

**HMED 8220**  
**GRADUATE SEMINAR:**  
**DISEASE AND THE CULTURE AND POLITICS OF HEALTH**

Spring 2010  
Wednesday, 3.35 pm – 5.30 pm

Prof. Dominique A. Tobbell, Ph.D.  
Program in the History of Medicine

---

In this graduate seminar we will examine how concepts of disease and health have changed over time and across place. We'll move from debates over the identity of the Black Death in 14<sup>th</sup> century Europe to the treatment of infectious diseases in Imperial China and colonial India, and to the contested diagnoses of AIDS and fetal alcohol syndrome in late 20<sup>th</sup> century United States. Along the way we'll evaluate the different methodological approaches used by scholars to study the history of disease, and we'll examine the ways in which social values, cultural assumptions, and political interests have shaped how diseases have been defined, experienced, and treated, and we'll consider the role that diseases have played in the shaping of health care institutions, policies, and practices. At the same time, we'll examine the processes of medicalization and demedicalization; colonialism, post-colonialism, and the politics of state-building; the ecological understandings of disease, environmentalism, and the politics of place; and the increasingly visible role of the politicized consumer and patient activist in late 20<sup>th</sup> century health care politics.

**Course Requirements**

The focus of this graduate seminar is on detailed and careful reading of the assigned texts, and lively and engaged in-class discussion of the texts. As such, evaluative emphasis will be placed on class participation and short weekly response papers to the reading. There will be no final writing assignment for this course.

*Leading Discussion and Participation:* At each of our meetings, one or two students (depending on final class numbers) will lead discussion of the weekly reading. This will mean formulating a list of discussion questions ahead of time and steering the course of the discussion during the seminar.

*Weekly Response Papers:* Students will write weekly response papers to the week's reading assignments (2-4 pages). A good response paper not only consists of a summary of the texts but also includes your critical response to the texts as well as your analysis of the material found in the texts. This means that you will be assessing the information found in the texts and stating your position towards it. It isn't necessary to analyze and respond to every aspect of a text. In fact, it is usually better to select from the text two or

three specific things to respond to and analyze -- perhaps something that particularly interests you, raises questions for you, or troubles you. Or you may want to contrast and compare the perspective presented by one author to the perspective offered by another. Whatever approach you wish to take is fine, as long as you provide evidence to support your position, and as long as it demonstrates your comprehension of the material and your ability to think critically about it.

Your response paper should have an introduction (just one paragraph)—a mini overview of your paper—which includes your thesis statement. This is a sentence or two in which you state the argument *you* will be making in this paper. Your paper should also include a brief summary of the texts you are responding to that includes a concise statement of the authors' arguments and an overview of how they made their case. In other words, what evidence did the author use? It is very important that you demonstrate that you understand what the author is trying to communicate, but it is equally important that you do this as concisely as possible. The remainder of the paper should be *your* critical response to the reading; it is where *you* evaluate the author's argument, and where you tie this reading into other readings and the themes of the course. Be sure to include why you responded as you did, offering relevant supporting ideas, examples, details, and explanations from the text itself, other readings, and from class.

## **Syllabus**

### **January 19**

#### **Disease and Disease-Concepts in History**

- Charles Rosenberg, "Framing Disease: Illness, Society, and History," in Rosenberg and Janet Golden (eds.), *Framing Disease: Studies in Cultural History*
- Oswei Temkin, "The scientific approach to disease: specific entity and individual sickness," *The Double Face of Janus and Other Essays in the History of Medicine*, pp. 441-455.
- Adrian Wilson, "On the history of disease-concepts." *History of Science* (2000) 38: 271-319.
- Andrew Cunningham, "Identifying diseases in the past: cutting through the Gordian Knot," *Asclepio* (2002) 54(1): 13-34.

### **January 26**

#### **Historiography of the Black Death**

- Ole J. Benedictow, "Part One: What was the Black Death?" *The Black Death 1346-1353: The Complete History* (The Boydell Press, 2004), pp. 3-54.
- Vivian Nutton (ed.) *Pestilential Complexities: Understanding Medieval Plague* (The Wellcome Trust, 2008), pp. 1-114.

### **February 2**

#### **Diagnostic uncertainty, sexuality, and the French Pox in Early Modern Europe**

- Claudia Stein, "The Meaning of Signs: Diagnosing French Pox in Early Modern Augsburg," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* (2006) 80(4): 617-648.

- Kevin Siena, "Pollution, promiscuity, and the Pox: English venereology and the Early Modern Medical Discourse on Social and Sexual Danger," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* (1998) 8(40): 553-574.
- William Eamon, "Cannibalism and Contagion: Framing Syphilis in Counter-Reformation Italy," *Early Modern Science and Medicine* (1998) 3(1): 1-31.
- Roger French and Jon Arrizabalaga, "Coping with the French Disease," in French, Arrizabalaga, Cunningham, et al, *Medicine from the Black Death to the French Disease*, pp. 248-287.

## **February 9**

### **Disease as Cultural Lens**

- Joan Jacob Brumberg, *Fasting Girls: The History of Anorexia Nervosa*

## **February 16**

### **Social History and the Disease Experience**

- Barbara Bates, *Bargaining for Life: A Social History of Tuberculosis, 1876-1938*

## **February 23**

### **Polio, Germ Theories, and the "New Public Health"**

- Naomi Rogers, *Dirt and Disease: Polio Before FDR*

## **March 2**

### **The Experience and Transformation of Breast Cancer**

- Robert A. Aronowitz, *Unnatural History: Breast Cancer and American Society*

## **March 9**

### **Disease and the Politics of State-Building**

- Margaret Humphreys, *Yellow Fever in the South*.
- Mariola Espinosa, "The threat from Havana," *Journal of Southern History* (2006) 72(3) 541-568.

## **March 16**

### **SPRING BREAK**

## **March 23**

### **Race, Disease, and the (Post)Colonial Enterprise**

- David Arnold, "Occidental therapeutics and Oriental bodies" and "Cholera" in Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in 19<sup>th</sup> Century India*, pp. 11-60, 159-199.
- Warwick Anderson, "Immunities of Empire: Race, Disease, and the New Tropical Medicine," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* (1996) 70(1): 94-118.
- Roberta Bivins, "'The English Disease' or 'Asian Rickets'? Medical Responses to Postcolonial Immigration," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* (2007) 81: 533-568.

## **March 30**

### **Ecological Perspectives on Global Disease**

- Randall Packard, *The Making of a Tropical Disease: A Short History of Malaria*, pp. 1-149
- Susan Jones, *Death in a Deadly Package: A Short History of Anthrax*, pp. 1- 127, 225-276

## **April 6**

### **Geography, Environment, and Disease in China**

- Marta Hanson, "Robust northerners and delicate southerners: the nineteenth-century invention of a southern medical tradition." In Judith Farquhar and Marta Hanson (eds). *Positions: East Asia Culture Critiques* (1998) 6(3): 515-550.
- Yang, B. (2010). "The Zhang on Chinese Southern Frontiers: Disease Constructions, Environmental Changes, and Imperial Colonization." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 84(2): 163-192.
- Andrews, B. J. (1997). "Tuberculosis and the assimilation of germ theory in China, 1895-1937." *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 52: 114-157.
- Hilary A. Smith, "Understanding the *jiaoqi* experience: the medical approach to illness in 7<sup>th</sup> century China," *Asia Major* (2008).

## **April 13**

### **The Industrial and Urban Politics of Disease**

- David Rosner and Gerald Markowitz, "Silicosis and the politics of disability, 1930-1960," in Rosenberg and Golden (eds.), *Framing Disease*, pp. 185-205.
- Keith Wailoo, *Dying in the City of the Blues: Sickle Cell Anemia and the Politics of Race and Health*

## **April 20**

### **The Cultural Politics of Chronic Disease**

- Robert A. Aronowitz, *Making Sense of Illness: Science, Society, and Disease*

## **April 27**

### **Patient Activism and Disease Politics**

- Stephen Epstein, *Impure Science: AIDS, Activism, and the Politics of Knowledge*

## **May 4**

### **The Making and Career of a Modern Diagnosis**

- Janet Golden, *Message in a Bottle: The Making of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome*