Economics 125-01
Economics and Epidemics

Spring 2013
Tuesday, Thursday 9:00-10:20 AM
Room: PAC104

Professor David Harrington
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Cell Phone: 740/504-9045

Office: PAC 312
Office Hours:
TTh 11:00-12:00 AM
Sunday 1:00-3:00 PM

Course Objectives

The principal goals of this course are to improve your writing and your economic reasoning skills. The readings and class discussions will examine the effects of major epidemics and the ways in which individuals and societies have sought protection from epidemics. The course will examine the rationales for government intervention in markets to combat epidemic diseases and will emphasize the pivotal role of the production of information about the causes of epidemic disease and the effectiveness of cures. As examples of epidemics, we will read about the Plague of 17th Century England, the cholera epidemic of 19th Century London, a Smallpox outbreak in Washington D.C. in 1894 and the battle against rabies over the centuries. This course is a First Year Initiative course and is limited to first-year students.

Course Materials

Required Books:


Contacting Me/Seeking Assistance

The best way to reach me outside office hours is via e-mail. You are encouraged to visit me regularly during my office hours. You can always talk to me before or after lecture.

Course Requirements

Essays: Students will write 3 short essays, each of less than 1,500 words, and the third one will be preceded by a rough draft. The dates that the essays are due are listed in the Reading and Essay Assignments section of the syllabus. All essays are due prior to class on the day listed and must be e-mailed to me as an attachment. No extensions will be given. There will also be 5 homework assignments, each of which will include a short writing component.

Grading

- Each essay and the rough draft of the 3rd essay is worth 15% (5•15 = 60%)
- Each homework is worth 5% (5•5 = 25%)
- Class participation is worth 15%
- Bonus for perfect attendance / penalty for missing more than 2 classes.

Essays are graded based on the clarity of the writing, the quality of the economic reasoning, the relevance of the evidence presented, and proper referencing using the style of the American Economic Review. Excellent essays are enjoyable to read and teach the reader something he or she doesn’t already know. Poor essays are a chore to read, because they are disorganized, littered with misspellings, poorly punctuated or lacking an interesting thesis.

Cases of plagiarism will be taken to the Honor Board. Plagiarism is a serious offence, which harms the offender’s growth as a writer and undermines our collective effort to learn from one another. It is a lousy thing to do. Examples of plagiarism are (1) cutting and pasting (and scrambling) other peoples’ words into to your essays, (2) paraphrasing other peoples’ words without proper referencing, (3) failing to acknowledge ideas that originated elsewhere, pretending that they are yours, (4) submitting an essay written for another course.
TOPIC OUTLINE and READING, HOMEWORK & ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS

**January 2013**

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**Thurs. 1/24**  
**What Causes Scurvy?**


**Tues. 1/29**  
**Basics of Demand and Supply**


**Thurs. 1/31**  
**Did the Polio Vaccine Work?**


**February 2013**

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**First Homework Due**

**Tues. 2/5**  
**The Doctors’ Plague**

**HOMEWORK 1** due at the beginning of class

Nuland, Sherwin B. *The Doctors’ Plague*. Chapters 1-5.

Levitt, Steven and Stephen Dubner. “The Fix is In—And it’s cheap and simple.” *Superfreakonomics*, chapter 4.

**Thurs. 2/7**  
**The Doctors’ Plague**

Nuland, Sherwin B. *The Doctors’ Plague*. Chapters 6-Afterword.

Tues. 2/12  **Price Gouging during Emergencies**

Thurs. 2/14  **Smallpox**
**HOMEWORK 2** due at the beginning of class

Tues. 2/19  **Smallpox in Washington D.C.**
*Washington Times*. 1894D. “Progress of the Plague: Including two suspect cases, nine is now the total affected,” October 26.

Thurs. 2/21  **SmallPox—Inoculations and Vaccinations**
**First Essay** due at the beginning of class (e-mail me the essay as an attachment. It must be less than 1500 words)

Tues. 2/26  **Epidemic of Sports Injuries, Applications and Smart Drugs?**

Thurs. 2/28  **Overview of the Plague**
Tue. 3/5  Did Clothing Spread the Plague?

HOMEWORK 3 due at the beginning of class
Brooks, Catherine, 2002. *The Year of Wonders*, pp. 3-78

Thur. 3/7  Blaming Witches for the Plague

3/11-3/22  Spring Vacation

Tues. 3/26  No Class--
Second Essay due at 9:00 am your time (EST) which will be 6:00 am my time (PST).
(e-mail me the essay as an attachment. It must be less than 1500 words)

Thur. 3/28  Market for Gravediggers during the Plague

Tues. 4/2  Opium Use in the Time of the Plague
Thurs. 4/4  **HPV Vaccine: Too Few Being Vaccinated?**

Tues. 4/9  **HPV Vaccine: Too Many?**

Thur. 4/11  **Sleeping Sickness**
**HOMEWORK 4 due at the beginning of class**

Tues. 4/16  **Rabid: Paying dogcatchers to hunt them down**

Thur. 4/18  **Rabid: Taxing dog owners.**
Tues. 4/23  
**Ghost Map**

**HOMEWORK 5** due at the beginning of class  

Thur. 4/18  
**Ghost Map**  

Tues. 4/23  
**No Class—Meetings about your 3rd Paper**

Thurs. 4/25  
**Cholera Epidemics in the United States**

**Rough Draft of 3rd Paper** due at the beginning of class

Tues. 4/30  
**No Class—Meetings to discuss the rough draft of your 3rd Paper**

Thurs. 5/2  
**Ghost Map**  
Johnson, Steven. 2006. *The Ghost Map*, Pages 111-228

Tues. 5/7  
**Wrap-up: Writing Economic Essays about Epidemic Disease**

**Final Draft of 3rd Paper** due at the beginning of class