

ANTHROPOLOGY 2U03: PLAGUES AND PEOPLE

Spring 2021

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Lecture: Blended; Tuesdays & Thursdays from 6:30pm-9:30pm EST

Office: Virtual office
Office Hours: Wednesdays from 1:00-2:00pm EST via zoom (see link on A2L). Email for appointment.

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Course Description

ANTHROP 2U03 *Plagues and People* is a consideration of the role played by infectious disease in human evolution. The social and biological outcomes of major epidemics and pandemics, past and present, will be explored using the Anthropology of Infectious Disease theoretical framework. The current pandemic is not the focus of our course and will not be studied in depth. This course is focused on the intersection of bioscience aspects of disease and pathogens; social determinants of health historically and currently; big events such as environment catastrophes and war; and listen to the voice of the lived experience of plagues.

We live in an era obsessed with killer germs, epidemics and pandemics. There is a growing sense of vulnerability as a growing list of pathogens becomes visible to investigators. Epidemics and plagues, however, are not new; they have influenced the course of human history for thousands of years. This course considers the origins, antiquity, and impact of plagues on human societies from an anthropological, biosocial perspective.

The class sessions begin with an exploration of models and general principles of infectious disease to establish a framework for understanding plagues. The focus then shifts to a discussion of specific plagues. We will consider historic, contemporary, and newly-identified plagues with a view to understanding why they emerge, how their occurrence is intimately linked to human behaviour, and how they transform societies.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Develop an understanding of the relationship between human behavior and the emergence of epidemics.
- Appreciate the importance of studying historic plagues for understanding current and future plagues.
- Discover anthropological frameworks for interpreting the biosocial origins and consequences of plagues.
- Think critically about contemporary issues and debates around disease.

The course objectives are achieved through full participation in readings, viewing films, engaging with lectures, and completing assigned work.

Required Materials and Texts

Slack, Paul. 2012. *Plague: A Very Short Introduction*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

You can purchase the text online from Amazon:

<https://www.amazon.ca/Plague-Short-Introduction-Paul-Slack/dp/0199589542>

Hard copies of the textbook and e-copies can also be ordered through the McMaster bookstore. Keep in mind, however, that shipping is often slow.

The specific mandatory course readings for the second-half of the course are available on Avenue to Learn.

Class Format

1. **Blended learning** using pre-recorded asynchronous and live synchronous lectures. All live lectures will be recorded and then posted to Avenue to Learn. See dates listed below on the syllabus to determine whether a lecture is live or recorded. Note taking PowerPoint slides will also be available on Avenue to Learn. Please complete readings before class.
2. **Live Question and Answer sessions:** In addition to the blended learning approach to this course and recorded lectures posted to Avenue to Learn, Dr. Cowall and Dr. Medeiros will host live question and answer sessions via Zoom. Schedule will be posted in advance on Avenue to Learn.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Midterm – 50%
2. Reading Response Activity – 10%
3. Final Exam – 40%

Course Evaluation – Details

Midterm (50%), May 25

This test consists of multiple choice and short answer, and you will have 2 hours to complete the test. It covers all assigned readings, lectures, and films up to the midterm test date. More information will be provided well in advance of the test and the instructions will be provided on Avenue to Learn.

Reading Response Activity (10%), due Thursday, May 27 at 11:59pm EST.

This assignment is a 500-word response (in academic writing style) to a topic that will be submitted to Avenue to Learn as a Word document. More details will be provided the first week of class on Avenue to Learn.

Final Exam (40%), June 17

This test consists of multiple choice and short answer, and you will have 2 hours to complete the test. It is not cumulative. More information will be provided well in advance of the test and the instructions will be provided on Avenue to Learn.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1

May 4 – Introductory lecture (Live lecture)

Please read the syllabus thoroughly. Zoom link on Avenue for lecture.

May 6 – Elements of a plague (Recorded lecture)

Readings: Slack, Paul. 2012. Chapter 1. Plague, What is in a Name?

Slack, Paul. Chapter 2. Pandemics and Epidemics.

Week 2

May 11 – The language of plague terms and concepts (Recorded lecture)

Readings: None.

May 13 – Black Death: Introduction to the microbe and its history (Live lecture)

Readings: Slack, Paul. 2012. Chapter 3. Big Impacts.

Zoom link on Avenue for lecture. Our first question and answer session will take place after the lecture.

Week 3

May 18 – Black Death within culture (Recorded lecture)

Readings: Slack, Paul. 2012. Chapter 4. Private Horrors.

May 20 – Black Death and culture change (Live lecture)

Readings: Slack, Paul. 2012. Chapter 6. Enduring Images.

Zoom link on Avenue for lecture. **The Dropbox OPENS for the assignment at 9:00am EST.** Our second question and answer session will take place after the lecture.

Week 4

May 25 – Midterm

Our Avenue to Learn will have a discussion forum for students to ask questions about the midterm in advance.

May 27 – Reflecting on the Black Death and the ‘White Plague’ (Tuberculosis; Live lecture)

Readings: Farmer, P. (2000). The consumption of the poor: Tuberculosis in the 21st century. *Ethnography*, 1(2): 183-216.

Zoom link on Avenue for lecture. **The Dropbox CLOSES for the assignment at 11:59pm EST.** There is no question and answer session after this live lecture.

Week 5

June 1 – Secret Plague Part I: Untold stories of AIDS (Recorded lecture)

Readings: Netflix – History 101 – Episode 9 AIDS (20 minutes & 28 seconds).

June 3 – Secret Plague Part II: Untold stories of AIDS and Tuskegee (Live lecture)

Brandt, Allan M. 1978. "Racism and research: The case of the Tuskegee Syphilis study." *The Hastings Center Report*, 8(6): 21-29.

Zoom link on Avenue for lecture. Our third question and answer session will take place after the lecture.

Week 6

June 8 – Speckled Plague: Smallpox and the story of vaccination (Recorded lecture)

Readings: Slack, Paul. 2012. Chapter 5. Public Health

Riedel S. (2005). Edward Jenner and the history of smallpox and vaccination. *Proceedings (Baylor University. Medical Center)*, 18(1): 21–25.

June 10 – Blue death: How cholera got this name (Live lecture)

Readings: Farmer, P., Almazor, C., Bahnsen, E., et al. (2011). Meeting cholera's challenge to Haiti and the world: A joint statement on cholera prevention and care. *PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases*, 5(5): e1145.

Kelly, A., Koudakossi, H., & Moore, S. (2017). Repellents and new 'spaces of concern' in global health. *Medical Anthropology*, 36(5): 467-478.

Zoom link on Avenue for lecture. Our fourth question and answer session will take place after the lecture.

Week 7

June 15 – Plagues among us (Live lecture)

Readings: Slack, Paul. 2012. Chapter 7. The lessons of histories

Sadruddin, A. & Inhorn, M. (2020). Aging, vulnerability and questions of care in the time of COVID-19. *Anthropology Now*, 12(1): 17-23.

Oxlund, B. An anthropology of the handshake. *Anthropology Now*, 12(1): 39-44.

Optional: Netflix – Coronavirus Explained – Episode 1 This Pandemic (26 minutes and 49 seconds).

Zoom link on Avenue for lecture. Our fifth question and answer session will take place after the lecture.

June 17 – Final Exam

Our Avenue to Learn will have a discussion forum for students to ask questions about the exam in advance.

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

The graded assignment is a 500-word response paper in academic writing style. This is not a research or essay paper. You will be provided with the topic and materials that you will respond to. Once completed, this will be submitted to the Dropbox in Avenue to Learn as a non-encrypted PDF in MS Word or compatible document. It must be typed in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced with standard one-inch margins. A rubric outlining the expectations of the assignment will be provided the first week of class on Avenue to Learn.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

| MARK | GRADE |
|-------------|--------------|
| 90-100 | A+ |
| 85-90 | A |
| 80-84 | A- |
| 77-79 | B+ |
| 73-76 | B |
| 70-72 | B- |
| 67-69 | C+ |
| 63-66 | C |
| 60-62 | C- |
| 57-59 | D+ |
| 53-56 | D |
| 50-52 | D- |
| 0-49 | F |

Late Assignments

Assignments are due per our schedule outlined in the course syllabus. Notification ahead of deadline is expected from students when they encounter challenges. Students who do not submit their assignment on time will be graded zero after five calendar days, inclusive of weekend days.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

Any students experiencing circumstances interfering with the deadlines will contact the instructors immediately to discuss your situation and decide on the course of action.

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

University Policies

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Privacy Protection

In accordance with regulations set out by the Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act, the University will not allow return of graded materials by placing them in boxes in departmental offices or classrooms so that students may retrieve their papers themselves; tests and assignments must be returned directly to the student. Similarly, grades for assignments for courses may only be posted using the last 5 digits of the student number as the identifying data. The following possibilities exist for return of graded materials:

1. Direct return of materials to students in class;
2. Return of materials to students during office hours;
3. Students attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with assignments for return by mail;
4. Submit/grade/return papers electronically.

Arrangements for the return of assignments from the options above will be finalized during the first class.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

ADVISORY STATEMENTS

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

AUTHENTICITY / PLAGIARISM DETECTION

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

COURSES WITH AN ON-LINE ELEMENT

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

ONLINE PROCTORING

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

REQUESTS FOR RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC TERM WORK

[McMaster Student Absence Form \(MSAF\)](#): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar’s Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.