What is disease? How has our understanding of disease – and people’s experiences of disease – changed over time? This course will give you some new and challenging ways to think about these questions. We will take specific diseases such as cholera, tuberculosis, smallpox, plague, malaria and AIDS, and examine their social and medical impact during the past couple of centuries. In doing so, we will trace the interplay of scientific, clinical, social and moral judgements invested in ‘framing’ a disease.

Previous knowledge of the subject is not required. There are twenty sessions, all in the first term. One essay is due, which carries 30% of the total mark. The exam is in the third term.

(HMED 3010, 1/2 unit)
Disease in History: Lecture schedule

1. Tues 5 Oct 2010   Introduction: how to do the history of disease
2. Thurs 7 Oct 2010  Framing disease: the Black Death
4. Thurs 14 Oct 2010 Bodies and organs: disease in the hospital
5. Tues 19 Oct 2010  Microscopes and cells: disease in the laboratory
7. Tues 26 Oct 2010  Climates and colonisers: tropical diseases
8. Thurs 28 Oct 2010 Medicine and imperialism: malaria
10. Thurs 4 Nov 2010 Victorian anxieties 2: venereal diseases

   Tues 9 Nov 2010      Reading Week – no lecture
   Thurs 11 Nov 2010    Reading Week – no lecture

11. Tues 16 Nov 2010  Mad, bad and dangerous to know: genius
12. Thurs 18 Nov 2010 Medicine and the law: smallpox
13. Tues 23 Nov 2010  The white death: tuberculosis
14. Thurs 25 Nov 2010 Diagnosing the social body: poverty
15. Tues 30 Nov 2010  Framing failure: influenza
16. Thurs 2 Dec 2010  Molecularising race: sickle cell anaemia
17. Tues 7 Dec 2010   Bodies and behaviours 1: homosexuality
18. Thurs 9 Dec 2010  Bodies and behaviours 2: anorexia nervosa
19. Tues 14 Dec 2010  Postmodern anxieties 1: cancer
20. Thurs 16 Dec 2010 Postmodern anxieties 2: AIDS

Essay deadline. Your essay must be handed to Dr Barnett in this lecture.
Disease in History: General reading

Most of the books referred to in this handout are available for borrowing in the Wellcome Library Student Loan collection. One copy of each item is also kept as a reference copy for use in the Wellcome Library only. Further copies of most of the books can be found in the UCL Library and University of London Library: these are available for longer loans, and may be useful when revising or writing your essay. Many of the journals are now available online, or in the Wellcome Library journals collection.

Photocopied extracts from some of the books are kept in the Wellcome Library Student Loan collection, arranged alphabetically by the author’s surname in the box-files marked ‘Disease in History’. Take a few minutes to browse through these boxes and familiarise yourself with what is available.

Recommended general texts on this subject – available for loan in the Wellcome Student Loan collection – are:


Disease in History: Reading for lectures

Each lecture has a list of recommended readings. You are advised to read those marked with a star in preparation for the lectures. Other readings are intended to assist you in writing your essays and in revising for the exam.

1. Tues 5 Oct 2010 – Introduction: how to do the history of disease


2. Thurs 7 Oct 2010 – Framing disease: the Black Death


4. Thurs 14 Oct 2010 – Bodies and organs: disease in the hospital


5. **Tues 19 Oct 2010 – Microscopes and cells: disease in the laboratory**


7. **Tues 26 Oct 2010 – Climates and colonisers: tropical diseases**


9. **Tues 2 Nov 2010 – Germs and natives: bubonic plague**


10. Thurs 4 Nov 2010 – Victorian anxieties 2: venereal diseases


Tues 9 Nov 2010 – Reading Week – no lecture

Thurs 11 Nov 2010 – Reading Week – no lecture

11. Tues 16 Nov 2010 – Mad, bad and dangerous to know: genius


12. **Thurs 18 Nov 2010 – Medicine and the law: smallpox**


13. **Tues 23 Nov 2010 – The white death: tuberculosis**

* Bynum (1994), chaps 7 and 8.


14. **Thurs 25 Nov 2010 – Diagnosing the social body: poverty**


See also readings on cholera.

15. Tues 30 Nov 2010 – Framing failure: influenza


16. Thurs 2 Dec 2010 – Molecularising race: sickle cell anaemia


17. **Tues 7 Dec 2010 – Bodies and behaviours 1: homosexuality**


18. **Thurs 9 Dec 2010 – Bodies and behaviours 2: anorexia nervosa**


19. **Tues 14 Dec 2010 – Postmodern anxieties 1: cancer**


20. Thurs 16 Dec 2010 – Postmodern anxieties 2: AIDS


Disease in History: Essay

The chapters in Rosenberg & Golden (1992) illustrate some of the ways in which historians have chosen to ‘frame’ diseases in historical terms. Your task is to write an essay for an imaginary second volume of this text. You may write about any disease not already covered by the existing chapters in Rosenberg & Golden.

There are a variety of approaches you could adopt – debates about the status of a disease, its treatment, causes, moral implications, experience and so on. Your essay will pick up on some aspect of contention or debate, one that will allow you to acknowledge the social, cultural or political dimensions, and explore the range of factors which go into the ‘framing’ of a disease.

If you choose to write about a disease covered in the lectures, your essay should go beyond the contents of the lecture and the required reading list. The Companion Encyclopedia contains good introductory essays on the major kinds of disease (nutritional, endocrinological, mental, tropical, sexually transmitted etc). In addition, the Cambridge World History of Human Disease has articles on many individual diseases. Each of these articles has a bibliography that will guide you to further sources.

For some general tips on writing essays, see the next couple of pages.

THE RULES

Your essay carries thirty percent of your final mark for this course. It must be submitted at the end of the last lecture on Thurs 17 Dec 2010. Two copies must be submitted – one for Dr Barnett and one for the second marker. Five percent per day will be deducted for late submission. Extensions may be negotiated in advance on presentation of a doctor’s note or equally compelling evidence of need.

Your essay must be properly referenced, with footnotes and a bibliography of sources. It must be no longer than four thousand words, not including bibliography and footnotes. This word limit is absolute (there is no 10% allowance) and must not be exceeded. Your essay must be printed in 11pt text and double spaced. It should be written in clear, concise prose: no bullet points, notes or abbreviations. Do not use dubious online sources in preference to the books and articles available in the Wellcome Library. In particular, students who cite Wikipedia or similar will be penalised.

PLAGIARISM

UCL takes plagiarism very seriously, and an accusation of plagiarism can screw up your chances of getting a good degree. This is particularly important in a history course: you will be heavily penalised for copying out even short statements from someone’s book or article without a reference. If you use another author’s words, arguments or ideas you must acknowledge them with a footnote, and at the end of your essay provide a full bibliography of your sources (including electronic sources, if you have used them). Please see Dr Barnett if you are at all unsure about how to reference and how to avoid an accusation of plagiarism.
Some tips on writing essays and dissertations

1. **Two different kinds of writing**
   - For exams: rehearsed, deceptive, compressed.
   - For essays and dissertations: detailed, honest, polished.

2. **Writing over time**
   - How effectively you approach rewriting is a major determinant of final quality.
   - Being a good *re*-writer is being a good writer.
   - So: don’t submit a first sketch – give yourself time to draft and re-draft.

3. **Get started**
   - Start writing early: it helps you to think.
   - Work on chunks rather than entire drafts, and don’t be a perfectionist.
   - Write *while* you read.
   - While you are reading, think about writing, and try to see how the pros do it (or fail to).

4. **Writing in depth**
   - *Do not* assume that your examiner has a thorough grasp of the material.
   - Explain your material as simply and as clearly as you can.
   - Think about how the *structure* of your piece can help you to say what you want to say.

5. **How to structure your essay**

   There are many possibilities, but if you’re unsure, consider the old ‘Sergeant-Major’ technique:
   - Introduction: say what you’re going to say, and what previous writers have said about it.
   - Main body of the essay: say it.
   - Conclusion: say what you’ve said, and why it’s important.

   Whatever you decide to do, give the reader a route-map through your argument: if you don’t know where you’re going next & why it matters, your examiners won’t either.

6. **Referencing, citation and plagiarism**

   Proper references are the only way to avoid accusations of plagiarism:
   - There is no single ‘house style’ for referencing and citation. Use any style you’re familiar with, so long as it is effective.

(You don’t need to footnote or give page references in exams, but it is always good practice to attribute ideas or quotes to their source – so try to remember authors & titles of important books.)

7. Style and the ‘active voice’

You don’t have to write like Roy Porter, or Janet Browne, or your dissertation supervisor, or anyone else. Find and develop your own voice – after all, they did. Three reliable tests for good style are:

• Does it sound clear and well-paced when I read it out loud?
• Do I believe it?
• Does it sound like me?

Good historical writing generally uses the ‘active voice’:

• The ‘passive voice’ (‘it was believed that...’; ‘it was decided to…’) conceals agency and attribution.
• The ‘active voice’ (Charles Rosenberg argues that…’; ‘the Council of the Royal College of Physicians decided to…’) tells the reader who thought what, and who did what.
• Writing in the active voice also helps you to identify weaknesses in the evidence and your argument.

8. Guides to writing

• Try Peter Lipton’s ‘Writing Philosophy’ (www.hps.cam.ac.uk/research/wp.htm) – good advice for anyone coming to the humanities from a scientific background.
• Read published articles with a critical eye, and trust your instincts – if an argument doesn’t seem clear, try to work out why, and how you could avoid the same mistake.