SOCIAL HISTORY OF AMERICAN MEDICINE  
AND PUBLIC HEALTH SINCE 1800

Graduate Seminar  
History 26: 510: 595

Spring 2010 SYLLABUS

Stephen Pemberton, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor, Federated Department of History  
New Jersey Institute of Technology / Rutgers University, Newark

Class Meetings  
Cullimore Hall 307  
Thursdays 5:30-8:10 p.m.

Office & Contact  
Cullimore Hall 323, NJIT Campus  
Phone: 973-596-5716  
Email: stephen.pemberton@njit.edu

Office Hours  
By Appointment, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays

This course provides an overview of the social history of medicine in the United States from the era of the early republic to the late twentieth century. The readings and discussions will utilize the histories of medicine, health and disease as a window onto a changing American society. Of particular focus will be the enduring roles of class, race, and gender. We will see, for instance, how medical and health issues reflect and illuminate matters of class, race and gender in America, how social movements have impacted efforts to promote health (including Jacksonian populism, 19th-century evangelical Protestantism, women's suffrage, and Civil Rights), how industrialism, big business, and consumerism have influenced medical and public health practice, and how the federal government has invested in medicine and health and developed health care policy. Topics also include the emergence of the medical profession; the relations between medical concepts, therapies, and mainstream social thought; the character of regular and alternative healing movements; the social context of medical innovation, experimentation, and progress; the social history of hospitals and other medical institutions; changing medical responses to infectious and chronic disease; as well as debates about health care in the United States.
In addition to doing the weekly reading assignments, each student will help lead one
discussion, write two short response papers, and one longer essay that incorporates their
understanding of the course readings.

Requirements:

Readings

There are ten books to read over the course of the semester with a small selection of
additional essays. The books are – in most cases – widely regarded as an exemplary
work on their subject. In several cases, the book is quite lengthy (over 350 pages). In
those cases, I will provide advance notice of the pages that will be our focus. Before
coming to class, you should familiarize yourself with the factual content of the work as
well as the author’s argument and his or her use of sources. In class, I will encourage you
to think critically about issues raised in the readings. This goal will only be attainable if
you come prepared.

Books for the course can be purchased through the Rutgers University Bookstore (Barnes
& Noble). Their contact information: Phone: 973-353-5377; Fax: 973-353-1623; Email:
sm409@bncollege.com. Copies of the assigned articles will be available online through
the password-protected electronic reserve system for this course. That system will be
explained the first day of class. Full citations for the books and articles appear in the
attached bibliography at the end of this syllabus.

Attendance and Class Participation

Class participation should involve active listening and engagement. Attendance is both
expected and required.

Discussion Responsibility

Each student will lead one book discussion during the semester. In preparation for the
discussion, I expect the student to also write a short response essay about the reading (see
reading response essays below). During the first class, I will assign responsibilities for
leading discussions to each student based on his or her stated preferences. The goal is to
facilitate a critical discussion of the reading and topic. In preparing your talking points
for the discussion, you should strive for more than a restatement of the reading material.
Your discussion should reflect what you have written in your response essay. However, I
also expect you to relate your reading of the book in a way that engages other students.
A series of questions or a provocative argument are often conversation starters. Areas on
which you might want to focus class discussion include: the author’s argument/s, the
author’s use of sources, his or her methodology, the organization of the book and whether
or not it works successfully, and/or how the readings for that week relate to the other
material we examined during the semester.
Reading Response Essays

At two points in the semester, each student will write a short-response essay to a book assigned in the preceding weeks. The essay should discuss a key matter in the book that you feel compelled to identify and discuss. The idea is for you to engage with a critical issue at stake in the scholarly work, rather than merely summarize the reading material. Beyond that, the three basic requirements follow. (1) The essay need be no longer than 5-6 pages. Less than three is not recommended, more than that is subject to the task you set for yourself – the point you are trying to make. Try to keep it under six pages. (2) One response paper is due on **March 4th**, and the second paper is due the day of your in-class presentation. (3) No later papers will be accepted except under extraordinary circumstances.

Final Essay

Each student will write a final paper of 15-20 pages in length, and will craft her or his paper in consultation with the professor. For this paper, you will identify a theme or subject from a set of assigned readings that interests you. The paper should discuss a minimum of three of the assigned books that speak to that issue, and at least one other scholarly book – to be determined in consultation with the professor – that treats the subject with historical sensitivity. It is fine to write about one or more books that you have discussed in the short-response papers. Indeed, by doing so, you have the opportunity to gain more feedback and (potentially) greater depth into the issues. The final paper is due **without exception** by on **May 7** at 8 pm. Details about this assignment will be provided over the course of the semester.

Grading

15% for attendance & participation
15% for leading a discussion of a reading
30% for the response essays (15% each)
40% for final essay
Consistent effort and improvement will be weighted heavily in grading.

*Semester Schedule*

**Week 1. Introduction to the History of Medicine and Public Health (Jan. 21)**

*Allan Brandt, “Emerging Themes in the History of Medicine” [15 pages]*

**Week 2. Medicine and Society in the Early Republic (Jan. 28)**

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife’s Tale* [464 pages]

**Week 3. The Medical Profession and the Question of Authority (Feb. 4)**


**Week 4. Alternative Medicine in America (Feb. 11)**

James Whorton, *Nature's Cures* [384 pages]

**Week 5. Race & Medicine in Antebellum America (Feb. 18)**

Sharla Fett, *Working Cures* [200 pages]

**Week 6. Women Physicians (Feb. 25)**

Regina Morantz-Sanchez, *Sympathy and Science* [464 pages]

**Week 7. Midterm Discussion (Mar. 4)**

**Week 8. Immigrants and Epidemics (Mar. 11)**

Alan Kraut, *Silent Travelers* [384 pages]

**Week 9. Spring Recess (No Class on Mar. 18)**

**Week 10. Scientific Medicine and American Culture (Mar. 25)**

Bert Hansen, *Picturing Medical Progress from Pasteur to Polio*

**Week 11. Polio in Postwar America (Apr. 1)**

David Oshinsky, *Polio: An American Story*

**Week 12. Race & Medical Treatment in 20th-Century America (Apr. 8)**

Keith Wailoo, *Dying in the City of the Blues* [234 pages]

**Week 13. Consumerism and the Politics of Health (Apr. 15)**

Allan Brandt, *The Cigarette Century* [Parts I-III, pp. 1-315]

**Week 14. The Governance of Health: The Case of Big Tobacco (Apr. 22)**

Allan Brandt, *The Cigarette Century* [Parts IV-V, pp. 318-505]
Week 15. Discussion of Course Themes (Apr. 29)

Final Paper Due (May 7)

Bibliography

Books


Articles

All article-length readings will be available through electronic reserve system for the course. The starred readings are recommended, but optional.


