History 066  
Disease, Culture and Society in the Modern World: Comparative Perspectives

Diego Armus  
Trotter 220  
Phone: 8094, e-mail: darmus1  
Office Hours: W 1:30-2:30  
F 12:30-1:30

Emphasizing on Latin America, but also discussing European, African, Asian, and North American cases, this course will deal with the diverse ways historians and scholars from other disciplines have been discussing the sociocultural dimensions of certain diseases in specific places and periods. Topics include strategies of public health in colonial and neocolonial contexts; changing ideas about contamination, hygiene, segregation, and contagion; specific epidemic outbreaks and the cultural politics of blame and responsibility; the individual and collective experience of illness; the class, ethnic and racial dimensions that accompanied the efforts to understand certain diseases; metaphors and representations of certain diseases in the media, cinema and in literature; the emergence of health care professions and institutions and the persistent presence of alternative healing cultures.

Requirements

1. Readings:
   Required readings are listed in the course schedule below. A list of books available for purchase follows. All required readings are on Blackboard and marked in this syllabus with an asterisk (*). Blackboard materials are chapters, articles or excerpts of books, most of them available at McCabe library.

2. Writing:
   First paper will take the form of a book review of about 1,500-1,800 words of one or several books. It is advisable to discuss with me in advance your selection.

   Second paper of about 2,500 words can take a variety of forms, such as: 1. a critical review of a problem as it was discussed by the secondary literature; 2. a paper on a specific topic or disease involving the use of primary sources; 3. an exercise in historical fiction in which you deal with an imaginary disease in a specific space, time, and biomedical context and explore the individual and collective experiences –at the material and symbolic levels- associated with it. An outline and bibliography for this assignment is mandatory.

   A more detailed information about these two written assignments will be provided in class. For those who are not familiar with modes of historical writing, writing conventions, and source documentation I recommend to read Richard Marius and Melvin Page, A Short Guide to Writing about History. Students must complete all writing assignments to pass the course.

3. Class participation:
   Each meeting one or more students will be in charge of commenting on the readings (up to 10 minutes), raising questions and leading the discussion. It is my intention to run this course in colloquium format. Consequently readings must be completed prior to class. You should come to every class, be prepared with questions and thoughts about the readings and participate fully in the discussions. I strongly recommend writing a commentary, paragraph, several questions or a brief outline stating your initial reaction to the assigned reading in order to facilitate your
participation in class discussions. Active participation is vital to receiving a good final grade. Unexcused absences will result in a lower grade.

Books
Nancy Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics Race, Gender and Nation in Latin America* (Cornell, 1991)

Tentative Course Schedule.

Week 1 (Jan 22)
Introduction

Week 2 (Jan 29)
Ways of Writing on the History of Disease
Charles Rosenberg, “Framing Disease: Illness, Society and History” (*)
Alfons Labisch, “Transcending the Two Cultures in Biomedicine”, Huisman and Warner, *Locating Medical History* (*)
Diego Armus, “Disease in the Historiography of Modern Latin America”, in Armus, *From Malaria to AIDS*

Cholera and Social Order
Charles Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: America in 1832, 1849 and 1866* (*)
Nancy Gallagher, “Cholera Goes out of Control”, in *Egypt’s Other Wars. Epidemics and the Politics of Public Health* (*)

Week 3 (Feb 5)
Tuberculosis: From Romantic Disease to Public Health Issue
Susan Sontag. *Illness as Metaphor*
David Barnes, *The Making of a Social Disease. Tuberculosis in Nineteenth-Century France*, (*)

Week 4 (Feb 12)
Tropical Diseases in the Periphery of the World

Malaria
Nancy Stepan, “‘The Only Serious Terror in these Regions’: Malaria Control in the Amazon”, in Armus, From Malaria to AIDS

Yellow Fever
Ilana Lowy, “What / Who Should Be Controlled? Opposition to Yellow Fever Campaigns in Brazil, 1900-1939”, in Andrew Cunningham, Western Medicine as Contested Knowledge (*)

Chagas
Marilia Coutinho, “Tropical Medicine in Brazil: The Case of Chagas’ Disease”, in Armus, From Malaria to AIDS
Simone Petraglia Kropf et al, “Biomedical Research and Public Health in Brazil: the Case of Chagas Disease”, Social History of Medicine, 16, April 2003, pp. 11-129 (*)
http://www.uta.edu/chagas/

video material: Houses of Fire

Week 5 (Feb 19)
Tropical Diseases and the Rockefeller Foundation

Steve Palmer, “Central American Encounters with Rockefeller Public Health, 1914-1921” (*)
Anne-Emanuelle Birn, “Revolution the Scatological Way: The Rockefeller Foundation’s Hookworm Campaign in 192-s Mexico”, in Armus, From Malaria to AIDS

Week 6 (Feb 26)
Leprosy and Exclusion
Diana Obregón, “The State, Physicians and Leprosy in Modern Colombia”, in Armus, From Malaria to AIDS
Susan Burns, “From ‘Leper Villages’ to Leprosaria: Public Health, Nationalism and the Culture of Exclusion in Japan”, in Strange and Bashford, eds. Isolation (*)


Public Health, Morality and Venereal Diseases
Katherine Bliss, “Between Risk and Confession. State and Popular Perspectives of Syphilis Infection in Revolutionary Mexico” in Armus, From Malaria to AIDS
Donna Guy, Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires, pp. 77-109 (*)

Week 7 (March 5)
Public Health, Morality and Venereal Diseases
Allan Brandt, Racism and Research. The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment (*)
Susan Reverby, More than a Metaphor. An Overview of the Scholarship of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study (*)
Amy Fairchild, “The Uses and Abuses of Tuskegee (*)
Virginia Berridge, “Introduction. AIDS and Contemporary History” (*)
Steven Epstein, *Impure Science: AIDS, Activism and the Politics of Knowledge*

video materials: *Welcome to the new world order: AIDS in Vietnam
Odo Ya*

**Week 8**

**Spring Break**

**Week 9 (March 19)**

**The Public and Private Sides of Hygiene**

Nancy Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs*;

**First Paper Due**

**Week 10 (March 26)**

**Disease, Nation and Eugenics**

Frank Dikötter, “Race and Culture: Recent Perspectives on the History of Eugenics”, *American Historical Review*, vol. 103, No. 2, pp. 467-478

Nancy Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics Race, Gender and Nation in Latin America*, especially Introduction, 2, 3, 5, 6, Conclusion)

**Week 11 (April 2)**

**Migration and Disease**

Lara Marks and Michael Worboys, “Introduction to Migrants, Minorities and Health” (*)

Alan Kraut, “A Plague of Nativism: the Cases of Chick Gin and ‘Typhoid Mary” (*) and “Viruses and Bacteria Don’t Ask for a Green card’: New Immigrants and Old Fears” (*)


**Week 12 (April 9)**

**Smallpox and the Politics of Vaccination**


Peter Wright, “Global Immunization. A Medical Perspective”, *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 41, 5, 1995 (*)

video material: *The Last Virus. Smallpox in Bangladesh*

**Week 13 (April 16)**

**Healings and Healers**

Brian du Toit, “Ethnomedical (Folk) healing in the Caribbean”, in Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, eds., *Healing Cultures: Art and Religion as Curative Practices in the Caribbean and its Diaspora* (*)

Margarite Fernández Olmos, “La Botanica Cultural: Ars Medica, Ars Poetica” (*)

Lydia Cabrera, “Black Arts: African Folk Wisdom and Popular Medicine in Cuba”(*)

Ester Rok, “Santeria as a Healing Practice in Diaspora Communities: My Cuban Jewish Journey with Oshun” (*)

Steve Palmer, “Hybrid Healers. Beyond the Arcadian Image of Popular Medicine in Latin
America” (*)


Video materials: Spirit Doctors

Week 14 (April 23)
Smoking, between Habit and Disease
Matthew Hilton, Smoking in English Popular Culture, 1800-200. Perfect Pleasures (*)
Richard Klein, Cigarettes are Sublime (*)

Week 15 (April 30)
Media and Disease
Kelly Cole, “Exorcising “Men in White” on Television”, in Lester D. Friedman, Cultural Sutures. Medicine and Media (*)
Christie Milliken, “Continence of the Continent. The Ideology of Disease and Hygiene in World War II Training Films”, in Lester Friedman, Cultural Sutures. Medicine and Media (*)
Kirsten Ostherr, “‘Invisible invaders’. The Global Body in Public Health Films”, in Lester Friedman, Cultural Sutures. Medicine and Media (*)