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HISTORY 35205:
DEATH, DISEASE, AND MEDICINE IN 20TH-CENTURY AMERICAN HISTORY

SPRING 2025
STANLEY COULTER HALL 239
TTH 1:30-2:45 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Covid-19 reminds us that despite medical technology and scientific advance, disease continues to shape our identities and interactions with others. In this course, we will investigate the role of disease and medicine on twentieth-century American culture and society. From polio to AIDS, ideas about risk, contagion,



health, and death have been intricately linked to politics, race, gender, class, and ethnicity.

*This course meets requirements for Purdue's Medical Humanities Certificate. Students interested in the Medical Humanities certificate should review the [website](#).

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course encourages students to recognize, most fundamentally, that disease has a history, and that its history is embedded in culture. We will analyze the ways in which societal assumptions about health and sickness help to determine the course of an epidemic. We will examine the role of doctors, public health workers, politicians, and patients in public health crises. We will analyze written work by historians of medicine along with documentary films to develop a solid understanding of the social implications of disease. By the end of the semester, students should be able to relate particular diseases and epidemics with larger trends in history in order to understand the relationship between health and history.

REQUIRED READINGS

5 books: (AVAILABLE AT THE BOOKSTORE AND AT AMAZON.COM):

- Awdish Rana, *In Shock: My Journey from Death to Recovery and the Redemptive Power of Hope*
- Markel, Howard, *When Germs Travel: Six Major Epidemics That Have Invaded America and the Fears They Have Unleashed*
- Oshinsky, David, *Polio: An American Story*
- Renfro, Paul, *The Life and Death of Ryan White: AIDS and Inequality in America*
- Kalanithi, Paul, *When Breath Becomes Air*

This course does not require any prerequisites.

This syllabus is subject to change and will be updated on Brightspace as needed.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

<i>REQUIREMENTS</i>	<i>DATE</i>	<i>% of final grade</i>
midterm	Feb 25 in class	30
reading quizzes	1/30, 2/20, 4/3, 4/17, 4/29	25 (5 points each)
Final paper	5/7 by 11:59 p.m. on Brightspace	30
Attendance		15

94-100% = A

73-77 = C

91-93	= A-	71-73	= C-
88-90	= B+	68-70	= D+
83-87	= B	63-67	= D
81-83	= B-	60-62	= D-
78-80	= C+	< 60%	= F

Important Notes:

My policies are simple:

- Attend class. If you have an excused absence (grief or medical or athletic), notify both me and Annemarie Bryans (in charge of attendance) in a joint email (wkline@Purdue.edu; abryans@Purdue.edu) along with the necessary evidence
- Sign YOUR NAME ONLY on attendance sheet (do not sign in for anyone else)
- Put away your phone.
- Close your laptop.
- Take notes with pen and paper.
- Do the reading on time.
- Turn in assignments on time.
- Be respectful.
- Use common sense.
- Do your own work.
- Do not plagiarize or cheat. If you do, you risk failing the course.
- Do not use ChatGPT or other AI writing software.
- Late papers will be penalized one-third grade per day [example: an A paper that is one day late becomes an A- paper]

***Email etiquette:** Outside of class or office hours, communicate with your professor by email. State the reason for your email in the subject line (ex: “question about essay”). Include a full salutation (ex: “Dear Professor”), and closing with your full name (ex: “Sincerely, Robert Owen”). Please use full sentences, correct grammar, and punctuation.

***Electronic Devices in the Classroom:** Please do not use electronic devices during class. No iPhones, iPads, or laptops. If you want to take notes, use pen/pencil and paper. If we are discussing the reading and you only have access to it on a laptop or iPad, let me know in advance.

SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Please note: Reading assignment in parentheses should be completed before the designated class. Be prepared to answer questions in response to that day’s reading assignment.

PART 1: DOCTORING

Week One: Introductions

Tues Jan 14 Introduction

Thurs Jan 16 All in My Power
(read *In Shock* Intro & ch. 1)

Week Two

Tues Jan 21 All in My Power
(read *In Shock* chs. 2-4)

Thurs Jan 23 What Makes a Good Doctor?
(read *In Shock* chs. 5-7))

Week Three

Tues Jan 28 Medical Education
(read *In Shock* chs. 8-10)

Thurs Jan 30 quiz/ discussion of *In Shock* including Q&A with Dr. Awdish!
(read *In Shock* chs. 11-12 & “communication tips”)

PART II: GERMS!

Week Four

Tues Feb 4 Vaccines
(read *When Germs Travel* Introduction)

Thurs Feb 6 Tuberculosis
(read *When Germs Travel* Ch. 1)

Week Five

Tues Feb 11 Bubonic Plague
(read *When Germs Travel* ch. 2)

Thurs Feb 13 Immigration
(read *When Germs Travel* ch. 3)

Week Six

Tues Feb 18 Mexican Immigration
(read *When Germs Travel* ch 4)

Thurs Feb 20 quiz/ discussion on *When Germs Travel* (chs. 1-4)

Week Seven

Tues Feb 25 **MIDTERM** *bring blue book to class!

Thurs Feb 27 No class

PART III: POLIO

Week Eight

Tues Mar 4 Flu
(read *Polio* Introduction, chs. 1-2)

Thurs Mar 6 FDR and Disability
(read *Polio* chs. 3-4)

Week Nine

Tues Mar 11 Sister Kenny
(read *Polio* chs. 5-6)

Thurs Mar 13 Medical Education
(read *Polio* chs. 7-9)

Week Ten

Tues Mar 18 SPRING BREAK

Thurs Mar 20 SPRING BREAK

Week Eleven

Tues Mar 25 The Quota System
(read *Polio*, chs. 10-12)

Thurs Mar 27 Ethics of Human Experimentation
(read *Polio*, chs. 13-14)

Week Twelve

Tues April 1 The Polio Crusade
(read *Polio*, chs. 15-16)

Thurs April 3 discussion and quiz on Polio, entire

PART IV: AIDS

Week Thirteen

Tues April 8 HIV/AIDS activism:
guest lecture by Lowell Kane, director, LGBTQ center, Purdue
(read *The Life and Death of Ryan White*, Intro., 1&2)

HOW WRITTEN WORK WILL BE EVALUATED:

I am less interested in a regurgitation of facts than a thoughtful analysis of the question, based on evidence from readings, lectures, discussions, and films.

Planning and organization- Before you jump into answering the question, make sure that you have prepared an outline of your essay. Each paragraph that you then write should correspond to a specific point that you have in your outline.

Introduction and thesis- Each question requires that you come up with an argument—or thesis—that directly answers the question. This thesis statement should be in your introductory paragraph. The rest of the introduction should state the meaning and significance of the issue as it will be discussed in the body of the essay (you don't need to spend time repeating or paraphrasing the question, or describing the specific scheme of organization that your essay will take).

Body-The body of your paper should provide examples and evidence to support your thesis. You may express an opinion, but your opinion should be based on the materials and evidence.

Conclusion-Use your final paragraph not only to summarize your main points, but to demonstrate the significance of your findings.

Proofreading- reread your essay in order to confirm that you have conveyed what you intended.

RUBRIC:

This rubric may help you succeed on all written assignments:

30 (A+): Very strong response. Well written. Lively. Well informed and draws on readings. Historically correct.

29 (A): Strong. Clearly written. Draws effectively on readings. Correct throughout.

28 (A-): Strong response. Draws evenly on the readings. No errors.

27 (B+): Solid, but may have one weaker element. Clearly written, no errors.

26 (B): Solid but may include some errors.

13 (C): Hard to read. Includes errors. Incomplete answer.

IMPORTANT NOTES AND PROCEDURES:

Attendance Policy:

This course follows the [University Academic Regulations regarding class attendance](#), which state that students are expected to be present for every meeting of the classes in which they are enrolled. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class and lateness will be noted. When conflicts or absences can be anticipated, such as for many

University-sponsored activities and religious observations, you should inform me and Annemarie Bryans (grader in charge of attendance) of the situation as far in advance as possible. For unanticipated or emergency absences when advance notification is not possible, contact me as soon as possible by Purdue email. For absences that do not fall under excused absence regulations (see below), this course follows the following procedures:

1. Unless it falls under the University excused absence regulations (see below), any work due should be submitted on time via our course Brightspace.
2. If that day's class involves assessed work such as a test or presentation, you and I will plan if and how you can make up the work, following the assignment guidelines. This plan must be done before the next class period, so again, email me immediately when you know that you will miss class.
3. The most important consideration in any absence is how it will affect your achievement of the assignment objectives and the course learning outcomes.

Academic integrity:

Academic integrity is one of the highest values that Purdue University holds. Individuals are encouraged to alert university officials to potential breaches of this value by either emailing integrity@purdue.edu or by calling 765-494-8778. While information may be submitted anonymously, the more information is submitted the greater the opportunity for the university to investigate the concern. More details are available on our course Brightspace under University Policies and Statements.

Incidents of academic misconduct in this course will be addressed by the course instructor and referred to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (OSRR) for review at the university level. Any violation of course policies as it relates to academic integrity will result minimally in a failing or zero grade for that assignment, and at the instructor's discretion may result in a failing grade for the course. In addition, all incidents of academic misconduct will be forwarded to OSRR, where university penalties, including removal from the university, may be considered.

Nondiscrimination Policy:

A hyperlink to Purdue's full Nondiscrimination Policy Statement is included in our course Brightspace under University Policies and Statements.

Mental Health/Wellness Statement:

If you find yourself beginning to feel some stress, anxiety and/or feeling slightly overwhelmed, try [Therapy Assistance Online \(TAO\)](#), a web and app-based mental health resource available courtesy of Purdue Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). TAO is available to all students at any time by creating an account on the [TAO Connect website](#), or downloading the app from the App Store or Google Play. It offers free, confidential well-being resources through a self-guided program informed by psychotherapy research and strategies that may aid in overcoming anxiety, depression and other concerns. It provides accessible and effective resources including short videos, brief exercises, and self-reflection tools.

If you need support and information about options and resources, please contact or see the [Office of the Dean of Students](#). Call 765-494-1747. Hours of operation are M-F, 8 a.m.- 5 p.m.

If you find yourself struggling to find a healthy balance between academics, social life, stress, etc., sign up for free one-on-one virtual or in-person sessions in West Lafayette with a [Purdue Wellness Coach at RecWell](#). Student coaches can help you navigate through barriers and challenges toward your goals throughout the semester. Sign up is free and can be done on BoilerConnect. Students in Indianapolis will find support services curated on the [Vice Provost for Student Life website](#).

If you're struggling and need mental health services: Purdue University is committed to advancing the mental health and well-being of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of mental health support, services are available. For help, such individuals should contact [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) at 765-494-6995 during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or by going to the CAPS offices in [West Lafayette](#) or [Indianapolis](#).

Emergency Preparation:

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor's control. Relevant changes to this course will be posted onto the course website or can be obtained by contacting the instructors or TAs via email or phone. You are expected to read your @purdue.edu email on a frequent basis.

A link to Purdue's Information on [Emergency Preparation and Planning](#) is located on our Brightspace under "University Policies and Statements." This website covers topics such as Severe Weather Guidance, Emergency Plans, and a place to sign up for the Emergency Warning Notification System. I encourage you to download and review the [Emergency Preparedness for Classrooms document](#).

The first day of class, I will review the **Emergency Preparedness plan for our specific classroom**, following Purdue's required [Emergency Preparedness Briefing](#). Please make note of items like:

- The location to where we will proceed after evacuating the building if we hear a fire alarm.
- The location of our Shelter in Place in the event of a tornado warning.
- The location of our Shelter in Place in the event of an active threat such as a shooting.