

History 861: The History of Health and Healing in Africa

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Office hours: Tuesdays 2-4

5114 Humanities

Over the past two decades or so, historians have developed a complex literature on the history of health and healing in Africa. This course examines why the topic of health and healing occupies such a central role in our understanding of Africa's pasts.

Drawing on the works of both historians and anthropologists, we explore the creative and shifting ways in which Africans have sought to compose healthy communities through the expansion of therapeutic repertoires. The course covers a wide chronological span and considers a variety of topics, including: faith and healing; therapy management and medical pluralism; debility and bodily misfortune; the use of contraceptives; epidemics and colonial planning; the HIV/AIDS epidemic; and the relationship between public healing and political authority. This is a fascinating history of how changes in health and healing are inseparable from broader changes in control over political institutions and the organization of economic production. It is a history situated at the core of some of the most critical challenges facing contemporary African societies and one that therefore begs for critical understanding.

Required Readings:

The following books are available for purchase at the University Bookstore and are also on reserve at Helen C. White:

Julie Livingston, *Debility and the Moral Imagination in Botswana*

Caroline Bledsoe, *Contingent Lives: Fertility, Time, and Aging in West Africa*

Myron Echenberg, *Black Death, White Medicine: Bubonic Plague and the Politics of Public Health in Colonial Senegal, 1914-1945.*

Timothy Burke, *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe*

I have also collected a set of readings for you to purchase from the copy center in the Humanities building (room 1650)

ASSIGNMENTS

- a) Research Paper: the major assignment for the course is a 25-30 page research paper. Paper proposals, including a bibliography, will be due in week 8. Please consult with me about your paper topic in advance of the deadline for the proposals.
- b) Class participation: weekly discussions of the assigned readings are a crucial component of the seminar. You should come to class prepared to share your thoughts on the assigned readings and to actively participate in discussion. Each week, one class member will be assigned to facilitate the discussion.
- c) Presentation of research papers: I will organize mini-conferences for the final two class sessions. The mini-conferences will provide an opportunity for you to practice your presentation skills. Each class member will be assigned to a panel and will have approximately 15 minutes to present his/her research paper. A 30-minute question and answer session will follow each panel.

EVALUATION

Your grade for the course will be determined through a combination of your research paper, class participation, and research paper presentation.

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS

1/26 Week 1. Introduction to course

2/2 Week 2. What is health, what is healing? Defining a field of inquiry

Reading: Steven Feierman, "Struggles for Control: The Social Roots of Health and Healing in Modern Africa," *African Studies Review* 28:2/3 (1985), 73-147.

Gwyn Prins, "But What Was the Disease? The Present State of Health and Healing in African Studies," *Past and Present* 124 (Aug., 1989), 159-179.

Shula Marks, "What is Colonial about Colonial Medicine? And What has Happened to Imperialism and Health?," *Social History of Medicine* 10:2 (1997), 205-219.

Maureen Malowany, "Unfinished Agendas: Writing the History of Medicine of Sub-Saharan Africa," *African Affairs* 99 (2000): 325-349.

2/9 Week 3. Faith, healing, and medical pluralism

Reading: Megan Vaughan, "The Great Dispensary in the Sky: Mission Medicine," in Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness*

Susan Whyte, "Anthropological Approaches to African Misfortune, from Religion to Medicine," in Anita Jacobsen-Widding and David Westerlund (eds.), *Culture, Experience, and Pluralism: Essays on African Ideas of Illness and Healing* (1989)

Paul Landau, "Explaining Surgical Evangelism in Colonial Southern Africa: Teeth, Pain and Faith," *Journal of African History* 37:2 (1996), 261-281.

Luise White, "They Could Make their Victims Dull: Genders and Genres, Fantasies and Cures in Colonial Southern Uganda," *American Historical Review* 100:5 (1995), 1379-1402.

Steven Feierman, "Explaining Uncertainty in the Medical World of Ghaambo," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 74 (2000): 317-344.

2/16 Week 4. Debility and bodily misfortune

Reading: Julie Livingston, *Debility and the Moral Imagination in Botswana*

2/23 Week 5. Contraception across cultures

Reading: Caroline Bledsoe, *Contingent Lives: Fertility, Time, and Aging in West Africa*

Nancy Rose Hunt, "Le Bebe en Brousse": European Women, African Birth Spacing and Colonial Intervention in Breast Feeding

in the Belgian Congo," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 21:3 (1988): 401-432.

3/2 Week 6. Epidemics and Colonial Planning

Reading: Myron Echenberg, *Black Death, White Medicine: Bubonic Plague and the Politics of Public Health in Colonial Senegal, 1914-1945*.

3/9 Week 7: AIDS, rumor, and writing contemporary history: Haiti, the DRC, Malawi, Nepal, and beyond

Reading: Stephen Ellis, "Writing Histories of Contemporary Africa," *Journal of African History* 43 (2002), 1-26.

Paul Farmer, "Sending Sickness: Sorcery, Politics, and Changing Concepts of AIDS in Rural Haiti," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 4:1 (1990), 6-27.

Nancy Rose Hunt, "STDs, suffering, and their derivatives in Congo-Zaire: notes towards an historical ethnography of disease," in Dozon, Christine Obbo, and Moribe Toure (eds.), *Vivre et penser le sida en Afrique*

Matthew Schoffeleers, "The AIDS Pandemic, The Prophet Billy Chisupe, and the Democratization Process in Malawi," *Journal of Religion in Africa* XXIX:4 (1999), 404-441.

Stacy Pigg, "Languages of Sex and AIDS in Nepal: Notes on the Social Production of Commensurability," *Cultural Anthropology* 16:4 (2001), 481-541.

3/16 Week 8: Where's the precolonial in all of this?/Conducting Fieldwork in Africa

Reading: TBA

RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSALS DUE

- 3/23 Week 9: The social history of hygiene**
- Reading: Timothy Burke, *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe*
- 3/30 Week 10: No class – work on research papers**
- 4/6 Week 11: Spring break**
- 4/13 Week 12: No class – work on research papers**
- 4/20 Week 13: No class – work on research papers**
- 4/27 Week 14: No class – work on research papers**
- DRAFTS OF RESEARCH PAPER DUE FOR THOSE PRESENTING 5/4
- 5/4 Week 15: No class – work on research papers**
- DRAFTS OF RESEARCH PAPER DUE FOR THOSE PRESENTING 5/11
- 5/11 Week 16: Research paper presentations**

Journals on Medicine and Health with an Africa Component:

AIDS Analysis Africa
American Anthropologist
American Ethnologist
Anthropology and Medicine
Bulletin of the History of Medicine
Bulletin of the World Health Organization
Central African Journal of Medicine
Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry
International Journal of Mental Health
International Journal of Psychiatry
Lancet
Medical History
Nigerian Medical Journal
Psychopathologie Africaine
South African Journal of Science

South African Medical Journal
Social Science and Medicine
The East African Medical Journal
Transactions of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene

Journals on Africa:

Africa
African Affairs
African Studies Review
Canadian Journal of African Studies
International Journal of African Historical Studies
Journal of African History
Journal of Modern African Studies
Journal of Southern African Studies
Man (The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute)

Other Works of Interest:

Ismail Abdalla, *Islam, Medicine, and Practitioners in Northern Nigeria*
Adelola Adeloje, *African Pioneers of Modern Medicine: Nigerian Doctors of the Nineteenth Century*
Kofi Appiah-Kubi, *Man Cures, God Heals: Religion and Medical Practice Among the Akan of Ghana*
David Arnold (ed.), *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies*
J. Beattie and J. Middleton (eds.), *Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa*
Ann Beck, *Medicine, Tradition and Development in Kenya, 1920-1970*
Janice Boddy, *Wombs and Alien Spirits: Women, Men, and the Zar Cult in Northern Sudan*
Alexander Butchart, *The Anatomy of Power: European Constructions of the African Body*
Gordon Chavunduka, *Traditional Healers and the Shona Patient*
Gordon Chavunduka, *Traditional Medicine in Modern Zimbabwe*
Gordon Chavunduka and Murray Last, *The Professionalization of Traditional Healers*
Albert R. Cook, *Uganda Memories*
Toyin Falola and Dennis Ituavuar (eds.), *The Political Economy of Health in Africa*
S. Feierman and J. Janzen (eds.), *The Social Basis of Health and Healing in Africa*
S. Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals: History and Anthropology in Tanzania*
John Ford, *The Role of the Trypanosomiases in African Ecology*
Michael Gelfand (ed.), *The Traditional Medical Practitioner in Zimbabwe*
Michael Gelfand, *Godly Medicine in Zimbabwe*
Charles Good, *Ethnomedical Systems in Africa: Patterns of Traditional Medicine in Rural and Urban Kenya*
Edward Green, *Rethinking AIDS Prevention*

G.W. Hartwig and K.D. Patterson (eds.), *Disease in African History*

Nancy Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon of Birth Ritual, Medicalization, and Mobility in the Congo*

John Illife, *East African Doctors: A History of the Modern Profession*

John Janzen, *The Quest for Therapy in Lower Zaire*

John Janzen, *Lemba, 1650-1930: A Drum of Affliction in Africa and the New World*

John Janzen, *Ngoma: Discourses of Healing in Central and Southern Africa*

David Lan, *Guns and Rain: Guerillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe*

Tracy Luedke and Harry West (eds.), *Borders and Healers: Brokering Therapeutic Resources in Southeast Africa*

Maryinez Lyons, *The Colonial Disease: A Social History of Sleeping Sickness in Zaire, 1900-1940*

J. Mackenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and the Natural World*

Shula Marks, *Divided Sisterhood: Race, Class and Gender in the South African Nursing Profession*

Harriet Moore and Megan Vaughan, *Cutting Down Trees: Gender, Nutrition, and Agricultural Change in the Northern Province of Zambia, 1890-1990*

Harriet Ngubane, *Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine: An Ethnography of Health*

Pamela Reynolds, *Traditional Healers and Childhood In Zimbabwe*

E.E. Sabben-Clare (ed.), *Health in Tropical Africa During the Colonial Period*

Jonathan Sadowsky, *Imperial Bedlam: Institutions of Madness in Colonial Southwest Nigeria*

P.W. Settel (ed.), *Histories of Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa*

Eric Silla, *People Are Not the Same: Leprosy and Identity in Twentieth-Century Mali*

W.D. Hammond Tooke, *Rituals and Medicines: Indigenous Healing in South Africa*

Rita Headrick, *Colonialism, Health, and Illness in French Equatorial Africa*

Patrick Tumwasi, *Medical Systems in Ghana: A Study in Medical Sociology*

Victor Turner, *The Drums of Affliction*

Merideth Turshen, *Political Economy of Health and Disease in Tanzania*

I.M. Wall, *Hausa Medicine: Illness and Well-Being in a West African Culture*

Sheldon Watts, *Epidemics and History: Disease, Power, and Imperialism*

Diana Wylie, *Starving on a Full Stomach: Hunger and the Triumph of Cultural Racism in Modern South Africa*

Stanley Yoder (ed.), *African Health and Healing Systems*