Commodities and Disease in Global History
History 705/Hist Sci 919/Med Hist 919
Tuesday, 1:00-3:30 pm
Fall 2017
Humanities 5255

Instructor:
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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12 – 1 pm, and by appt.

Course Description:
This seminar seeks to put historical scholarship on the global flows of capital, commodities, and disease in conversation with one another. Our temporal reach is expansive, from the shifting patterns of yellow fever accompanying the Atlantic slave trade to the global threat of avian influenza arising from factory farms and changing diets worldwide. We will consider a range of commodities—from cotton and silver to latex and blood—to name just a few, to ask what commodities, and associated diseases that accompanied them, can reveal about changing economic, material, political, and social relationships on the global stage. At the same time, we will interrogate the ways that changing ecological regimes of capital have altered and redistributed life—both human and non-human—and created new disease pathways. We will also attend to the different questions, methods, and forms of evidence that economic, environmental, and medical history bring to a consideration of such questions.

Expectations:
This course is based on a seminar-discussion format. Each one in class needs to assume the responsibility of an active participant and learner. Success in the class depends largely upon the time, energy, and commitment you invest. You will be required to arrive at class having read the material assigned for the day and prepared to engage in a thoughtful and constructive conversation that is respectful of others in the classroom and takes seriously the issues and themes presented in the readings.

If any problem arises, either academic or personal, that might jeopardize your performance in the course, please contact me as soon as possible by either phone, email, or in person.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, I urge any student in this course with a disability to inform me as soon as possible, so that I may make any necessary accommodations to ensure full participation and facilitate your educational opportunities. All such requests are confidential.

Students are expected to familiarize themselves with the UW policies on plagiarism and to assume responsibility for honesty in all course work.

Course Requirements:
1) Take turns leading discussion of assigned readings (the number will depend on the number of seminar participants). A typed summary/critique/reaction (1 page in length) should accompany your discussion.
2) Write a 750 to 1,000-word book review for one of the books discussed, which should be an outgrowth of the seminar you helped to lead.

2) Complete a minimum of 20 pages of prose writing in connection with this course – ideally a research paper which relates to the themes of this course, makes use of primary documents, and incorporates conceptual and/or methodological insights gained from the seminar readings. Other possibilities include a research prospectus for a master's thesis, a historiographic essay in preparation for a prelim field, or a draft dissertation proposal. Please meet with me as early as you can in the semester to discuss how you propose to fulfill the writing requirement. A preliminary proposal and bibliography outlining your research/writing plans is due by Tuesday, October 24.

Grading will be based on class participation (25%), book review (~25%; due two weeks after your seminar discussion), and your written work (~50%). Your written work is due on Monday, Dec. 18.

Topics and Schedule of Readings:

All readings, except those marked with an asterisk (*), can be accessed electronically at https://uwmad.courses.wisconsin.edu/d2l/home/3782419. Readings marked by an asterisk are books to be purchase or borrowed from the library.

September 12: Charting our Course, Some Helpful Guides


VEGETABLE

September 19: Sugar


**September 26: Cotton**


**October 3: Rubber**


Gregg Mitman, “Parasite,” typescript.

**October 10: Fruits**


**ANIMAL**

**October 17: Furs**

**October 24: Guano**

**October 31: Meat**


**November 7: Blood**


**MINERAL**

**November 14: Silver**


**November 21: Lead**


**SYNTHETICS**

**November 28: Hormones**


**December 5: Plutonium**

December 12: Plastics
https://aeon.co/essays/plastics-run-in-my-family-but-their-inheritance-is-in-us-all?src=longreads
