

POLI 3510
The Politics of Pandemics
Department of Political Science
Dalhousie University
Fall 2020

Instructor:

Dr. Larissa Atkison

Email: larissa.atkison@dal.ca

Office hours: Fri 3:00-4:30 or by appointment by Collaborate Ultra.



Course Overview:

This course considers the relationship between plague and politics, both theoretically and in practice. We will consider some of the most pressing questions that contagion, and the threat of contagion, have posed to and revealed about the political communities they infect and more broadly affect. For example, what do contagions and the public crises they induce teach us about the function of fear and risk in political life? How have and should political communities balance individual rights and freedoms against collective security and well-being? How have pandemic responses fueled the emergence of new rights and social cohesion and how have they amplified social and political breakdown? What are the implications of epidemiological crises for vulnerable and marginalized groups, such as migrants and visible minorities?

This is an asynchronous seminar course divided into four units (including introduction) focussed on, plague history, critical theories of contagion, and COVID-19 and contemporary politics. Each unit, after the introduction, will last approximately three to four weeks. Within the units we will read, listen, watch, discuss, and critically respond to thinkers and scholars, such Thucydides, Foucault, Camus, Giorgio Agamben, Judith Butler, Cornell West, Andrew T. Price-Smith, Samantha Power, and Naomi Klein. We will also read articles from a variety of reputed news venues such as the New York Times, the Atlantic, and the New Yorker.

Learning Objectives and Outcomes:

- 1) Identify and define salient ways plagues and pandemics have impacted local and global politics, as well as the ethical and moral questions they inspire;
- 2) Recognize, assess, and critically respond to scholarly positions on pandemics and their social, political and legal impacts, and relate these positions to ongoing debates around individual rights and freedoms, international and domestic law and governance;
- 3) Engage in sustained, safe, and respectful online intellectual debate and exchange with peers;
- 4) Develop an ability to review, synthesize, and distill information from a variety of well-reputed news-sources;

Assignments and Class Participation Overview:

Discussion Board	35%
Reflective Blog	30%
Quizzes x 3	15%
Take-home Exam	20%

N.B. If you are a Dal student, and would like to review the FULL syllabus for this course, please contact Dr. Larissa Atkison directly (larissa.atkison@dal.ca).