

McGill University, Department of History and Classical Studies
HIST 596: Canada Health History
Theme for 2014-15: Epidemics and Public Health

Instructor: Elsbeth Heaman

Office hours: Thursday 1-3 at Ferrier 490

“But again and again there comes a time in history when the man who dares to say that two and two make four is punished with death.” Albert Camus, *The Plague*

When cholera swept around the world in 1832, people struggled to make sense of the experience: medically, morally, and politically. A new, free, and progressive country like Canada should, in theory, have been exempt from such old-world calamities associated with backwardness, filth, poverty, and fatalism. Cholera initiated a century of urgent, practical soul-searching about how processes of human history should be scrutinized and managed. Typhus in 1847, smallpox in 1885 and influenza in 1918 were no less politically and intellectually confounding. When authorities tried to quarantine or hospitalize people, or destroy their property in an effort to clean up local environments, they found their (often very new and fragile) legitimacy tested. Tuberculosis had its own perplexities as the disease, commonly attributed to overcrowding, spread through Indigenous populations in defiance of that precept.

Epidemics and public health unraveled nineteenth-century laissez-faire government. Liberal states had minimal mandates to manage private life; they saw themselves as facilitators of market forces. But what if the market brought death? Adam Smith had made airy promises that such a thing could never be—but there it was, spectacularly on display wherever epidemics were imported. To what extent did epidemics indict market forces or the state—whether liberal or authoritarian? To what extent did they unbind people from ordinary constraints of civil behaviour? What changed first: the medical profession’s ability to give good advice or the state’s administrative abilities? How did a long term shift from epidemic to endemic disease change things? These are some of the scholarly questions we will be addressing in this seminar.

Assignments

Grading Scheme

Attendance and participation: 25%

Writing Assignment I: 25% due December 3

Major Research Essay: 50%, including:

1000-word proposal (worth 10%) due February 23

7500-word essay (worth 40%) due April 8

This is a reading and research-intensive seminar. Students must come to class prepared to speak to weekly readings. Every week half the class will pose and half the class will answer two questions about the assigned readings. Students will be graded on class participation; a written paper based primarily on readings, and a major research essay on a topic of their choosing, approved by the instructor.

Writing Assignment I. How did scientific or medical or other kinds of evidence inform the public debates around or responses to a given epidemic? You should focus your analysis on one particular epidemic crisis but also situate it in the larger context of epidemics and public health studied in this

course to date. You may base it on assigned secondary readings but should consider reading a little further into suggested supplementary or other relevant readings. The goal is to get inside the reasoning of people at the time and convey how they understood the problems—medical, social, political—that the epidemic was seen to create or intensify or perhaps to solve. Consider how social and professional or scientific events speak to one another. You may use this initial paper to lay the groundwork for your major research essay.

Major Research Essay: Students will formulate their own research essay in dialogue with the instructor.

McGill University Policies

McGILL UNIVERSITY VALUES ACADEMIC INTEGRITY. THEREFORE ALL STUDENTS MUST UNDERSTAND THE MEANING AND CONSEQUENCES OF CHEATING, PLAGIARISM AND OTHER ACADEMIC OFFENCES UNDER THE CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

Every student has a right to write essays, examinations and theses in English or in French except in courses where knowledge of a language is one of the objects of the course. Chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit (sauf sans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

Schedule

D1: Fall 2014

September 3: Introduction

September 10: Camus *The Plague*

Giorgio Agamben, "[The State of Exception](#)," (lecture European Graduate School 2003)

Suggested Further Reading

Giorgio Agamben, *The State of Exception* (trans. Kevin Attell) (2005)

Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*

Thucydides on the plague of Athens, in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*

Richard Adams, on Efrafa in *Watership Down*

September 17: The Shock of Cholera

[Report of the Commission Appointed by the Sanitary Board of the City Councils, to Visit Canada, for the Investigation of the Epidemic Cholera, Prevailing in Montreal and Quebec](#) (Philadelphia, 1832);
[Report of the Commissioners Employed to Investigate the Origin and Nature of the Epidemic Cholera of Canada](#) (New York, Board of Health, 1832).

Charles A. Farley, [A Sermon Preached in the Unitarian Chapel, Montreal, on Wednesday, 6th February, 1833, being a day appointed for public thanksgiving by His Excellency the governor-in-chief, for deliverance from the ravages of cholera](#) (1833).

J.G. Mountain, [A Retrospect of the Summer and Autumn of 1832, being a sermon delivered in the Cathedral Church of Quebec, on Sunday, the 30th December, in that year](#) (Quebec, 1833).

[Report of the Special Sanitary Committee of Montreal upon cholera and emigration for the year 1834](#)

(Montreal, 1835)

Suggested Further Reading:

Mark Harrison, *Contagion: how commerce has spread disease* (2012)

Peter Baldwin, *Contagion and the State in Europe, 1830-1930* (1999)

Sheldon Watts, *Disease and Medicine in World History* (2003).

September 24: Social History of Cholera

Geoffrey Bilson, *A Darkened House: Cholera in Nineteenth-Century Canada* (1980)

Erwin H. Ackerknecht, "[Anticontagionism between 1821 and 1867,](#)" *International Journal of Epidemiology* 38, 1 (2009): 7-21 (reprint) along with Christopher Hamlin, "[Commentary: Ackerknecht and 'Anticontagionism': A Tale of Two Dichotomies,](#)" *IJE* 38, 1 (2009): 22-27.

Richard Evans, "[Epidemics and Revolutions: Cholera in Nineteenth-Century Europe,](#)" *Past and Present* 120 (August 1988): 123-46. (jstor)

Charles E. Rosenberg, "[Disease in History: Frames and Framers,](#)" *Milbank Quarterly* 67 (1989): 1-15.

Suggested Further Reading:

Donald Fithian Stevens, "Eating, Drinking, and Being Married: Epidemic Cholera and the Celebration of Marriage in Montreal and Mexico City, 1832-1833," *Catholic Historical Review* 92, 1 (January 2006): 74-94.

Charles Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (2009 reprint)

RJ Morris, *Cholera 1832: The Social Response to an Epidemic* (1976)

Patrice Bourdelais, *Histoire du choléra en France, 1832-1854 : une peur bleue* (1987)

Christopher Hamlin, *Public Health and Social Justice in the Age of Chadwick: Britain, 1800-1854* (1998)

W Coleman, *Death is a Social Disease: Public Health and Political Economy in Early Industrial France* (1982)

A.F. Laberge, *Mission and Method: The Early Nineteenth-Century French Public Health Movement* (2002)

October 1: Post-Social History of Cholera

Michel Foucault, "Panopticism," in [Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,](#) 195-228.

Patrick Joyce, "The Water and Blood of the City: Naturalising the Governed," ch 2 of *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (Verso, 2003).

Bruce Curtis, "[Social Investment in Medical Forms: The 1866 Cholera Scare and Beyond,](#)" *Canadian Historical Review*

Roger Cooter, "[After Death/After 'Life': The Social History of Medicine in Post-Postmodernity,](#)" *Social History of Medicine* 20, 3 (2007): 441-64.

Suggested Further Reading:

Francois Delaporte, *Disease and Civilization: The Cholera in Paris, 1832* (trans. Arthur Goldhammer) (1986)

Pamela Gilbert, *Cholera and Nation: Doctoring the Social Body in Victorian England* (2008)

Christopher Hamlin, *Cholera: The Biography* (2009)

October 8: Imperial Disease

[British American Journal of Medical and Physical Science](#) 3, 3 (July 1847) *passim*. (discussion of typhus amidst other professional interests)

Dan Horner, "['The Public Has the Right to be Protected from a Deadly Scourge': Debating Quarantine, Migration and Liberal Governance during the 1847 Typhus Outbreak in Montreal,](#)" *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 23, 1 (2012): 65-100

Dan Horner, “[“If the evil now growing around us be not staid’: Montreal and Liverpool Confront the Irish Famine Migration as a Transnational Crisis in Urban Governance,”](#) *Histoire sociale/Social History* 46, 92 (November 2013): 349-66.

Laurence Monnais and Hans Pols, “Health and disease in the colonies: medicine in the Age of Empire,” in Robert Aldrich and Kirsten McKenzie, eds. *The Routledge History of Western Empires* (Routledge 2014), 270-84.

Suggested Further Reading:

Roy M. MacLeod, *Disease, Medicine and Empire: Perspectives on Western Medicine and the Experience of European Expansion* (1988)

Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (2003)

Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano, eds. *The Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* (2009)

Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines* (2006)

Vijay Prashad, “Native Dirt/Imperial Ordure: The Cholera of 1832 and the Morbid Resolutions of Modernity,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 7, 3 (September 1994): 243-60.

October 15: Sanitarianism

Primary and secondary articles, links, etc at Christian Genest’s website, “[Documentation on the Montreal Sanitary Association](#),” including

Patricia Thornton and Sherry Olson, “A deadly discrimination among Montreal infants, 1860-1900,” *Continuity and Change*, 16 (2001): 95-135.

David R. Bellhouse and Christian Genest “A public health controversy in 19th century Canada,” *Statistical Science*, 20 (2005): 178-192.

Denyse Baillargeon, “A ‘Bad Mother’ Called Quebec,” chapter 1 of *Babies for the Nation: The Medicalization of Motherhood in Quebec, 1910-1970* (2009); trans by Donald Wilson of *Un Québec en mal d’enfants: La médicalisation de la maternité 1910-1970*. Ebook in library

Suggested Further Reading:

Baillargeon, *Babies for the Nation*

Cynthia Comacchio, ‘Nations are Built of Babies’: *Saving Ontario’s Mothers and Children 1900-1940* (1993).

Robert Gagnon, *Questions d’égouts: Santé publique, infrastructures et urbanisation à Montréal au XIXe siècle* (2006)

Jamie Benidickson, *The Culture of Flushing: A Social and Legal History of Sewage* (2007)

Heather MacDougall, *Activists and Advocates: Toronto’s Health Department, 1883-1983* (2009)

Bruce Curtis, “Sanitary Medicine and the Social Body: The Case of National Civil Registration and Statistics in Canada, 1855-75,” *CBMH* 20, 2 (2003): 73-101.

October 22: Sanitarian Demographic Catastrophes I

W.H. Hingston, [Lecture on Vaccination](#) (Montreal, 1876)

Michael Bliss, *Plague: How Smallpox Devastated Montreal* (2003)

Suggested Further Reading:

Paul-André Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal depuis la Confédération* (1992).

Richard Evans, *Death in Hamburg: Society and Politics in the Cholera Years, 1830-1910* (1987)

Nadja Durbach, *Bodily Matters: The Anti-Vaccination Movement in England, 1853-1907* (2005)

Coral Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog: Women, Workers, and Vivisection in Edwardian England* (1985)

J.T.H. Connor, "Cruel Knives? Vivisection and Biomedical Research in Victorian English Canada," *CBHM* 14 (1997): 37-64.

Katherine Arnup, "'Victims of Vaccination?' Opposition to Compulsory Immunization in Ontario, 1900-90," *CBHM* 9 (1992): 159-76.

October 29: Sanitarian Demographic Catastrophes II

James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, & the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (2013)

Suggested Further Reading:

Maureen Lux, *Medicine that Walks: Disease, Medicine, and Canadian Plains Native People, 1880-1940* (2001)

Mary-Ellen Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies: Aboriginal Health and Healing in British Columbia, 1900-50* (UBC, 1999).

L. Barron and James Waldrum, eds. *1885 and After: Native Society in Transition* (Regina, 1986).

George F.G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* (1936, reissued UTP 1992).

Laura Lynn Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780-1870* (Winnipeg: Manitoba UP, 1994).

Sarah Carter, *Aboriginal People and the Colonizers of Western Canada to 1900* (Toronto, 1999).

Treaty Seven Elders, et al. *The True Spirit and Intent of Treaty Seven* (Montreal, 1996). Ebook.

Arthur J. Ray, Jim Miller and Frank J. Tough, *Bounty and Benevolence: A History of Saskatchewan Treaties* (2000)

J.R. Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada* (Toronto: UTP, 2009).

November 5: Solutions and Eradications

Nancy Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women and the Microbe in American Life* (1999)

Suggested Further Reading:

Michael Worboys, *Spreading Germs: Disease Theories and Medical Practice in Britain, 1865-1900* (2007)

J.T.H. Connor, "Listerism Unmasked: Antisepsis and Asepsis in Victorian Anglo-Canada," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 49 (1994): 207-39.

November 12: Solutions and Eradications

Peter Bryce, "[Report on the Indian Schools of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories](#)," Ottawa, 1907.

Peter Bryce [The Story of a National Crime, Being a Record of the Health Conditions of the Indians of Canada from 1904 to 1921](#) (Ottawa, 1922).

Suggested Further Reading:

J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: UTP, 1996).

Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC, 1986).

Stephen J. Rockwell, *Indian Affairs and the Administrative State in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: UP, 2010).

Robin Jarvis Brownlie, *A Fatherly Eye: Indian Agents, Government Power, and Aboriginal Resistance in Ontario, 1918-1939* (Oxford, UP, 2003).

Dean Neu and Richard Therrien, *Accounting for Genocide: Canada's Bureaucratic Assault on Aboriginal People* (Fernwood, 2003).

John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879-1986* (Winnipeg: Manitoba UP, 1999).

November 19: Influenza

Mark Humphries, *The Last Plague: Spanish Influenza and the Politics of Public Health* (2013)

Suggested Further Reading:

Magda Farhni and Esyllt W. Jones, *Epidemic Encounters: Influenza, Society and Culture in Canada 1918-20* (UBC Press, 2012).

Esyllt W. Jones, *Influenza 1918: Disease, Death, and Struggle in Winnipeg* (2007).

Mary-Ellen Kelm, "British Columbia First Nations and the Influenza Pandemic of 1918-19," *BC Studies* 122 (Summer 1999): 23-48.

November 26: Eugenics and the end of exception?

Helen MacMurchy, "[Medical Inspection of Schools](#)," *CMAJ* 3, 2 (Feb 1913): 111-117.

J.G. Adami, "[Unto the third and Fourth Generation!: A Study in Eugenics](#)," *CMAJ* 2, 11 (November 1912): 963-82.

[Canadian Bulletin of Medical History](#) 31, 1 (2014), special issue on Eugenics, *passim*.

Suggested Further Reading:

Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945* (1990)

Sebastian Normandin, "Eugenics, McGill, and the Catholic Church in Montreal and Quebec: 1890-1942," *CBHM* 15 (1998): 59-86.

Erica Dyck, *Facing Eugenics: Reproduction, Sterilization, and the Politics of Choice* (2013)

December 3: First Writing Assignment Due.

D2: Winter 2015

Students will largely devote the second semester to researching and writing their essays. We will meet in January to discuss some historiographical pieces and then

7 January: John Harley Warner, "The History of Science and the Sciences of Medicine," *Osiris* s2, 10 (1995): 164-93 and his "The Humanising Power of Medical History: responses to biomedicine in the 20th-century United States," *Medical Humanities* 37 (2011): 91-96.

14 January: Michael Worboys, "Practice and the Science of Medicine in the Nineteenth Century," *Isis* 102, 1 (March 2011): 109-115.

21 January: Steve Sturdy, "Looking for Trouble: Medical Science and Clinical Practice in the Historiography of Modern Medicine," *Social History of Medicine* 24, 3 (2011): 739-57.

January 28-February 23 We will continue to meet weekly to discuss readings assigned by students. Each student will recommend one article or book chapter to serve as a historiographical introduction to their research topic.

March 9-April 1 we will circulate students' research essays and meet to discuss them. Students will comment upon one another's essays.

April 8: Final essays due.