

Epidemics and the Early Modern Body

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Zoom Seminar

Fall 2020

Th 1:30-3:20

Course Description

What can we learn from the early modern period about the pandemic we find ourselves in? Students in this seminar will be reading classic and new scholarly works on early modern epidemics and human responses to them. We will devote particular attention to conceptions of the body that emerged from epidemics, or that affected responses to them. We will also engage with the notions of the collective body, the body of the state, and the body of knowledge as they relate to early modern epidemics. The readings vary broadly in methodology, geographical scope, and historiographical scale.

Assignments

1. Participation in zoom discussions is welcome and expected.
2. Every week, starting week 2, a student will present a book on the reading list.
3. Contributions to the [Epidemic Histories](#) website. The extent of this contribution can be decided during the semester.
4. Participation in round-table on a selection of primary sources on week 7.
5. Presentation of final project on week 13.
6. Final paper (ca. 5000 wds). This can be a review essay or a paper based on primary sources. This assignment can be replaced by contributions to [Epidemic Histories](#). Either option needs to be approved by the end of November. The final paper/project is due **December 10**.

Calendar of Readings

1. Introduction. Please browse [Epidemic Histories](#). A few days before class please post on canvas a link to one or more articles about the current pandemic that you would like to discuss.
2. G. Geltner, *Roads to Health: Infrastructure and Urban Wellbeing in Later Medieval Italy*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).
<http://hdl.handle.net/10079/bibid/15004125>
3. Jane L. Stevens Crawshaw, *Plague Hospitals: Public Health for the City in Early Modern Venice*, The History of Medicine in Context (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2012).
4. John Henderson, *Florence Under Siege: Surviving Plague in an Early Modern City* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019).
<http://hdl.handle.net/10079/bibid/14593780>
5. Nükhet Varlik, *Plague and Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean World: The Ottoman Experience, 1347-1600*, electronic resource (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015)
<http://hdl.handle.net/10079/bibid/15314881>
6. Ruth MacKay, *Life in a Time of Pestilence: The Great Castilian Plague of 1596-1601*, electronic resource (Cambridge ; New York, NY, 2019).
<http://hdl.handle.net/10079/bibid/15365599>
7. Students' selections from: Dean Phillip Bell, *Plague in the Early Modern World: A Documentary History* (Routledge, 2019).
8. Andrea Alice Rusnock, *Vital Accounts: Quantifying Health and Population in Eighteenth-Century England and France*, Cambridge Studies in the History of Medicine

(Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

9. Elizabeth A. Fenn, *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82*, 1st ed (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001).
10. Paul Kelton, *Cherokee Medicine, Colonial Germs: An Indigenous Nation's Fight against Smallpox, 1518-1824*, *New Directions in Native American Studies*, volume 11 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015).
11. Paul F. Ramírez, *Enlightened Immunity: Mexico's Experiments with Disease Prevention in the Age of Reason*, *Stanford Scholarship Online* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2019).
<http://hdl.handle.net/10079/bibid/13940643>
12. Kevin Patrick Siena, *Rotten Bodies: Class and Contagion in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).
<http://hdl.handle.net/10079/bibid/14593813>
13. Students' presentations

Final projects due December 10.