

HISTORY HIS 2819G
Cholera to Covid: How Epidemics Change the Way We Live
Winter 2022

Lecture: Tuesdays 12:30 - 2:30 p.m. (Location: TBD)

Course delivery: In-person

Instructor: Professor Shelley McKellar

Office Hours: TBA

Department of History, Office: Lawson Hall 2227

Email: smckell@uwo.ca

This is a draft syllabus. Please see your course OWL site for the final syllabus.

Course Description:

Focusing on the 19th and 20th centuries, this course investigates the disruption and changes arising from disease outbreaks. Disease can permanently alter society, with lives lost, community practices modified, and individual habits scrutinized. The role of government, society's expectations, science and medicine, power, class, race, and gender will be explored.

Prerequisite(s):

None

Antirequisite(s):

History 2812E

Course Syllabus:

Content & Expectations

How does a disease outbreak turn into an epidemic? Epidemics do not always become pandemics, but they can. The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted and changed the way we lived **significantly**. How have past epidemics changed the way we live, either temporarily or permanently, and possibly in positive or negative ways? How have governments, scientists and society navigated past epidemics? When do disease outbreaks become public health crises, and who gets to decide? Is COVID-19 the most deadly or disruptive pandemic in history? Would you be surprised to learn that the COVID-19 pandemic measures of reporting disease cases and death numbers, imposing stay-at-home and travel restrictions, closing schools and businesses, practicing vigilant hand-

washing, wearing face masks and promoting social distancing (the “gentler cousin” to isolation and quarantine measures) are not new?

Epidemics and pandemics provide a lens through which to explore political, economic and socio-cultural practices in different places and times. Disease outbreaks are stress tests, exposing cracks in the systems, such as problems with health care delivery and access, socio-economic inequities, political leadership challenges, medical uncertainties, and more. It is misleading to consider diseases as equal-opportunity threats since outbreaks can be catastrophic for marginalized and vulnerable populations. Fearmongering, blaming, and stigmatizing disease sufferers or suspected disease carriers occur at the same time as ‘hero’ narratives and valuable community mobilization emerge during pandemic times.

This course will examine different disease outbreaks in history, exploring how epidemics change the way we live. When a disease outbreak spreads rapidly to many people and over a large geographic area, it becomes an epidemic, as in the case of the Ebola epidemic in West Africa in 2014-16. An epidemic that spreads globally is a pandemic, with the most recent example being the COVID-19 pandemic. This course will make connections, identify themes, and tease out issues between various epidemics and pandemics in history. It will offer a narrative account of past disease events, encourage you to compare-and-contrast outbreaks, and entice you to explore interesting individuals and vignettes. This course will also ask you to consider changing historical interpretations, contrasting points of view, as well as new methods and theories used by historians to gather and evaluate historical evidence. How do historians know what they know about the past? Students will be exposed to a variety of primary and secondary sources throughout this course. Lecture attendance is expected.

Who can take this course?

This course is open to all students. History students, students planning to major in science or medicine, or other students in the social sciences, health sciences, or arts and humanities are welcome. Students do not need a background in science, medicine or even history to take this course. This course is open to all students.

Course-Level Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students shall be able:

- To articulate the role played by disease in shaping the past, specifically the impact of epidemics and pandemics on political structures, the economy and society
- To differentiate the changes and continuities (historical shifts and patterns) in disease understanding, public health approaches, and community responses, and how this relates to human agency, government involvement, society’s expectations, the role of science and medicine, issues of power and authority, class, race, gender and sexuality
- To recognize that disease understanding and social responses are shaped by time and place;
- To apply various methodologies and approaches employed by scholars in the study of disease outbreaks
- To analyze critically various source materials – both primary and secondary sources – from which to understand epidemics and pandemics in history

- To formulate and communicate an effective argument, which demonstrates good research, writing and analytical skills
- To use (possibly) historical analysis to generate useful perspectives on the continuing challenges of epidemics and pandemics today, notably insight and relevancy to the COVID-19 pandemic

Course Materials:

- Mitchell L. Hammond, *Epidemics and the Modern World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020) Available at [Western Libraries](#); Available for purchase in paper and eBook at <https://utorontopress.com/ca/epidemics-and-the-modern-world-2>

Methods of Evaluation:

Quizzes -- two quizzes; each worth 10% (MCQs online; open book)	20 %
Library Exercise (connected to Essay Assignment)	10 %
Essay Assignment (2000-2500 words)	40 %
Final Exam (during April exam period)	30 %

Essay Assignment:

A handout regarding the essay assignment will be posted on the OWL course site.

Submitting Your Assignments ---

You will submit your completed quizzes, library exercise and essay assignment online via the OWL course site. An **electronic copy** of this work is required for grading.

Late Penalties –

Penalty for late assignments is 2% each day (including Saturday and Sunday) after the due date.

Extensions may be granted if legitimate circumstances are presented by the student to the professor well in advance of the due date. Poor work planning (such as “I have XX other papers due”) is not grounds for an extension. * **Note that after 7 days (1 week past due date), the assignment will not be accepted** to ensure timely marking and the ability to return marked assignments to students who did respect the deadline.

Accommodation for missed assignment deadlines with a Self Reported Absence:

If a student reports a SRA for an assignment (i.e. an essay) the new due date will be 48 hours after the SRA was submitted.

Course Schedule and Readings:

Week	Lecture Topic	Readings	Topic Zooms
#1 Jan 4	Introduction	None	None
#2 Jan 11	Cholera, John Snow and Sanitary Reform	Hammond, Chapter 5 (pp191-220)	Haiti's Cholera Outbreak: A Humanitarian Disaster?
#3 Jan 18	Tuberculosis, Class and ... Romanticism? (Or a pretty way to die?)	Hammond, Chapter 6 (pp233-264)	Understanding Tuberculosis: The Role of the Arts?
#4 Jan 25	Venereal Disease and Moralism Online Quiz #1 Opens: 9:00 am. Wed Jan 26 Closes: 12:30 p.m. Tues Feb 1 (start of next class)	Hammond, Chapter 2 (pp76-91)	Venereal Disease and Women: A Provocative Public Health Campaign?
#5 Feb 1	Killer Flu: The 1918 Flu Pandemic (Part 1)	Hammond, Chapter 8 (pp315-337)	Pale Horse, Pale Rider as a Survivor's Perspective: How Well Does It Convey the Suffering Caused by the 1918 Flu Pandemic?
#6 Feb 8	Killer Flu: The 1918 Flu Pandemic (Part 2)		The 1918 Flu and COVID- 19 Pandemics: More Parallels or Differences?
#7 Feb 15	Influenza Pandemics since 1920: A never- ending threat? Unit 4 Online Quiz #2 Opens: 9:00 am. Wed Feb 16 Closes: 12:30 p.m. Tues Mar 1 (start of next class)	None	The 1976 Swine Flu and U.S. Public Service Announcements: Fear- mongering or Necessary?
Feb 22	Winter Study Break		
#8 Mar 1	Poliomyelitis, Vaccines and the Public Debate	Hammond, Chapter 10 (pp391-414)	The 1949 Canadian Arctic Polio Epidemic: Greater Challenges in Indigenous Communities?
#9 Mar 8	HIV-AIDS and Global Implications Essay Assignment Due: Tues Mar 8 (end of day)	Hammond, Chapter 11 (pp427-452)	HIV-AIDS, 'Patient Zero,' and the Case of Gaetan Dugas: Is this Good Science or Hysteria and Scapegoating?
#10 Mar 15	SARS, 2003: Politics and Vulnerabilities	Hammond, Conclusion (pp463-467)	The 2003 SARS Outbreak in Canada: Health Care Workers as Key Difference Makers?
#11 Mar 22	Ebola and Zika: New Risks?	None	None
#12 Mar 29	COVID-19 and History	None	None
April Exam Period	Final Exam TBD		

Additional Statements:

Please review the Department of History Course Must-Knows document, <https://www.history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/Docs/Department%20of%20History%20Course%20Must-Knows.pdf>, for additional information regarding:

- Academic Offences
- Accessibility Options
- Medical Issues
- Plagiarism
- Scholastic Offences
- Copyright
- Health and Wellness

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