

University of Pennsylvania
HSOC 443/HSPV 620
Spring 2021

Draft Syllabus

Remembering Epidemics

Tuesdays 1:30-4:30 p.m.

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Description:

During a deadly pandemic that has profoundly disrupted all aspects of society, just as the question of public commemoration has vigorously and sometimes violently re-entered our country's public discourse, one question has remained surprisingly neglected: How do we remember epidemics? This course confronts this question through an analysis of traumatic epidemics in Philadelphia's history, and of the broader landscape of public memory. We devote special attention to the yellow fever epidemic of 1793, but we also consider the 1918-1919 influenza, AIDS, and COVID-19, among others. Students conduct archival, documentary, site-based, and other kinds of research in the process of analyzing the origins, course, and consequences of epidemics, as well as the nature of public commemoration.

Course Objectives

This course is designed to further develop students' research, analytical and writing skills in a collaborative atmosphere. Students will complete an original research project through critical reading and step-wise assignments that will culminate in a final project. By the end of the course, students will have honed skills in primary and secondary source research, and the construction of an analytical scholarly argument and paper. Students will build an argument based on their analysis of primary sources, and appropriately situate their argument within the literature of history and history-adjacent disciplines. In addition, student will continue to develop skills in critical analysis through weekly reading assignments and discussions.

Course Structure

We will meet synchronously on Tuesday afternoons. (Please save the entire 1:30-4:30 time slot for course activities.) Course readings, online discussions, research, and writing assignments will be done asynchronously.

Discussion Questions and Response Papers (DQ&RP): On alternating weeks, students are required to submit either 3-5 discussion questions or a one-page response paper on that week's assigned readings by 10:00 a.m. (on Canvas). Guidelines for discussion questions and response papers will be posted on Canvas.

Use of Electronic Devices

Electronic devices are indispensable tools—and irresistible distractions. For that reason, devices are not permitted during class, except for specific in-class research exercises. To prepare for class, students should take notes on paper, and bring the notes to class. Students may bring to class a tablet or e-reader that can be laid flat on the table, to refer to readings. Printing readings and taking notes on the printed copies are strongly recommended. Students with specific recognized accommodations that involve electronic devices should contact the instructors for clarification.

Evaluation

You will be evaluated and graded on a combination of class participation, assignments, and your final research project.

Class Participation (including written discussion questions and response papers): 30%

Cumulative Intermediate Assignments: 20% (5% each)

First Draft Workshop: 10%

Final Project: 40%

Participation

Showing up for class, and meaningful participation during class, is critical for the success of this class. You must have read, thought about, and be prepared to discuss the assigned readings before each class. Participating includes both speaking thoughtfully and listening attentively. Attendance is required.

Research Project

This class will build toward the completion of a final research project through a series of short assignments that will assemble the critical elements of the research throughout the semester. The quality of the final project will depend on the time and effort put into these intermediate assignments.

Cumulative Intermediate Assignments

Each of these short assignments is worth 5% of your grade. They are designed to build on one another. Specific assignment instructions will be provided. The assignments are:

Assignment 1: Topic Proposal (Due: March 5)

Assignment 2: Annotated Bibliography (Due: March 19)

Assignment 3: Historiography Review (Due: April 2)

Assignment 4: Outline of Final Project (Due: April 9)

First Draft of Final Project: Due April 14

Peer Feedback on First Drafts: Due April 20

Final Project: Due May 7

Final Project

The project is worth 40% of your total grade; the in-class workshop of first drafts is worth an additional 10%. The following is a brief description of the assignment.

You are required to propose a memorial of some kind (monument, event, program, or other) to an epidemic in Philadelphia's history: yellow fever, influenza, or AIDS. The proposal includes a lengthy essay based on original into both the epidemic and the practice of memorialization. We will devote class time to discussing possible topics and approaches to this project. This essay must include a clearly articulated thesis that is well-supported with primary source evidence and appropriately situated within the existing historiography and other secondary literature.

First Draft Workshop

During class we will have an in-class workshop for your first drafts. You will each be assigned to read one or two of your colleagues' drafts before class, and must come prepared with at least six points of critique for your colleagues, before class. You are also responsible for submitting three questions, along with your draft. Your questions and your points of critique must be submitted through Canvas. Together these will be worth 10% of your final grade.

Overview of Grading Standards:

These are the criteria used to assign letter grades for each assignment, and for class participation.

A = outstanding, nearly flawless work; assignment(s) completed thoroughly; technically excellent; evidence of creativity and/or inspiration, deep contextual grasp of issues and connections among issues; and ability to synthesize individual elements into broader historical analysis.

B = good work; all aspects of assignment(s) completed thoroughly and competently; technically competent (though perhaps not perfect) in spelling, grammar, format, citations; presentation adequate; does not consistently show inspiration, creativity, deeper grasp of connections, interpretations, and/or synthesis among elements.

C = less than fully satisfactory work; assignment(s) not completed thoroughly or according to instructions; basic grasp of issues not always evident; more than occasional technical flaws.

D = basic work of course (or assignment) not done, little or no effort evident.

Work displaying most of the characteristics of an A and some of the characteristics of a B will be graded A-; work displaying most of the characteristics of a B and some of the characteristics of an A will be graded B+; etc.

Academic Integrity

The University of Pennsylvania has clear policies regarding academic integrity and plagiarism: <http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/index.html>.

Schedule of Topics and Assignments

[subject to change, with notification in advance]

January 26

Introduction and Overview
(no assigned readings)

February 2

How Memorials Work, Part I

February 9

Yellow Fever, Part I

February 16

Influenza, Part I

February 23

AIDS

March 2

Yellow Fever, Part II

March 5: Final Project Topic Proposal Due

March 9

Influenza, Part II

March 16

How Memorials Work, Part II

March 19: Final Project Annotated Bibliography Due

March 23

Remembering Race

March 30

Remembering Class

April 2: Final Project Historiography Review Due

April 6

Remembering Immigration and Ethnicity

April 9: Final Project Outline Due

April 13

Writing Workshop

April 14: Final Project First Draft Due

April 20

Peer Review Workshop: post comments on classmates' drafts by 12 noon

April 27

Final Project Symposium: In-Class Presentations

***May 7
Final Project Due***