Meaning, and Social Change in 19th-Century America," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* (Summer 1977).

10.20 Aronowitz, *Unnatural History* (2007)

Due: Book reviews (please be prepared to present on them in class)

10.27 Mitman, *Breathing Space* (2007)

11.3 Brandt, *The Cigarette Century* (2007)

11.10 Goldstein, *Hysteria Complicated by Ecstasy* (2009)

Due: Final paper proposals

11.17 Conis, *Vaccine Nation* (2015)

11.24 NO CLASS (Thanksgiving break)

12.1 Reading: Book selected by the class

Student presentations

12.8 Allan Brandt, "Emerging Themes in the History of Medicine," in *The Milbank Quarterly* 69, no.2 (1991): 199-214.

Student presentations and seminar wrap-up