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*
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


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


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*


3/2 **Week 6.** Epidemics and Colonial Planning


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


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*


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 Adeloye, *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*
Janice Boddy, *Wombs and Alien Spirits: Women, Men, and the Zar Cult in Northern Sudan*
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 Gelfland, *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 Took, 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 Afflication
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