

**Spring 2021  
HIS 301.02  
Reading and Writing History  
History of Epidemics**

**Online, synchronous and asynchronous—This means that we will meet via zoom (not in person) according to the weekly schedule. The class days are:**

**Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:00-4:20 pm EST**

**The semester runs from February 1 to May 8, 2021. All class materials are posted in the Blackboard (BB) course site and are organized in folders by week. Before each synchronous class meeting, I will send out a reminder and Zoom link 30 minutes before class. You can only attend via your Stony Brook email address that appears in Blackboard.**

**Professor Shobana Shankar**

**Associate Professor, History/Faculty Affiliate, Africana Studies**

**Please reach me via email at [shobana.shankar@stonybrook.edu](mailto:shobana.shankar@stonybrook.edu)**

**Office Hours Wednesdays, 3-4pm EST, Thursdays, 10-11 am, EST and by appointment via Zoom. It's fine to drop into office hours but usually much better to schedule a block of time with me in advance.**

### **Catalogue Description**

In-depth training course in the craft of history, with a systematic introduction to methods, analysis, synthesis, and writing. As the gateway course for the History major senior seminar, HIS 301 teaches students how to locate, organize, and analyze primary and secondary sources, distill the information in intelligible and meaningful writing, and convey one's findings in persuasive and articulate oral presentations. These skills are taught through a close analysis of a particular field or theme in history.

### **Detailed Description**

How have historians studied epidemics? This course offers students an in-depth exploration of past outbreaks, with focus on some topics like disease-specific events related to smallpox, polio, Ebola, and HIV; how historians collect and interpret primary and secondary sources; and the application of different lenses of political, social, economic, and cultural dynamics in the study of epidemics. Many of the cases will be drawn from African history and connected to wider global events. The goal is to produce and present research that analyzes complex and multi-layered dimensions of disease and medicine, which go far beyond biological causes and effects and have profound implications for the present and future.

### **\*\*The course fulfills the SBC ESI requirement: Evaluate and Synthesize Researched Information\***

If you are a History major graduating this spring or summer 2021, you must also enroll in HIS459 to complete the writing requirement. Otherwise, when you take HIS401 starting next year, your writing requirement will be automatically filled.

### ESI Learning Outcomes

1. Locate and organize information from a variety of appropriate sources.
2. Analyze the accuracy of information and the credibility of sources.
3. Determine the relevance of information.
4. Use information ethically and responsibly.

### Specific Learning Outcomes in HIS301.02 Epidemics

1. Identify useable sources to study epidemics through the specific disciplinary lens of history
2. Measure the relative strength of primary and secondary sources—how are they different, how to glean one from the other, how to use them together
3. Extract data from readings about history
4. Use Chicago Manual of Style citations correctly and embed references in oral presentations

### Time Management

1. This course is organized by weekly folders organized by methods in the history of disease. The weekly readings will be for Tuesdays and Thursdays—it is best to have it all done by Tuesday so we can discuss both days in class before your paper is due Friday.
2. It is not self-paced. All work has specific deadlines.
3. Plan to log into the class at least 3 times per week.
4. Besides our meeting time each week, you should plan to spend about 2-3 hours weekly on asynchronous work, including readings, writing, and listening/viewing multimedia presentations. If you are spending a long time on reading or writing, please consult me for tips on reading for comprehension, note-taking, and starting papers with brainstorming and outlines.

### Required Readings (All readings will be provided on Blackboard. Please note that because of delays caused by lack of library access, the readings are subject to change, but I will give advance notice.)

- There will be primary sources and videos we will watch that will also be uploaded to BB or emailed to you directly.
- **Please inform me right away if you do not have regular reliable access to a computer, the internet, Blackboard, or the books. The sooner we can communicate about any known problems, the better. But I understand that emergencies come up also and will count on you to keep me posted on any information about you that will affect your ability to meet obligations for this class.**

### How We Will Communicate

If you have questions related to the class—the organization, instructions for completing assignments, deadlines, etc., it is likely that others might, too. Please **email** me or drop in at office hours. I will respond within 48 hours, probably sooner.

### Required Assignments

1. **Participation:** Attendance and class discussion via chat on ZOOM or raising your hand will be the basis of your grade for participation, which will constitute **20% of your final grade**. Participation will make your weekly writing assignments much easier to complete. This will also include short informal presentations (10-15 minutes) I will ask you to do in class individually and in small groups.

2. **Writing Assignments:** You will complete weekly short papers of between 300 and 500 words. I will drop the two lowest grades out of the 14 at the end of the semester. Each of these will be due on Fridays. They will be based on readings and class discussion and address questions like the following:
- What kind of information can historians research about epidemics?
  - What sources can we collect? What sources are harder to find?
  - Do all people see epidemics the same way?
  - How can you make an effective argument from available evidence—without knowing everything?
  - Another possible weekly writing may be annotating sections of the reading.

**Rewrite Assignment:** Your group will develop a research question and plan for collection of sources on a specific epidemic and present it to the class for **20% of the final grade**.

Assessment	Deadline	Points in Final Grade
Attendance, discussion	Weekly	20
Weekly Writing, due Thursdays	Weekly, Fridays by noon	60
Revision of Weekly Paper into Longer Paper, 4-6 pp	May 6	20

**Please read emails from me—they will contain important information and reminders**

**Course Policies—please note that these are developed from the Faculty and Student Rights and Responsibilities (see below).**

1. If you miss class, please look over the BB folders for that week, get the notes from a classmate if you can, and make an appointment with me to go over any missed material.
2. The course will be discussion based with occasional lectures. We can records classes as long as everyone in the class is comfortable.
3. *Grade appeals:* If you feel I have made a mistake in grading your work, you may appeal it through the following process: You must 1) submit a *written* paragraph by email addressing my comments and why you feel the grade is mistaken or inappropriate, along with your paper with our comments on it. 2) We will review the appeal and then discuss it with you. I reserve the right to **raise or lower** the grade if I feel that we have erred in our evaluation.
4. *Attendance/Participation:* This is an unusual semester for all of us. I will take attendance but will also measure it by your completion of the assignments to the best of your ability.
5. *Cameras on if possible please:* I know some professors are insistent on this, but I understand some circumstances necessitate having the camera. A good compromise: think about how it's better for your education if I have my camera on. If you are speaking during class, you might put your camera on and then turn out if again, if possible.
6. If you find yourself missing a lot of classes and falling behind/not understanding the material, please get in touch with me.

#### Assignments Requirements

1. All papers will be submitted on BB, where it will be scanned by turnitin.com. Please do not email any papers as an attachment to email unless requested.
2. Put word count at the end of your paper.

3. Double-space and use 12-point (non-bold) font, with one inch margins. Papers that are too short will be penalized.
4. Number pages.
5. Please use a working title for your paper.
6. Use footnotes in Chicago Style Format. The format guidelines are posted on BB, and you can see examples below in the weekly reading schedule.
7. Late papers will not be accepted without a documented excused reason. With this excuse, you must complete the missed paper within the allotted time. If there is need for a make-up exam, the exam format may be different from the original.

### **Technical Requirements**

In order to participate fully, the computer you're using must conform to the following minimum recommended set-up:

- PC with Windows 10, or ● Macintosh with OS 10.13 or higher ● Latest version of Chrome, Firefox or Explorer; Mac users may use Chrome, Firefox or Safari. (A complete list of supported browsers and operating systems can be found on the My Institution tab of the Blackboard website)
- 8 GB RAM ● Cable modem or DSL are recommended ● Printer ● Word processing software (Microsoft Word) ● Speakers (either internal or external) or headphones ● Ability to download and install free software applications and plug-ins (note: you must have administrator access to install applications and plug-ins). ● Adobe Flash player with the latest update is needed for playing multiple videos throughout the course

### **Weekly Schedule**

#### **Week 1 February 2, 4**

#### **Why History Matters**

1. David S. Jones, "History in a Crisis—Lessons for COVID-19," *The New England Journal of Medicine* (March 12, 2020): 1681-3.
2. Andrew Sullivan, "A Plague is an Apocalypse: But It can Bring a New World," *New York Magazine*, (July 21, 2020). <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2020/07/coronavirus-pandemic-plagues-history.html>

**\*\*Write 300-500 words on readings.**

#### **Week 2 February 9, 11**

#### **Comparative History: Societies Across the World and Smallpox**

1. Donald Hopkins, *The Greatest Killer: Smallpox in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), preface + Chapter 1, "Variola Rex" (pp. xi-21)

**\*\*Write 300-500 comparing smallpox epidemics in different times periods/locations using 2 specific illustrations from texts/sources.**

#### **Week 3 February 16, 18**

#### **Demography, Deaths, and Other Morbidities: Quantitative Approaches**

#### **Library Session with E. Filstrup on Tuesday**

1. Alfred Crosby, "Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation in America," *The William and Mary Quarterly: A Magazine of Early American History* (1976): 289-299.

2. Sumner La Croix, "The Khoikhoi population, 1652-1780: A Review of the Evidence and Two New Estimates," *Studies in Economics and Econometrics* 42, no. 2 (2018): 15-34.

**\*\*Please write 300-500 words on any topic related to this week's readings and/or the Kelton talk. You can write on any topic, but here are some suggestions:**

1) Has epidemic history been used to portray Native American history/societies in certain ways that has created obstacles in revising our knowledge?

2) Does comparison of mass death events in human history work?

3) Why does counting people/census matter?

**Week 4 February 23, 25**

### **Diaries and Discovery: The Politics of Inoculation in Primary Sources**

1. Thomas H. Brown, "The African Connection: Cotton Mather and the Boston smallpox epidemic of 1721-1722," *JAMA* 260, no. 15 (1988): 2247-2249.
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZWZekTJFKg&list=PLh5mk8BxSPgg5aFiEjgLY1umT6JkTVYj0&index=4> [History in Public Service Announcements—can you spot an error?]
3. <http://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/special-edition-on-infectious-disease/2014/the-fight-over-inoculation-during-the-1721-boston-smallpox-epidemic/>

**\*\*Write 300-500 words on a topic related to Onesimus and Cotton Mather. Possible topics:**

1. What are some fundamental dynamics behind vaccination skepticism that the history of Onesimus tells us?
2. What is the history of the medical idea of vaccination? Is it an invention?

**Week 5 March 2, 4**

### **A Disease over the Longue Durée: Polio, Modern Sanitation, and Unexpected Problems**

1. Jo Guldi and David Armitage, "Going Forward by Looking Back: The Rise of the Longue Durée," *Ab Imperio* no. 1 (2015): 14-37.
2. Nidia De Jesus, "Epidemics to eradication: the modern history of poliomyelitis," *Virology journal* 4, no. 1 (2007): online.
3. Stephen Mawdsley, "Polio Provocation: Solving a Mystery with the Help of History," *The Lancet* 384, no. 9940 (2014): 300-301.

**\*\*Watch the documentary linked in Week 5 folder. Write 300-500 words responding to one of the two prompts:**

1. What makes polio, an ancient disease, a modern story?

**OR**

2. What are some "universal truths" in polio history?

Please make sure to use specific references to the readings and the documentary. Proofread and organize your points logically.

**Week 6 March 9, 11**

**Biographies of Doctors—Whose History Helps?**

1. Excerpts from David Oshinsky, *Polio: An American Story* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
2. Philip Cawkwell and David Oshinsky. "Storytelling in the Context of Vaccine Refusal: A Strategy to Improve Communication and Immunisation," *Medical Humanities* 42, no. 1 (2016): 31-35.

**\*\*For this week, take a biographical approach to polio history. You should use Oshinsky and can do so in a variety of ways:**

1. Give a biography of the American nation through polio history.
2. Develop a story about an individual--Sabin, Salk, FDR, or another person--why does looking through their life history help?
3. "Life history" of a place or institution--Rockefeller Foundation, the March of Dimes.

**Make sure you do not summarize but summarize strategically around an argument--what does history of disease through a singular lens like a person or a place or an institution tell us?**

**400 words minimum**

**You must put the wordcount, proofread, and double-space please (for my eyes!).**

**Week 7 March 16, 18**

**Oral Histories: Perspectives on Polio**

1. Renato Rosaldo, "Doing oral history," *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 4 (1980): 89-99.
2. Kathleen M. Scott, "The Iowa Polio Stories Oral History Project," *The Annals of Iowa* 67, no. 2 (2008): 212-218.

**\*\*Write 500-700 words on how to make history out of personal experiences using oral history or other sources**

**Week 8 March 23, 25**

**Historians and Documentaries**

Compare and contrast documentaries "Influenza of 1918" and "The Shot Felt Around the World"

**\*\*Please write a minimum of 500 words up to 1000 on your reactions to the film. Specifically, address this analysis of theoretical possibilities in light of history derived through oral sources.**

**Week 9 March 30, April 1**

**A New Plague: HIV's Origins**

1. Excerpts from Jacques Pepin, *The Origins of AIDS* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021).
2. Tamara Giles-Vernick, Didier Gondola, Guillaume Lachenal, and William H. Schneider. "Social history, biology, and the emergence of HIV in colonial Africa," *The Journal of African History* (2013): 11-30.

**\*\* Jacques Pepin is a doctor not an historian. He knew trying to use historical methods was important to shed light on the mysteries surrounding AIDS. Pick two specific quotes from the book review by McNeill and discuss how Pepin sheds more light beyond the polio virus theory of AIDS origins. Please write up to 600 words and put the wordcount.**

**Week 10 April 6, 8**

### **Disaggregating Epidemics in a Pandemic**

1. Shane Doyle, "Chronology and Causality in Africa's HIV Pandemic: The Production of History between the Laboratory and the Archive," *Past & Present* (2020): 1-43.

**\*\*Historical revisionism is defined by the American Historical Association in this way:**

Revision is the lifeblood of historical scholarship. History is a continuing dialogue between the present and the past. Interpretations of the past are subject to change in response to new evidence, new questions asked of the evidence, new perspectives gained by the passage of time. There is no single, eternal, and immutable "truth" about past events and their meaning. The unending quest of historians for understanding the past—that is, "revisionism"—is what makes history vital and meaningful.

Both Giles-Vernick et al and Doyle offer revisionist perspectives on the beginnings of HIV/AIDS focusing on Africa. Write a response of 600 words to discuss how both articles reshape specific elements of the story of AIDS. Revision can be correcting mistakes, showing new information, illustrating assumptions, highlighting information that is missing, offering new approaches like environmental history (like chimp-human contact or STD-AIDS links), and a number of other contributions.

You can focus on anything you like, but you must use both articles at least once. You must also use footnotes, which means please write your essay in a word file and attach it. If this doesn't work via BB submission, please email me your essay.

Use Chicago format for your footnotes. Info here: <https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/history/undergrad/style>

**Week 11 April 13, 15**

### **Government Histories and AIDS**

1. Nono Simelela, WD Francois Venter, Yogan Pillay, and Peter Barron, "A Political and Social History of HIV in South Africa," *Current HIV/AIDS Reports* 12, no. 2 (2015): 256-261.
2. Jennifer Brier, "Reagan and AIDS," in *A Companion to Ronald Reagan*, edited by Andrew Johns (New York: Wiley, 2015), 221-237.

**\*\*Government denialism about an epidemic has many roots and many effects. It also is a prism through which we can develop histories of state and society, that is the relationship of political authorities to people/citizenry--defined by obligations, rights, responsibilities, power, and the social contract.**

**Pick a poster or more than 1 from one of these two sources and discuss what it says about the relationship between state and society in relation to the AIDS epidemic.**

Write at least 500 words and name 1 or 2 research questions you might generate from that 1 source--the poster.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-confusing-and-at-times-counterproductive-1980s-response-to-the-aids-epidemic-180948611/>

<https://bhekisisa.org/article/2018-12-12-00-treatment-action-campaign-south-africa-hiv-movement-celebrates-20-years/>

#### **Week 12 April 20, 22**

#### **Ecological History: Animals and Human Epidemics**

1. Hilde Kruse, Anne-Mette Kirkemo, and Kjell Handeland, "Wildlife as Source of Zoonotic Infections," *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 10, no. 12 (2004): 2067.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3323390/>
2. William Karesh, Andy Dobson, James O. Lloyd-Smith, Juan Lubroth, Matthew A. Dixon, Malcolm Bennett, Stephen Aldrich et al., "Ecology of Zoonoses: Natural and Unnatural Histories," *The Lancet* 380, no. 9857 (2012): 1936-1945.

#### **Week 13 April 27, 29**

#### **Epidemics in Episodes: Piecing Together Lassa Fever and Ebola**

1. Jacqueline Weyer, Antoinette Grobbelaar, and Lucille Blumberg. "Ebola Virus Disease: History, Epidemiology and Outbreaks," *Current infectious disease reports* 17, no. 5 (2015): 1-8.
2. Shobana Shankar, "Lessons Learned from Lassa and Ebola Fevers: Missionaries and Epidemics in West Africa, 1969 to the present," in *Breaking Barriers: SIM and African Pioneers Remaking Missions in the Sudan*, co-edited by Barbara Cooper et al (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2018).

#### **\*\*Final Writing Assignment**

Pick one of your earlier writings to expand into a 4-6 page paper. Alternatively you could merge a couple of the papers and reorganization and polish. Or you can write a new paper that brings together critical perspectives from the semester into reflecting on one of the final weeks' topics like zoonosis, COVID and politics, or ethics in light of Tuskegee.

Papers must conform to the following guidelines:

1. 4-6 pages double-spaced, one inch margins, titled, page numbers, footnoted citations
2. You must use at least 2 sources from class and any more above that you wish to use.
3. Use a more formal style than write-ups have been. Use evidence to back up your points.

#### **Week 14 May 4, 6**

#### **Being Careful Historians: Humility and Ethics**

1. David Jones, "COVID-19, History, and Humility," *Centaurus* 62, no. 2 (2020): 370-380.
2. Susan Reverby, "Ethical Failures and History Lessons: The US Public Health Service Eresearch Studies in Tuskegee and Guatemala," *Public Health Reviews* 34, no. 1 (2012): 1-18.

#### **Student Accessibility Support Center Statement**



If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact the Student Accessibility Support Center, 128 ECC Building, (631) 632-6748, or via e-mail at: [sasc@stonybrook.edu](mailto:sasc@stonybrook.edu). They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

### **Academic Integrity Statement**

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty is required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. Faculty in the Health Sciences Center (School of Health Technology & Management, Nursing, Social Welfare, Dental Medicine) and School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty please refer to the academic judiciary website at [http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/academic\\_integrity/index.html](http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/academic_integrity/index.html)

### **Critical Incident Management**

Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of University Community Standards any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. Faculty in the HSC Schools and the School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. Further information about most academic matters can be found in the Undergraduate Bulletin, the Undergraduate Class Schedule, and the Faculty-Employee Handbook.