

POLI 3510
The Politics of Pandemics
Department of Political Science
Dalhousie University
LSC-Common Area C208
Time: 2:25-3:55 pm

Instructor:

Dr. Larissa Atkison

Email: larissa.atkison@dal.ca

Office hours: T/TH 4-5 pm Henry Hicks 354



Note: This 1656 engraving shows the iconic plague doctor wearing a protective mask filled with herbs to ward off the pestilence.

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 seminar course divided roughly into three units; the first unit focuses on famous plagues throughout human history, and asks what we might learn about the politics of pandemics from these past examples; the second unit turns to philosophical, literary, and critical theories of contagion as threats to the body politic and as opportunities for change; the third unit will shift to the contemporary landscape and will examine political questions that have emerged in this pandemic, including debates around vaccine distribution and hesitancy and the environment.. Each unit, after the introduction, will last approximately three to four weeks.

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 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:

Participation	10%
Critical Responses (3 x 15%)	45%
Midterm	20%
Final Exam	25%

Note: each assessment component must be complete to pass this course.

Participation: Absences are to be expected during pandemic and I encourage you to stay home if you are symptomatic with flu or cold symptoms or are asymptomatic with a positive Covid test. You are still, however, required to make up for any missed content by requesting notes from the Accommodations Office. If sickness prevents you from attending more than TWO consecutive classes, you will need to provide me with a doctor’s note explaining your absence. Participation points will be deducted if you miss THREE or more classes throughout the term without explanation.

Note, even as participation requirements are somewhat relaxed due to the pandemic, you are expected to be an active participant in class when in attendance. Use of devices during class except for the purpose of notetaking, arriving late, distracting others, are all cause for participation deductions and may result in your removal from the classroom. Participation points of 8/10 or higher, will be assigned to students who attend class regularly (barring illness), are focussed and prepared to learn, and are willing to participate in class discussion (Note, engaged listening is a form of participation).

Critical Response (3 x 15%): You are expected to contribute **THREE 500-word critical reading reflection** over the semester and **at least one per unit of the course** (*this means you may skip two of the possible six). Critical reflections should be thoughtful and thorough, written

in clear prose, and engage closely with the assigned content. I expect to see references to assigned content to support your claims.

Note, that a critical reflection is not a summary or description of the reading. Rather, you should demonstrate your understanding of the material by reflecting on the author(s)' claims and applying them to your practical experience, or by bringing them into conversation with other reputable published opinions you have encountered.

Direct quotes must be marked as such and referenced, and you must link to any sources which have directly informed your thinking on a particular issue. The writing style may be first person but should be polished and clear. Assume your reader is informed and interested in your analytic perspective – do not, therefore, spend time, introducing basic concepts covered in the course in these assignments.

Please include the word count at the top of your assignment along with your name, the date, and a title.

The overall mark on the assignment will take into account your critical engagement with the assigned material, the originality of your questions and observations, and the clarity of your writing. A grading rubric will be provided.

*Note, a grade of A- or higher on these assignments is reserved for submissions that exceed expectations across the grading rubric.

Midterm – 20%: There will be one in-class midterm that will be designed to take 60 minutes to complete. If you require longer than 75 minutes, please contact the Accommodations Office.

Note, as the Midterm is 20% of your final grade, Student Declaration of Absence forms will not be accepted to excuse you from completing this assignment. **If you are unwell the day of the exam, it is your responsibility to schedule a make-up exam with me by the end of week seven** (barring a medical or family emergency such as a death, or proof of positive Covid test). **If you do not reschedule your missed exam within this window, you will receive zero on this assignment.**

Final Exam - 30%: Students will write a final exam during the scheduled exam period. The exam should take you no more than 3 hours of focussed writing time. Further instructions on the final will be given in class.

Class Logistics and Policies:

This class will be held in person barring unforeseen developments in Nova Scotia's COVID-19 response. Barring illness or family emergencies, you are expected to attend class in person and ready to contribute to class discussion. You can expect to be tested on any material covered in class lectures or discussion. You will also be responsible for retrieving notes from any missed classes from the Accessibility Centre.

Under no circumstances is it permissible to audio or video record lectures without explicit permission from the instructor.

Policy on Classroom Behavior: Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate and respectful learning environment. This includes ensuring you use your devices appropriately and only for course related content. **Cell phones should be turned off for the duration of lecture and computers should be used exclusively for notetaking. If you are distracted by your phone, chats, or online material, chances are you are also distracting those around you. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards will be subject to discipline and potentially removed from the class.**

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, colour, ethnicity, culture, religion, creed, politics, military status, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, and gender expression, age, disability, and nationality.

Policy on Late Assignments:

Late critical responses will be penalized 2% percent per day of lateness (weekends included) up to a maximum of 20%. Late course work will not be accepted after the end of the exam period.

Student Declaration of Absence policy:

Dalhousie students are asked to take responsibility for their own short-term absences (3 days or less) by contacting their instructor by email prior to the academic requirement deadline or scheduled time and by submitting a completed Student Declaration of Absence to their instructor in case of missed or late academic requirements.

The Student Declaration of Absence Form was introduced in select courses to replace sick notes for absences of three days or fewer that result in missed or late academic requirements. The Student Declaration of Absence Form functions the same as a sick note. It may be used **once** in this class for this purpose. If you are ill and must miss more than one assignment please provide a formal doctor's note.

Student Declaration of Absence do not excuse students from completing work required for this class. If you submit an SDA to account for a late assignment or missed test, you are still responsible for making up the assignment and test, within one week. If you will be absent for longer than 3 days and are unable to complete or revise work please see the long-term absence policy available online. The following paragraphs outlines long-term absence policy:

Where long-term absences are due to major or chronic physical or mental health conditions, documentation must be provided by on-campus or off-campus primary care health professionals. Documentation should indicate the dates and duration of the condition (**confidential health information of the exact condition is not required**), when possible should describe its impact on the student's ability to fulfill academic requirements, and include any other information a primary care health professional considers relevant and appropriate.

For more information, see here:

[https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/dept/university_secretariat/policy-repository/Student%20Absence%20Regulation%20\(May%202018\)%20\(3\).pdf](https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/dept/university_secretariat/policy-repository/Student%20Absence%20Regulation%20(May%202018)%20(3).pdf)

Course Texts

Albert Camus, *The Plague* (Penguin Classics: 2013).

Mitchell L. Hammond. *Epidemics and the Modern World* (University of Toronto Press: 2020).

Andrew T. Price-Smith, *Contagion and Chaos: Disease, Ecology, and National Security in the Era of Globalization* (MIT Press: 2009)

Andrew T. Price-Smith, *The Health of Nations: infectious Disease, environmental change, and their effects on national security and development* (MIT Press: 2002)

Priscilla Wald, *Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative* (Duke University Press: 2008)

N.B. Course texts should all be available electronically through the library system, with the exception of Albert Camus' *The Plague*, which you are encouraged to buy on your own. However you are encouraged to download your texts early in the week to ensure you have plenty of time to complete your reading.

Course Schedule

Week 1. Introductions and key themes

T/Sept. 6: Course welcome and overview of syllabus.

Read: Course syllabus (carefully)!

TH/Sept. 8: “Theory and Exegesis: On Health and the Body Politic”

Price-Smith “Introduction.” *Contagion and Chaos*, pp. 1-7; Price-Smith “Chapter 1,” *Contagion and Chaos*, esp. 24-32; Marijn Nieuwenhuis. “The Significance of the Covid-19 Crisis” *Open Democracy*:

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/significance-covid-19-crisis/>

UNIT ONE: PLAGUE HISTORY

Week 2 The Athenian Plague and the Black Death

T/Sept. 13: Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* (selections; Brightspace); Bocaccio, “Introduction”, *The Decameron*. (Brightspace)

“Chapter 1” *Epidemics and the Modern World* (hereafter *EMW*), pp. 17-39; 46-52

Rec: Thucydides, “Part 2: Lessons from the Plague in Athens” *CBC Ideas*:

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/thucydides-part-2-lessons-from-the-plague-of-athens-1.5624087>

TH/Sept. 15: CLASS CANCELLED

Week 3 Syphilis Misogyny and Racism

T/Sept. 20: Girolamo Fracastoro *Syphilis or the French disease* (Brightspace)
“Chapter 2” *EMW*, pp. 57-79; 92-99

TH/Sept. 22: Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, “On Black Philadelphians Conduct During the Yellow Fever Outbreak in Philadelphia”; Hammond, “Chapter 4,” *EMW*, pp. 178-85; Hammond, “Chapter. 2” *EMW*, pp. 79-91

*First Reading Response Due TH Sept. 22 by 2 p.m.

Week 4 Scapegoating; The “Spanish” Flu; Typhoid Mary

T/Sept. 27 Price-Smith, “Pandemic Influenza: On Sclerosis in Governance” *Contagion and Chaos* *Contagion and Chaos*, pp. 57-88; Hammond, “Chapter 8” *EMW*, 323-32.
Alisha Haridasana Gupta, “How the Spanish Flu Almost Upended Women’s Suffrage” April 28, 2020, *The New York Times*:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/28/us/spanish-flu-womens-suffrage-coronavirus.html>

TH/Sept. 29 Price-Smith, “Pandemic Influenza: On Sclerosis in Governance” *Contagion and Chaos* *Contagion and Chaos*, pp. 57-88; Hammond, “Chapter 8” *EMW*, 323-32.
Alisha Haridasana Gupta, “How the Spanish Flu Almost Upended Women’s Suffrage” April 28, 2020, *The New York Times*:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/28/us/spanish-flu-womens-suffrage-coronavirus.html>

Week 5 AIDS’ Patient Zero and a Short History of Vaccination,

T/ Oct. 4: Wald, “The Healthy Carrier: ‘Typhoid Mary’ and Social Being” *Contagious*, Ch. 2, pp. 68-113

TH/Oct. 6: Wald, “The Columbus of AIDS” Chapter. 4, pp. 212-254

Week 6 Review and Midterm

T/Oct. 11: Hammond, “Chapter 10,” *EMW* ,pp. 391-413; Hammond, “Chapter 3,” *EMW* 121-133

TH/Oct. 13: MIDTERM (In-class)

UNIT TWO: CRITICAL THEORIES OF CONTAGION: SURVEILLANCE, RESISTANCE, SACRIFICE, GRIEF, SOLIDARITY

Week 7 The State of Exception or Sacrificial Politics?

T/Oct. 18: Foucault, M. “Panopticon,” reproduced on “Coronavirus and Philosophers: A Tribune” *European Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Feb 2020-May 2020 (in collaboration with the Journal “Antinomie”): <https://antinomie.it/>),
<https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/articles/coronavirus-and-philosophers/>

TH/Oct. 20 Read contributions from Agamben and Benvenuto “Philosophers on Contagion and Coronavirus” <https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/articles/coronavirus-and-philosophers/>; Carlo Salzani, “COVID-19 and State of Exception: Medicine, Politics, and the Epidemic State”: <https://parisinstitute.org/depictions-article-covid-19-and-state-of-exception-medicine-politics-and-the-epidemic-state/>

Week 8 Mourning and Accountability

T/Oct. 25 Naomi Klein, “Disaster Capitalism” Harpers Oct. 2007: <https://www.angelfire.com/il/photojerk/klein.pdf>

T/Oct. 27 Judith Butler on Mourning and the Pandemic: http://schauspiel.moz.ac.at/medien/Applied_Theatre/Texte_Aufnahmepruefung_/Interviewtext_Butler.pdf

*Second Reading Response due TH. Oct. 27 by 2 pm.

Week 9 Camus, Plague, Corruption and Solidarity

T/Nov. 1 Camus, Albert. *The Plague* (Parts I and II, pp. 1-137 in the Penguin Classics edition)

TH/Nov. 3 *The Plague* (Parts III-V, pp. 138-252)

Week 10 READING WEEK (NO CLASS)

***Optional Bonus Assignment** (3% on your final grade if you complete in full)

Watch A plague movie such as *The Seventh Seal*, *Contagion*, *Death in Venice*, *Outbreak*, *Jezebel*

Read: “Imagined Immunities: The Imagined Epidemiology of Belonging” Wald, *Contagion* Ch. 1.

Due Sunday 11:55 pm:

A 500-word reflection on the function of plague narratives in popular culture (submit to “Bonus” folder in Assignments).

UNIT THREE: PANDEMICS AND THE GLOBAL ORDER

Week 11. COVID-19, Geopolitics, and Vaccine Hesitancy

T/Nov. 15: Barnett, M. (2020). “COVID-19 and the Sacrificial International Order.” *International Organization*, 74(S1), E128-E147. doi:10.1017/S002081832000034X

“Global COVID-19 vaccine inequity” by Tahla Burki, *The Lancet*, July 2021:

<https://www.who.int/news/item/22-07-2021-vaccine-inequity-undermining-global-economic-recovery>

“Vaccine inequality will cost money as well as lives”

<https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2021/08/30/vaccine-inequality-will-cost-money-as-well-as-lives>

- TH/Nov. 17: Sorell, T, and Butler, j, “The Politics of Covid Vaccine Hesitancy and Opposition” *The Political Quarterly*, 92(2), April-June 2022:
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/1467-923X.13134>
 Cao, J, et. Al. “The politics of vaccine hesitancy in the United States” *Social Science Quarterly* 103(1) 2022, pp. 42-54

Week 12 Zoonosis: Connected Pandemic and Climate Crisis

- T/Nov. 22 Climate, Ecology and Human Health,” Paul R. Epstein, Ch. 3. *Plagues and Politics*.
 “Environmental Change and Disease Proliferation,” *The Health of Nations*, Ch. 5

- TH./Nov. 24 IPBES Workshop On Biodiversity And Pandemics Executive Summary:
https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/2020-12/IPBES%20Workshop%20on%20Biodiversity%20and%20Pandemics%20Report_0.pdf
 “The COVID-19 lockdowns: a window into the Earth System,” Noah S. Diffenbaugh, Christopher B. Field, Gabrielle Wong-Parodi et al; *Nature Reviews Earth & Environment* vol. 1: https://www.nature.com/articles/s43017-020-0079-1#auth-Gabrielle-Wong_Parodi
 Carl Latkin, Lauren Dayton, Catelyn Coyle, Grace Yi, Abigail Winiker, Danielle German, “The association between climate change attitudes and COVID-19 attitudes: The link is more than political ideology☆☆☆★,” *The Journal of Climate Change and Health*, 5, 2022,
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joclim.2021.100099>

*Third Critical Response due TH/Nov. 24 by 2 pm.

Week 13

- T/Nov. 29 Lipsy, P. 2020. “COVID-19 and the Politics of Crisis” *International Organization* 74 (supplement), 98-107.
 TH/Dec. 1: Review and conclusions

Note: While I have tried to the best of my ability to finalize the reading list for this syllabus, adjustments may be required as the course unfolds.

ADDITIONAL CLASS POLICIES

SECTION B: UNIVERSITY POLICIES, STATEMENTS, GUIDELINES and RESOURCES for SUPPORT

“This course is governed by the academic rules and regulations set forth in the University Calendar and the Senate.

University Policies, Statements, Guidelines, and Other Resources for Support

This course is governed by the academic rules and regulations set forth in the University Calendar and the Senate.

University Statements

Student Code of Conduct

Everyone at Dalhousie is expected to treat others with dignity and respect. The Code of Student Conduct allows Dalhousie to take disciplinary action if students do not follow this community expectation.

Students are required to comply with health and safety requirements on campus, and should be considerate of others' health concerns. Non-compliance may be reported under the Code of Student Conduct.

Diversity and Inclusion – Culture of Respect

Every person at Dalhousie has a right to be respected and safe. We believe inclusiveness is fundamental to education. We stand for equality. Dalhousie is strengthened in our diversity. We are a respectful and inclusive community. We are committed to being a place where everyone feels welcome and supported, which is why our Strategic Direction prioritizes fostering a culture of diversity and inclusiveness (Strategic Priority 5.2).

Recognition of Mi'kmaq Territory

Dalhousie University would like to acknowledge that the University is on Traditional Mi'kmaq Territory. The Elders in Residence program provides students with access to First Nations elders for guidance, counsel and support. Visit their office at:

Room 107, Indigenous Student Centre
1321 Edward Street Phone: (902) 494-6803

University Policies and Programs

- Important Dates in the Academic Year
http://www.dal.ca/academics/important_dates.html
- University Grading Practices: Statement of Principles and Procedures
https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/academic/grading-practicespolicy.html
- Scent-Free Program <https://www.dal.ca/dept/safety/programs-services/occupational-safety/scent-free.html>

Learning and Support Resources

- General Academic Support - Academic Advising: https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/advising.html
- Copyright and Fair Dealing: <https://libraries.dal.ca/services/copyright-office/fairdealing/fair-dealing-guidelines.html>
- Libraries: <http://libraries.dal.ca>
- Student Health Services: https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/health-and-wellness/services-support/student-health-and-wellness.html
- Counselling and Psychological Services: <https://www.dal.ca/counselling>
- Black Student Advising: https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/communities/blackstudent-advising.html
- Indigenous Student Centre: https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/communities/indigenous.html
- eLearning Website: <https://www.dal.ca/dept/elearning.html>
- Student Advocacy Services: <http://www.dsu.ca/dsas>

- Dalhousie Ombudsperson: https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/safety-respect/student-rights-and-responsibilities/where-to-get-help/ombudsperson.html
- Writing Centre: https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/writing-andstudy-skills.html. Assistance with learning to write academic documents, reviewing papers for discipline -specific writing standards, organization, argument, transitions, writing styles and citations.
- Studying for Success program and tutoring: https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/study- skills-and-tutoring.html