Introduction to the History of Disease and Medicine

Course prefix: HTS

Course number: 2080

Section: A

CRN (you may add up to five):
91135

Instructor First Name: Taylor Elizabeth

Instructor Last Name: Dysart

Semester: Fall

Academic year: 2025

Course description:

This course's goal is to introduce students to the major topics, themes, questions, and methods in the history of medicine, disease, and the body. We will examine how ideas about healing, suffering, care, health, and illness have changed across time and space. These questions will be explored from the perspectives of caregivers—physicians, nurses, family members, and community organizations—and patients. This course begins with an exploration of ancient Greek and Chinese medical theories and practices and ends with reflections about our modern healthcare landscape. We will explore the advent of major medical advancements, such as the germ theory of disease and the rise of antibiotics, as well as lesser-known episodes in the history of medicine. We will trace these events around the globe with a geographic emphasis on the Americas and Europe, as well as colonial territories and post-colonial regions.

Course learning outcomes:

With the successful completion of this course, students will be able to do the following:

- Describe the major transformations in the (global) history of medicine and disease from ancient Greece and China to the present day
- Identify how the advent of diseases and medical advancements have shaped cultural, political, and social historical developments
- Analyze primary sources and situate them in their appropriate historical context

Required course materials:

All materials will be free and available on Canvas.

Grading policy:

Assignments and Assessments

1. Introductory Survey – 2%
2. Syllabus Quiz – 3%
3. Participation – 20%
4. Quizzes – 10%
5. Primary Source Analysis 1 – 15%
6. Primary Source Analysis 2 – 20%
7. Student-Generated Final Exam – 30%

Grading Scale

I will provide a specific rubric for each assignment that you can find on Canvas.

90 – 100% = A, superior performance

80 – 89% = B, high-quality performance

70 – 79% = C, average performance

60 – 69% = D, poor performance

0 – 59% = F, unacceptable performance

Attendance policy:

Participation is a crucial part of this course. Attendance will be taken in each session. Your participation grade is based on in-class participation. For each class session, our time together will unfold with some combination of lectures, small and large group discussion, silent reflection, group and individual analyses of primary and secondary sources, and debates, amongst other forms of engagement. You are expected to be fully engaged in each of these activities. Being fully engaged can look like listening closely, responding thoughtfully, asking questions, taking on an assigned group role, evidence of completed readings, etc.

If you are worried about your participation, please come talk to me and we can discuss strategies to help you in engage in our classroom.

Students can have a total of three unexcused absences over the course of the semester with no questions asked. More than three missed courses will result in a reduction of the final participation grade. Exceptions will be made for Georgia Tech-approved absences and emergencies.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Scholarship is an intellectual, ethical, and social endeavor. It can be a great joy to discuss and debate assignments, ideas, theories, and readings with your peers. For this class, I encourage you to reflect on course materials, workshop ideas, and proofread drafts with your peers outside of our scheduled class time. However, you also have a responsibility to properly and clearly cite any ideas, language, or theories that you did not generate. It is a form of plagiarism to misrepresent another scholar's work as your own without proper attribution, even if such misrepresentation is unintentional. See below for proper citation practices, including a reference for the Chicago Manual of Style.

Any instances of academic dishonesty will result in disciplinary action, which may include a required resubmission, a failing grade, or a report to the Office of the Dean of Students. Violations include cheating, plagiarizing, or the inappropriate use of online software, including AI.

If you have any questions or you're in doubt, please ask me. It is our shared responsibility to foster an environment where you can debate, discuss, take risks, make mistakes, improve, learn, and grow.

For more information, please see Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code and Student Code of Conduct.

https://policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-life/academic-honor-code

https://policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-life/student-code-conduct

Citation Requirements

For all assignments, please reference the citation guidelines for the Chicago Manual of Style, 18th edition, unless otherwise explicitly stated.

https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Science area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcomes:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social or geographic relationships develop, persist or

change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion