HIS 9715 Outbreak! Epidemics and Disease Control in History

Professor Shelley McKellar

Office: Lawson Hall room 2227  
Office Telephone: 661-2111 ext. 84990  
Email: smckell@uwo.ca  
Office Hours: Tuesday 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Seminar Meeting: Tues 9:30-11:30 a.m. in LwH 2270C

Course Description:

This graduate seminar explores the impact of disease outbreaks on human society. It focuses on the social and political responses to disease, tracing changes and continuities in society’s efforts to understand and control various diseases. How have different societies, at different times, responded to disease outbreaks? What role have patients, medical practitioners, scientists, public health officials, the state, the church, international health agencies, the pharmaceutical industry, or even entrepreneurs played in response to specific disease outbreaks and medical challenges? Using a case study approach, this course will examine outbreaks that range in time and place, from the plague and smallpox to influenza and HIV-AIDS, among others. Questions relating to power, agency, class, race, gender and sexuality shall most certainly be discussed.

This is a seminar and workshop-structured course. Seminar meetings shall concentrate on student-directed discussions based on assigned readings (both articles and monographs), from which students shall acquire content and critical inquiry into a specific topic. Workshops focus on student development of research skills of ‘doing history,’ including asking good historical questions, analyzing primary source materials, communicating findings in both oral and written formats, and encouraging peer interchange and assessment. Students will have the opportunity to pursue their own interest in the history of disease and epidemics for their major course paper.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, students will:

1. Appreciate the interaction between the conceptualization of and the response to disease epidemics in society;

2. Understand many of the key issues, historiography and methodologies in the history of epidemic disease;

3. Work towards developing several life-long learning skills including:
   - effective question formulation;  
   - critical thinking;  
   - peer and self assessment.  
   - research skills;  
   - communication (written & oral);
Seminar Meeting Schedule

Jan 6  Introduction
Jan 13 Plague
Jan 20 Smallpox
Jan 27 Yellow Fever
Feb 3 Cholera
Feb 10 Workshop: (1) Pre-circulated Preliminary Outline for Research Paper; Peer Discussion and Feedback
(2) Breakout Small Groups: Interrogating Historical Sources
Feb 17 Reading Week – No meeting
Feb 24 Influenza
Mar 3 Malaria
Mar 10 Polio
Mar 17 HIV-AIDS
Mar 24 Workshop: Pre-circulated Draft Research Paper; Peer Discussion and Feedback
Mar 31 Workshop: Pre-circulated Draft Research Paper; Peer Discussion and Feedback
Apr 7 * Final Research Paper due

Course Evaluation:

- Seminar Discussions and Workshops 35%
- Book Review (750-1000 words or roughly 3-4 pp) 15%
- Final Research Paper (18-25 pp in length) 50%

Course Work Descriptions:

- Seminar Discussions and Workshops

  Seminar Discussions: We shall meet weekly as a seminar group to discuss assigned readings towards gaining insight into some of the key issues, historiography and methodologies in the history of epidemic disease. The assigned readings shall be a mix of monographs, articles and primary sources. As much as possible, these readings shall be made available on OWL-Sakai. A list of these assigned readings will be circulated separately. Students are expected to come prepared to discuss the assigned readings in detail, and to bring their notes to meetings. A schedule of our meetings is presented below.

  Workshops: In this course there are two different workshops scheduled to assist in student development of research skills of ‘doing history’ – including asking good historical questions, analyzing primary source materials, communicating findings in both oral and written formats, and encouraging peer interchange and assessment.
Research Paper (18-25 pp)

This research paper provides you the opportunity to work through the skills of being a good historian. That is, you are expected to formulate an effective historical question, locate resource materials (primary and/or secondary sources), evaluate evidence, apply critical analysis, synthesize your research findings, and formulate conclusions. It is expected that students will undertake substantial research for this paper.

The topic of this research paper can be drawn from any disease outbreak or epidemic in global history, from antiquity to the end of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. All topics should be approved by the professor. Students are strongly advised to start thinking about the research paper immediately.

Library Resources - http://www.lib.uwo.ca/programs/historyofmedicine

Key to your research success for this paper is your ability to distinguish between a historical account of your disease and a medical text describing the etiology, diagnosis and/or treatment of your disease. Note: you will not be able to write a good history paper based on science papers or newspaper articles only! So make sure you read historical sources on your research topic. There is a portal for library resources in the history of medicine that identifies relevant bibliographies, biographies, encyclopedias and databases pertaining to the history of medicine at: http://www.lib.uwo.ca/programs/historyofmedicine.

Some bibliographical guides in the library that list good historical sources on various diseases, scientists, and other events are:

Titles in The D.B. Weldon Library:
- DBW reference Q 180.55.D57S29 2006 (3 volumes) - Science and Scientists
- DBW reference R 133.M34 1985 - Encyclopedia of Medical History
- DBW reference R 134.D57 2007 (5 volumes) - Dictionary of Medical Biography

Titles in Allyn & Betty Taylor Library:

Online resources (via shared library catalogue):
- Encyclopedia of World Biography
- Epidemics and Pandemics: Their Impacts on Human History - Also available in DBW reference RA 649.H293 2005
- Science and Its Times: Understanding the Social Significance of Scientific Discovery
Some databases available online through Western library that will direct you to scholarly historical articles in academic journals on your topic are:

- **America: History and Life** (Canadian and American History)
- **Historical Abstracts** (Non-North American History)

**Preliminary Outline** - Students will submit a one-page preliminary outline via email to all seminar members before our meeting on Feb 10.

Please use identical format to the sample outline below:

---

**Preliminary Outline for Star Student, #987654321**

**Topic:** The Influenza Pandemic of 1918

**Research Question:** How and why did influenza spread around the world after the First World War, and to what extent was Canada involved in this pandemic?

**Preliminary Bibliography:**

**Secondary Sources:**

**Primary Sources:**
- Hans Zinsser, *The Etiology and Epidemiology of Influenza*. [Baltimore?: s.n., 1922?].

**Thesis Statement:** yet to be determined? Or perhaps working thesis?
Your preliminary outline should include the following information:

- **Topic:** general topic of your research essay, include place and time period

- **Research Question:** or line of inquiry – what do you want to know? (the answer to your research question will be your thesis statement)

- **Bibliography:** – list of primary and secondary sources – where will you find the answers to your line of inquiry?

- **Thesis Statement:** so what is the answer to your research question and/or the general argument of the essay? You’ve done research on ‘x’ topic – so what? Why is this important?

Your outline will facilitate discussion which will help you to refine your research question, find appropriate sources, and in past cases, students have directed fellow classmates to material which they have found! This has always been a very useful exercise for students.

**Due Dates and Late Penalties:**

Penalty for late essays is 2% each day (excluding Saturdays and Sundays) after the due date. Essays must be handed to the instructor or submitted to the History Department on the 2nd floor of Lawson Hall. Faxed and emailed essays are not acceptable. Extensions may be granted if legitimate circumstances are presented by the student to the instructor well in advance of the due date. Poor work planning (such as “I have XX other papers due”) is not grounds for an extension. After 7 days (one week past the due date), the assignment will not be accepted without a properly documented excuse. There will be no exceptions.

**Statement on Academic Ethics and Academic Dishonesty:**

Students are reminded that they should read and comply with the university’s position on academic ethics and academic dishonesty. Plagiarism and submission of work that is not one’s own or for which previous credit has been obtained are examples of academic dishonesty. Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar.)

**Health and Wellness**

As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on campus health related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students, as part of their registration, receive membership in Western’s Campus Recreation Centre. Numerous cultural events are offered throughout the year. Please check out the Faculty of Music web page http://www.music.uwo.ca/, and our own McIntosh Gallery http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/. Information regarding health- and wellness-related
services available to students may be found at http://www.health.uwo.ca/

Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. Campus mental health resources may be found at http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html

To help you learn more about mental health, Western has developed an interactive mental health learning module, found here: http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/module.html. This module is 30 minutes in length and provides participants with a basic understanding of mental health issues and of available campus and community resources. Topics include stress, anxiety, depression, suicide and eating disorders. After successful completion of the module, participants receive a certificate confirming their participation.