

**Department of History and Sociology of Science
University of Pennsylvania
Fall 2009**

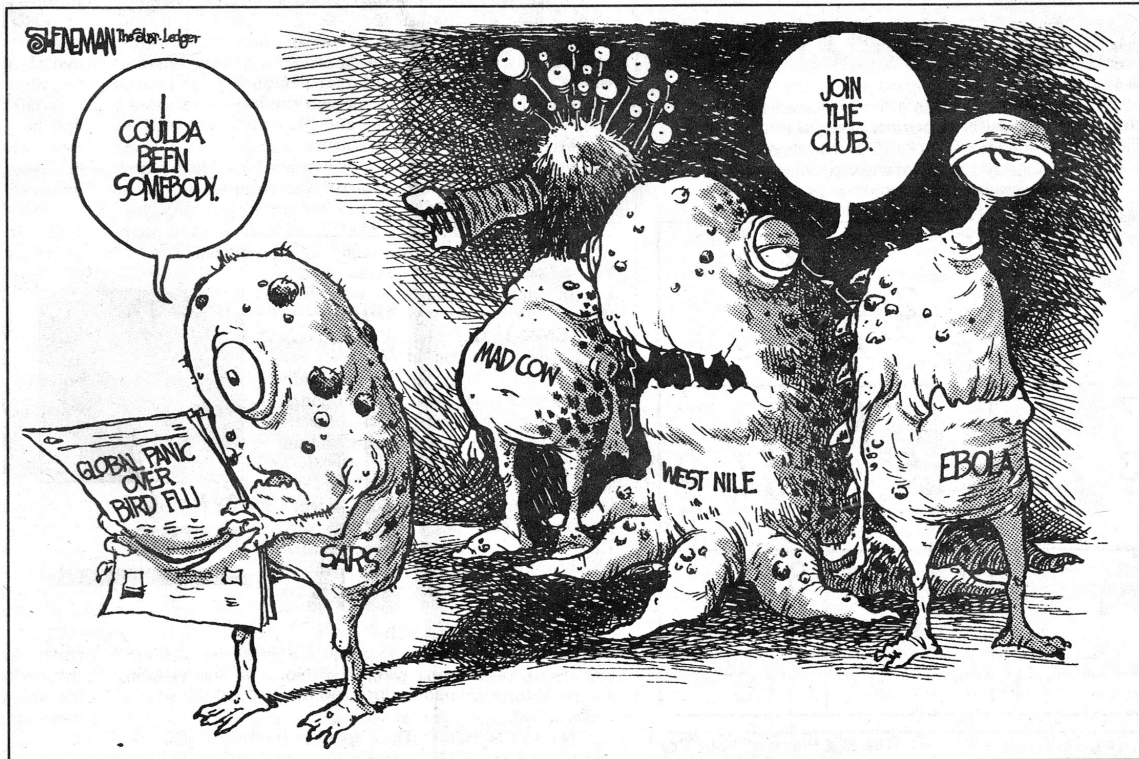
**MLA Proseminar
HSSC 559:**

EPIDEMICS IN HISTORY

M 5:30-8:10 p.m.
David Rittenhouse Labs 2N36

Office Hours:
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Description:

Dramatic and terrifying in their immediacy, outbreaks of epidemic disease have devastated and transformed human societies since the beginnings of recorded history. From the Black Death to cholera to AIDS, epidemics have wrought profound demographic, social, political, and cultural change all over the world. Through a detailed analysis of selected historical outbreaks from the 14th

to the 21st century, this seminar examines the ways in which different societies in different eras have responded in times of crisis. The class also analyzes contemporary “pandemic preparedness” policy and responses to health threats including bioterrorism, SARS, avian flu, and swine flu.

Requirements:

- attendance at all class meetings;
- active participation in class discussions;
- all required readings, completed before class meeting for which they are assigned;
- discussion questions based on required readings, submitted before each class;
- short paper (4-5 pages), on topic to be assigned;
- group research project (including database, presentation, poster, and paper) on pandemic preparedness and assessment of contemporary health threats in historical perspective.

Detailed instructions for the written assignments will be distributed in class and posted on the course’s Blackboard site (under “Assignments”).

Readings: Assigned books are available for purchase at Penn Book Center (34th and Sansom Sts.). Shorter required readings are available in a coursepack which can be purchased at Campus Copy Center (3907 Walnut St.). Additional documents and links relevant to the course will be posted on the course’s Blackboard site.

Attendance and participation: These are not optional. Participation involves active listening and engagement—more than simply showing up, and more than sheer volume of oral output.

Grading:

Class attendance and participation:	30%
Discussion questions:	10%
Short paper:	15%
Final group project:	
• database	10%
• poster	5%
• presentation	10%
• essays/analysis	20%

Consistent effort and improvement will be weighted heavily in grading.

A general overview of grading standards:

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.

Academic Integrity

The University Code of Academic Integrity is central to the ideals of the university, and of this course. Students are expected to be independently familiar with the Code

<<http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/osl/acadint.html>>

and to recognize that their work in the course is to be their own original work that truthfully represents the time and effort applied. All material (including concepts) derived from the work of others must be appropriately cited. The university and I take violations of the Code very seriously, and they will be handled in a manner that fully represents the extent of the Code and that befits the seriousness of its violation. **When in doubt, cite. Failure to cite or explicitly acknowledge sources is plagiarism, regardless of intention.**

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

[All books assigned in their entirety, unless otherwise noted]

WEEK 1 September 14

Introduction and Overview
(no assigned readings)

WEEK 2 September 21

- Charles Rosenberg, “What Is an Epidemic? AIDS in Historical Perspective” [coursepack]
- Richard Preston, The Hot Zone

WEEK 3 September 28

- Charles Rosenberg, “Explaining Epidemics” [coursepack]
- Powell, Bring Out Your Dead

WEEK 4 October 5

- Rosenberg, The Cholera Years

WEEK 5 October 12

- Steven Johnson, The Ghost Map
- John Snow, "The Cholera Near Golden Square" [coursepack]

Friday October 16: Short Paper Due (“Homage to Richard Preston”)

WEEK 6

October 19 No Class (Fall Break)

Week 6 reading:

- Dan Baum, “Jake Leg: How the Blues Diagnosed a Medical Mystery,” The New Yorker, September 15, 2003 [coursepack]
- Jill Lepore, “It’s Spreading,” The New Yorker, June 1, 2009 [coursepack]

WEEK 7

October 26

Research Workshop I

[final project research assignment TBA]

WEEK 8

November 2

- John Barry, The Great Influenza (chapters TBA)

Friday November 6: Short Op-Ed Paper Due (part of Final Research Project)

WEEK 9

November 9

- Priscilla Wald, Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative (chapters TBA)
- Kate Muir, “The first time I saw a child die of measles it blew my mind,” The Times (London), September 12, 1995 [coursepack]
- Steve Connor, “The Terror is Infectious,” The Independent (London), April 20, 1995 [coursepack]

WEEK 10
November 16

- Jonathan Engel, The Epidemic: A Global History of AIDS

WEEK 11
November 23

Research Workshop II

[final project research assignment TBA]

WEEK 12
November 30

- Thomas Abraham, Twenty-First Century Plague: The Story of SARS
- Richard Preston, “West Nile Mystery” [coursepack]

WEEK 13
December 7

Final group presentations in class

Friday December 11
All Final Project Materials Due