

Epidemics and Pandemics  
Fall 2020

This is a 10-week seminar with a plan for introductory topics (week 1) and concluding discussions (week 10) bracketing 16 presentations by participants. Each week, a specific epidemic will be outlined in the first hour in a 30-40-minute presentation with questions and discussion. The second hour of each week will be a 30-40-minute presentation on a specific factor in models of disease and mitigation, as well as how writers and filmmakers grapple with epidemics. If fewer than 16 are enrolled, topics can be eliminated or combined, or participants can choose 2 topics.

Proposed topics:

Week 1: Introduction to Epidemiology, Public Health and Overview (moderator)

Weeks 2-9: Specific Outbreaks (details on disease, transmission, mortality, vaccine status etc)

Malaria and Zika

Smallpox

Cholera

Typhoid

Ebola

Plague

HIV

Influenza

Weeks 2-9: Factors and Context (general outline and a few specific examples)

Epidemics and Crossing the Species Barrier (wet markets, pig farms, and avian flu)

Transportation and Epidemics (canals, ships and airplanes)

Vaccination and Quarantines

Corruption: Public Health versus Private Interests (Aaron Burr and the Manhattan Co, Flint etc)

Blame and Misinformation (Vaccine resistance, denialism and scapegoating; Cholera riots 1892)

Public Health, Sanitation and Crowding (factory farms, slums and major inflection points)

Epidemics as metaphor: Literature

Epidemics as entertainment and education: Film

Week 10:

Lessons Learned from COVID-19 and the current state of public health in the US (All)

Resources:

Sonia Shah "Pandemic" Farrar, Straus and Giroux 2016 (highly recommended for all)

Emily St. John Mandel "Station Eleven" 2014 (highly recommended for all)

2020 Ready or Not (pdf) Public Health pdf to be distributed to all

Suggested bibliography for other topics (articles, books etc.) available from moderator upon request

