



**Approved in 44<sup>th</sup> BoA Meeting (24-11-2021)**

**Course number** : HS 543  
**Course Name** : Epidemics in World History: From the Black Death to COVID-19  
**Credit Distribution** : 3-0-0-3  
**Intended for** : B.Tech/M.A./Ph.D.  
**Prerequisite** : None  
**Mutual Exclusion** : None

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### **1. Preamble:**

How have epidemics been critical to the unfolding of global history? Exploring major epidemics from the 14<sup>th</sup> Century Black Death that swept across Europe to the current COVID-19 crisis, this course will examine the medical and social factors that give rise to global health crises and the geopolitical, cultural and social consequences of epidemics. Situating epidemics within the broader narrative of world history enables us to look at how epidemics have both connected and alienated different countries, communities, and individuals across lines of wealth, power, status, race, class and sexuality. The course will also reflect on what we can learn from the history of epidemics about how to rebuild, recover and move forward as societies in the aftermath of a global pandemic.

### **2. Course Modules with quantitative lecture hours:**

1. Introduction: Medicine, Disease and World History [3 hours]
  - a. Basic features of world history vs. area studies
  - b. Benefits of placing medicine and disease within a world history framework
  - c. Evolution of medicine and understanding of disease across time and space
  - d. Emergence of modern scientific medicine
2. Medieval Pandemics: Leprosy and The Black Death [6 hours]
  - a. Prevalence and treatment of leprosy in the middle ages
  - b. The persecuted leper in medieval Europe: myth or reality?
  - c. Global trading links in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century and the spread of the Black Death
  - d. Medieval responses to the plague
3. Epidemics and Conquest: Smallpox and Syphilis in the Americas [4 hours]
  - a. The Columbian Exchange
  - b. Role of smallpox in the Conquest of the Americas
  - c. Syphilis: the Columbian Theory
  - d. Spread of syphilis and impact on society
4. Epidemics and Literature: Shakespeare in Quarantine, Tuberculosis in the Romantic Era [6 hours]
  - a. Plague in 17<sup>th</sup> Century England and its effect on theaters

- b. Representation of plague in Shakespeare's plays (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*)
  - c. Industrialization and tuberculosis
  - d. "Consumption" and Romantic Literature
- 5. Diseases and Colonialism: Cholera and Plague in India, Yellow Fever in Africa and Haiti, Malaria in Africa [6 hours]
  - a. Role of yellow fever in the Haitian revolution
  - b. The disease barrier of Africa
  - c. Malaria, quinine prophylaxis and the scramble for Africa
  - d. The science of bacteriology in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century
  - e. British colonial policies and the spread of cholera in India
- 6. Epidemics and War: the 1918 Influenza pandemic [3 hours]
  - a. Medical understanding of influenza in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century
  - b. Conditions of WWI that enabled spread of the disease
  - c. Global mortality of the epidemic
- 7. Epidemics and Sexuality: AIDS in the 1970s [3 hours]
  - a. Cultural and social factors in the emergence of AIDS in Africa and the United States.
  - b. AIDS, stigmatization, and hysteria
- 8. Epidemics and Globalization: SARS, EBOLA, ZIKA, COVID-19 [9 hours]
  - a. Social and ecological factors behind emergence of zoonotic viruses.
  - b. Mobility, migration and spread of viruses.
  - c. The role of WHO
  - d. Superstition and cultural resistance to treatments
  - e. Politics, the State, and national security
  - f. Pandemics and behavioral change
- 9. Hope and recovery [2 hours]
  - a. smallpox vaccine
  - b. eradication drive for polio
  - c. what we can learn from past medical successes and challenges.

### 3. Text books:

There is no textbook for this course. Readings will be assigned from the reference texts listed below.

### 4. References:

- Arnold, David. *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth century India*, Berkeley and London, University of California Press, 1993
- Barry, John M. *The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of The Deadliest Pandemic in History*. Penguin, 2005.
- Crawford, Dorothy H. *Deadly Companions: How Microbes Shaped Our History*. OUP Oxford, 2007.
- Crosby, Alfred W. *Ecological Imperialism, the Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Crosby, Alfred W. *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*. Vol. 2. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003.
- Honigsbaum, M. *The Pandemic Century: A History of Global Contagion from The Spanish Flu to Covid-19*. Penguin Books, 2020.

Barroll, Leads, *Politics, Plague and Shakespeare's Theater: the Stuart years*, Ithaca & London, Cornell University Press, 1991

Pati, Biswamoy and Mark Harrison (eds), *The Social History of Health and Medicine in Colonial India*, *Routledge Studies in Asian History*, London: Routledge, 2009.

Price-Smith, Andrew T. *Contagion and Chaos: Disease, Ecology, and National Security In The Era of Globalization*. MIT press, 2008.

Ranger, Terence, and Paul Slack, eds. *Epidemics and ideas: essays on the historical perception of pestilence*. Cambridge University Press, 1995.)

Rawcliffe, Carole, *Leprosy in Medieval England*, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006

Snowden, Frank M. *Epidemics and Society: From the Black Death to the Present*. Yale University Press, 2019.

Tumbe, Chinmay, *Age of Pandemics (1817-1920): How they shaped India and the world*. HarperCollins, 2020.

Watts, Sheldon J. *Epidemics and History: Disease, Power, and Imperialism*. Yale University Press, 1999.

#### **Additional resources:**

Newspaper reports from NYTimes, The Guardian etc.

#### **5. Similarity with the existing courses:**

(Similarity content is declared as per the number of lecture hours on similar topics)

S.N.	Course Code	Similarity Content	Approx. % of Content
1.	Hs 391	Some discussion of Black Death and Conquest of Americas	10%
2.	HS 393	Some discussion of malaria and yellow fever in Africa	5%

#### **6. Justification of new course proposal if cumulative similarity content is >30%:**