Drugs and Germs in Global Trade and Empire
History 79-752
Revised to reflect cancellation of 1/22 class

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Class meeting time and place: Thursdays 9:00 to 11:50 am in BH 246A

Course Description: The course will begin in the period just before the European voyages of exploration and will end in the late twentieth century. It will follow drugs across oceans and borders from when they became important commodities in the emerging global trade of the early modern period. It will also examine social and cultural contexts of and meanings ascribed to drug use by different peoples in different times. In particular, it will examine what happens to patterns of use as a drug moves from one social, cultural, and economic setting to another. Drugs to be followed will include opium, tobacco, chocolate, and coffee in the early modern period as these drugs were used in China, India, Mesoamerica, Europe, and the Middle East. Later readings will focus on heroin and cocaine trafficking and use in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Latin America and the United States.

As people increasingly traveled long distances around the world, bacteria and viruses traveled with them to places where populations were unfamiliar with them. Resulting epidemics sparked panic as well as more orderly attempts to control and prevent epidemic outbreaks. Over time and with new or continued exposure, people and pathogens evolved into new forms of relationship. Some species purposely brought to new lands also altered ecological arrangements. Among the diseases to be analyzed in specific settings, especially port cities in several continents, are cholera, malaria, and bubonic plague.

Both drugs and disease posed challenges that elicited state action. Drugs could be sources of state revenue, or objects of concern based on their effects on behavior, or both; they could also be medicines for the treatment of disease. Disease could cause social upheaval and sap productivity. States acted vigorously to attempt to structure the market channels in which drugs moved and to control the spread of infectious disease. Moreover, states sometimes responded to drug use and disease outbreak in similar ways. Both drug use and disease elicited state attempts to control subjects’ or citizens’ behavior. The spread of drug use in populations was compared to the spread of disease. The course will examine how attempts to control drug trade and disease incidence influenced not just the actions of states but also the bases for states’ claims to power and authority.

This course falls in the Technology, Environment, Science, and Health cluster.
Assignments: Beginning in week 2 (Jan. 22), students will submit a two to three page double-spaced essay discussing the week’s readings to Blackboard by 12:00 pm on the day before class. Each student will submit a four to five double-spaced essay on a week’s readings once during this semester (this essay replaces the shorter one for that week). These longer essays should also be posted by 5:00 pm the day before class. Students should read all the posted essays before class meets. In weeks when a student has written a 4-5 page essay, that student will lead class discussion for the first half of the class session (9:00 to 10:20).

REQUIRED TEXTS:


WEEKLY READINGS:

Jan. 15:


All articles available at Blackboard.

Jan. 22: Class cancelled because of instructor illness.


CLASS MEETS AT 5 HIGHLAND COURT; BREAKFAST WILL BE PROVIDED.


Feb. 19: Articles on opium in India and China.


All articles available at Blackboard.


Feb. 26: Articles on drug travels and disease constructions.


All articles available at Blackboard.


**Mar. 12:** NO CLASS; SPRING BREAK


**Mar. 26:** Selections from Matthew Gandy and Alimuddin Zumla, eds. *The Return of the White Plague: Global Poverty and the “New” Tuberculosis*. London: Verso, 2003: Prologue; Introduction; Chapters 1, 4, and 10; Epilogue; one other chapter to be announced.


