

**STS.005: Disease and Society in America**  
(HASS-D/CI, Category 5)

**Fall 2008**



**Class Website:** <http://stellar.mit.edu/S/course/STS/fa08/STS.005>

**Lecturer:**

Slava Gerovitch, PhD  
slava@mit.edu  
E51-165

**Writing Advisor:**

Tom Delaney  
tdelaney@mit.edu

**Lectures:**

Tuesday-Thursday  
10-11, Room 54-100

**Teaching Assistants:**

Richa Kumar  
richak@mit.edu

Ellen Bales  
ebales@mit.edu

**Recitations:**

- 1: Friday 11, 12-122 (Kumar)
- 2: Friday 11, 4-257 (Gerovitch)
- 3: Friday 12, 4-257 (Gerovitch)
- 4: Friday 1, 4-257 (Bales)

The balance between health and disease is a central feature of human life and society. Over the past 500 years there have been major changes in the prevalence and experience of diseases, from epidemics of smallpox and tuberculosis, to the chronic afflictions of obesity, heart disease, and mental illness. At the same time there has been enormous growth in the role of medicine in culture, economics, and politics. This course will use a historical approach to explore the changing interactions between disease and society in America, examining: the reasons for the changing patterns of disease, the evolution of medical theory and practice, the development of hospitals and the medical profession, the rise of biotechnology research and the pharmaceutical industry, and the politics of health care in America.

## Requirements

As a HASS-CI course, emphasis is placed on oral and written communication. The course requires (1) active participation in both lectures and weekly recitation sections, (2) one 5-minute oral presentation; (3) co-leading one discussion, and (4) a series of written assignments: weekly reading responses, two short papers, and one final research paper. There will be no midterm or final examinations.

## Readings

Each week, except the four weeks when papers are due, 50-70 pages of readings will be assigned. All the readings will be available on the STS.005 Stellar site.

## Recitations

Each week's readings must be read prior to recitation section. Active participation in the discussions is required. Each student will also co-lead one recitation. This will involve:

- 1) emailing the other members of the section in advance with a list of likely discussion topics,
- 2) providing a 5-10 minute summary of the readings,
- 3) leading the discussion with help from the recitation leader.

## Weekly Reading Responses

Every Friday night, a short, one-page (300 words) writing assignment, based on the weekly readings, will be posted in the Homework section of the STS.005 Stellar site. We will provide a few tentative questions, but you are encouraged to raise your own questions about the readings. The reading responses must be submitted via Stellar **by 9 am on the recitation day**, except the four weeks when papers are due. PDF format is preferred, but DOC and TXT are also allowed.

## Papers

As a HASS-CI class, three papers are required, for a minimum of 20 pages total. Two shorter, 6-page papers (1800 words each) are due on **October 3** and **October 24**. One of these papers (you choose which one) must be substantially revised and resubmitted by **November 11**. The final research paper (8 pages, 2400 words) is due on **December 9**.

## Oral Presentation

Each student will give one 5-minute oral presentation on the topic of their first or second paper. Presentations will be given during recitations on October 3, October 24, or November 11.

## Grading

Participation in Discussions:	20%
Co-leading Recitation:	5%
Oral Presentation:	5%

Weekly Writing Assignments:	15%
Paper 1:	10%
Paper 2:	10%
Re-write:	10%
Final Paper:	25%

### Writing Advisor

To receive feedback on paper drafts or to consult on any other issues related to writing assignments or oral presentations, contact Tom Delaney, the course writing advisor, at <tdelaney@mit.edu> or sign up online at <http://www.mysignup.com/fallwritingsessions>

### Writing and Communication Center

Another resource is the Writing and Communication Center (12-132), which offers you **free** professional advice from published writers about all types of academic, creative, and professional writing, as well as about oral presentations. Go to <http://web.mit.edu/writing> and click on the yellow sunburst. If you cannot find an open appointment slot, do not despair. There are always cancellations on the day of the appointment. Click on the Wait List (the blue strip that says “Is the time that you want already reserved?”) Whenever a cancellation occurs on that day, you will be automatically notified by email. Because several people might receive that same message, go online ASAP to schedule that open spot; 96% of clients who want an appointment end up with one if they use the Wait List. If you can’t find an appointment, you can drop by the Center and sign up to be a drop-in client and/or try the Online Tutor at <http://web.mit.edu/writing/Center/onlinetutor.html>. The Center’s hours are Monday-Thursday, 9:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.; Friday 9:00 a.m. 6:00 p.m.; and Sundays, 5:00-9:00 p.m. (check the online scheduler for up to-date hours).

### Reference Librarian

To find literature sources appropriate for your paper topic, set up an appointment with Michelle Baildon, reference librarian for History of Science and Technology, <baildon@mit.edu>, phone 253-9352, Room 14S-222.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

### Lectures

### Readings & Papers

#### Week 1

09/04 Introduction: Disease, Medicine, and Society

### Part I: Social Determinants of Disease

#### Week 2

09/09 What Is Disease?

09/11 Colonization and Disease

Colonial Encounters

Week 3

09/16 Urbanization, Hygiene, and Cholera

09/18 The Decline of Tuberculosis

Urban Epidemics

Week 4

09/23 Epidemiological Transitions

09/25 Health Disparities

Transitions and Disparities

Week 5

09/30 Diseases of Civilization

10/02 The Rise of Cigarettes

***10/03 Paper 1 Due  
Student presentations*****Part II: The Rise of Modern Medicine**Week 6

10/07 Colonial Medicine and Bloodletting

10/09 From Heroic Therapy to the Numerical Method

Therapeutic Paradoxes

Week 7

10/14 Anesthesia and the Rise of Surgery

10/16 Germ Theory and the Therapeutic Revolution

Therapeutic Revolutions

Week 8

10/21 Medical Education and Specialization

10/23 Medical Technology and the Modern Hospital

Medical Technologies

Week 9

10/28 Sanitation and Hygiene

10/30 Antibiotics and Clinical Trials

***10/31 Paper 2 Due  
Student presentations*****Part III: Solutions For Today's Problems**Week 10

11/04 Health Care Policy: Access and Cost

11/06 Debate: The Future of Health Care

Public Health

Week 11

11/11 Veteran's Day: No class

11/13 Risk, Regulation, and Public Health

***11/14 Rewrite Due  
Student presentations***Week 12

11/18 The Tobacco Pandemic

11/20 Obesity and Diabetes

Disease and Responsibility

Week 13

11/25 Biotech and the Big Pharma

11/27 Thanksgiving: No class

No recitation

Week 14

12/02 The Age of AIDS

12/04 Psychotherapy and Psychopharmacology

Mental Health

Week 15

12/09 Disease and Society in the 21st Century

***12/09: Final Paper Due***

## READINGS

### Week 1: Introduction (no readings)

### Week 2: Colonial Encounters

- Crosby, Alfred W. "Conquistador y Pestilencia." In *The Columbian exchange; biological and cultural consequences of 1492*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Pub. Co. 1972, pp. 35-63.
- Jones, David S. "Virgin Soils Revisited." *William and Mary Quarterly* 60 (October 2003): 703-742.
- Kupperman, Karen Ordahl. "Apathy and Death in Early Jamestown." *Journal of American History* 66 (June 1979): 24-40.

### Week 3: Urban Epidemics

- Pernick, Martin S. "Politics, Parties, and Pestilence: Epidemic Yellow Fever in Philadelphia and the Rise of the First Party System." *William and Mary Quarterly* 29 (October 1972): 559-586.
- Rosenberg, Charles E. "The Cholera Epidemic of 1832 in New York City." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 33 (1959): 37-49.
- Sack, David A., R. Bradley Sack, and Claire-Lise Chaignat. "Getting Serious About Cholera." *New England Journal of Medicine* 355 (17 August 2006): 649-651.
- Kramer, Andrew E. "Cholera Now Appears in Baghdad." *The New York Times* (September 21, 2007).

### Week 4: Transitions and Disparities

- Wilkinson, Richard G. "The Epidemiological Transition: From Material Scarcity to Social Disadvantage?" *Daedalus* 123 (Fall 1994): 61-77.
- Marmot, Michael. "Understanding Social Inequalities in Health." *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 46 (Summer 2003): S9-S23.
- Banks, James, Michael Marmot, Zoe Oldfield, and James Smith. "Disease and Disadvantage in the United States and in England." *JAMA* 295 (3 May 2006): 2037-2045.
- Bowe, Christopher, and Clive Cookson. "High Anxiety: What Ails the World's Big Spender on Health." *Financial Times* (September 1, 2006).

### Week 6: Therapeutic Paradoxes

- Buchan, William. *Domestic Medicine, or A Treatise on the Prevention and Cure of Diseases By Regimen and Simple Medicines*. Exeter: J.B. Williams, 1839. Excerpts: *Diseases of the Laborious, the Sedentary, and the Studious; Knowledge and Cure of Diseases, Inoculation, Bleeding* (full text is available at <http://www.americanrevolution.org/medicine.html>)
- Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher. *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990, pp. 36-71.

- Rosenberg, Charles. "The Therapeutic Revolution: Medicine, Meaning, and Social Change in Nineteenth-century America." In *Explaining Epidemics and Other Studies in the History of Medicine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 9-31.

### **Week 7: Therapeutic Revolutions**

- John Harley Warner, "From Specificity to Universalism in Medical Therapeutics: Transformation in the 19th-Century United States," in Judith Walzer Leavitt and Ronald L. Numbers, ed., *Sickness and Health: Readings in the History of Medicine and Public Health*, 3rd edition. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997, pp. 87-101.
- Pernick, Martin. "The Calculus of Suffering in 19th-Century Surgery." *Hastings Center Report* 13 (April 1983): 26-36.
- "Discussion on the Advisability of the Registration of Tuberculosis." *Transactions of the College of Physicians* 16 (Philadelphia 1894): 1-27.
- Leavitt, Judith W. "'Typhoid Mary' Strikes Back: Bacteriological Theory and Practice in Early Twentieth-Century Public Health." *Isis* 83 (1992): 608-629.

### **Week 8: Medical Technologies**

- Herrick, James B. "Modern Diagnosis." *Journal of American Medical Association* 92 (February 1929): 518-522.
- Carhart, J.W. "The Clinical Thermometer." *Medical and Surgical Reporter* 72 (1895): 119-121.
- Evans, Hughes. "Losing Touch: The Controversy over the Introduction of Blood Pressure Instruments into Medicine." *Technology and Culture* 34 (October 1993): 784-807.
- Beecher, Henry K. "The Powerful Placebo." *Journal of American Medical Association* 159 (24 December 1955): 1602-1606.

### **Week 10: Public Health**

- Tomes, Nancy. "The Making of a Germ Panic, Then and Now." *American Journal of Public Health* 90 (2000): 191-198.
- Brandt, Allan M. "The Syphilis Epidemic and its Relation to AIDS." *Science* 239 (22 January 1988): 375-380.
- Kushner, Howard I. "The Other War on Drugs: The Pharmaceutical Industry, Evidence-Based Medicine, and Clinical Practice," *The Journal of Policy History* 19:1 (2007): 49-70.

### **Week 12: Disease and Responsibility**

- John H. Knowles, "The Responsibility of the Individual." *Daedalus* 106 (1977): 57-80.
- Brandt, Allan M. "The Cigarette, Risk, and American Culture." *Daedalus* 119 (Fall 1990): 155-176.
- Steinbrock, Robert. "Facing the Diabetes Epidemic--Mandatory Reporting of Glycosylated Hemoglobin Values in New York City." *New England Journal of Medicine* 354 (9 February 2006): 545-548.

- Fairchild, Amy L. "Diabetes and Disease Surveillance." *Science* 313 (14 July 2006): 175-176.

#### **Week 14: Mental Health**

- Seligman, Martin E. P. "The Effectiveness of Psychotherapy: The Consumer Reports Study." *American Psychologist* 50 (December 1995): 965-974.
- Pettus, Ashley. "Psychiatry by Prescription: Do Psychotropic Drugs Blur the Boundaries between Illness and Health?" *Harvard Magazine* (July 2006): 38-44, 90-91.
- DeGrandpre, Richard J., and Stephen P. Hinshaw. "ADHD: Serious Psychiatric Problem or All-American Cop-out?" *Cerebrum* 2 (Summer 2000): 12-38.