

HTS 3087

HISTORY OF MEDICINE

School of History and Sociology Georgia Institute of Technology

Class time	Tuesday, 5 – 7:45pm
Location	OCE, 104
CRN	94152
Semester	Fall 2026
Instructor	Dr. Taylor Elizabeth Dysart
Email	tdysart8@gatech.edu
Form of address	You can call me Taylor, Dr. Dysart, or Professor Dysart
Office	G07B, Old Civil Engineering Building (OCE)
Student hours	By appointment.
Course description	<p>This advanced undergraduate and graduate seminar examines the main themes and methods in the global history of biomedicine and the biomedical sciences from the nineteenth century to the present day. In this course, we will explore how a broad range of actors constructed, contested, and circulated knowledge about health, illness, medicine, and the body. We will examine how such knowledge moved between local, regional, and national contexts, including from North America to post-Soviet states to the Global South, and explore the perspectives of physicians, patients, activists, laboratory scientists, and public health officials, amongst others.</p> <p>Though this course draws primarily from the history of medicine and science, we will also read in allied disciplines including critical medical anthropology, the anthropology of science, and STS.</p>
Learning objectives	<p>With the successful completion of this course, students will be able to do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognize and synthesize the major arguments, methods, and theories underlying the global history of biomedicine and the biomedical sciences

- Analyze how various stakeholders have accelerated, produced, and/or contested the development of biomedical knowledge across time and space
- Critically evaluate the relationship between biomedicine, biomedical sciences, and major historical developments
- Demonstrate a skilled ability to read and synthesize complex historical monographs as evidenced through written summaries, leading seminar discussions, and engaging with peers in thoughtful conversation
- Complete historiography paper or project proposal related to the global history of biomedicine and the biomedical sciences that contributes to the historiography, identifies appropriate primary sources, and develops nuanced research questions.

Required texts

Articles:

Charles Rosenberg, "Framing Disease: Illness, Society, and History," in *Explaining Epidemics and Other Studies in the History of Medicine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 305 – 318.

Warwick Anderson, "Where is the Postcolonial History of Medicine?" *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 72, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 522 – 530.

Beth Linker, "On the Borderland of Medical and Disability History: A Survey of the Fields," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 87, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 499 – 535.

Books:

Warwick Anderson, *The Collectors of Lost Souls: Turning Kuru Scientists into Whitemen* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

Liz. P.Y. Chee, *Mao's Bestiary: Medicinal Animals in Modern China* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021).

Steven Epstein, *Impure Science: AIDS, Activism, and the Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

Michel Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1963, original, English translation published in 1973).

Catherine Mas, *Culture in the Clinic: Miami and the Making of Modern Medicine* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022).

Annmarie Mol, *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

Abena Dove Osseo-Asare, *Bitter Roots: The Search for Healing Plants in Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

Nana Osei Quarshie, *African Pharmakon: The Asylum as Shrine from Slavery to the Return* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2025).

Adriana Petryna, *When Experiments Travel: Clinical Trials and the Global Search for Human Subjects* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

Joanna Radin, *Life on Ice: A History of New Uses for Cold Blood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

Gabriela Soto Laveaga, *Jungle Laboratories: Mexican Peasants, National Projects, and the Making of the Pill* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

Courtney E. Thompson and Kylie M. Smith, eds. *Do Less Harm: Ethical Questions for Health Historians* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2025).

Beans Velocci, *Sex Isn't Real: The Invention of an Incoherent Binary* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2026).

Academic integrity

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

Technology policy

I reserve the front row of class for students who do not use laptops, tablets, etc. in class, who prefer to take notes by hand, and find these devices to be distracting.

If you do use these devices in class, I expect you to use them responsibly and for course purposes only. If I see you inappropriately using these devices during course time, your participation credit for that day will be reduced.

There will be some classes where you are expected to close your laptops and rely on handwritten notes. I will let you know in advance when that is required.

You may not record (audio/visual) class lectures and/or discussions without the written consent of the instructor unless it is according to an accommodation granted by the Office of Disability Services. Class recordings, lectures, presentations, and other materials posted on Canvas are for the sole purpose of educating the students currently enrolled in the course.

AI policy

AI is playing an increasingly undeniable role in how we think about knowledge, learning, and scholarship. It allows for a unique opportunity for students to reflect on their own attention and learning as well as the limitations of intelligence, humanity, and reflexivity [as D. Graham Burnett writes](#). However, the emergence of more data centers can also have environmental and social consequences, like contributing to water scarcity in [communities as close to us as Newton County](#).

This class has the following guidelines for the responsible use of AI and makes a distinction between AI-generated content (not allowed) and AI-stimulated content (allowed but discouraged).

What this means in practice is that you CAN do the following:

- Have a conversation with AI about the course and its materials.
- Ask AI for feedback on responses that you have generated.

You CANNOT do the following:

- Copy and paste the AI's response to an assignment prompt. This is plagiarism.
- Paraphrase the AI's response to an assignment prompt. This is also plagiarism.
- Ask AI to read course materials for you.

If you do choose to use AI, you MUST do the following:

- Acknowledge the use of AI in on the assignment (including presentations).
- Write a brief reflection (that you, not the AI write) on why you found AI useful for this assignment with specific examples.
- Be able to explain and answer any questions about your assignment without defaulting to AI.

I strongly advise you to resist using AI in this course.

Disability

If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, please feel welcome to discuss your concerns with me.

Students with disabilities, whether physical, learning, or psychological, and /or chronic medical conditions who believe that they need accommodations, are encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible. Students must provide documentation of their disability to ODS by uploading the forms into the AIM portal.

Communication	Email is the best way to reach me. In communication, you can address me as Taylor, Dr. Dysart, or Professor Dysart. I will respond to emails within 48 hours during the work week. I do not regularly check email after regular business hours or on the weekend. If you send me an email over the weekend, I will respond within 48 hours during the work week. Please keep this in mind as you are working on your assignments. If you have not heard from me within 48 hours of emailing me, then please follow-up.
Student-Faculty Expectations	It is imperative to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility, and the role of faculty and students to contribute to such an environment. The Student-Faculty Expectations articulate some basic expectations that can serve as a guideline for this course. We will discuss these the first day of class.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING POLICIES

- 1) Syllabus Quiz – 5%
- 2) Participation – 20%
- 3) Discussion Questions – 25%
- 4) Book Review – 15%
- 5) Final Paper – 35%

SYLLABUS QUIZ – 5% (1 September)

A short quiz administered in the first week to ensure students have read and understood the course policies, expectations, and required materials. This assignment is designed to set students up for success by familiarizing them with the structure of the seminar from the outset. The assignment will be submitted on Canvas.

PARTICIPATION – 20% (Ongoing)

Active, prepared engagement in weekly seminar discussions is central to this course, and students are expected to come having read the assigned text carefully and ready to introduce thoughtful questions, analyses, and debates that sustain and advance the conversation.

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 two unexcused absences over the course of the semester with no questions asked. More than two missed courses will result in a reduction of the final participation grade. If you miss more than two class sessions, you must have formal documentation.

As discussed above, active participation is a significant part of this seminar.

DISCUSSION LEADER AND CLASS PRESENTATION – 25% (TBD)

Once during the semester, each undergraduate student will prepare 5 – 7 discussion questions and explain why they have chosen these specific questions. The questions should target the course's broader themes, highlight the author's key arguments, contributions, and methods, and provide multiple pathways to guide the seminar. These must be submitted to the instructor 24 hours before class.

BOOK REVIEW – 15% (3 November)

Students will write a book review of one monograph in the global history of medicine and the biomedical sciences that is important for their final paper. The review should summarize the book's argument, assess its contribution to the historiography, and identify its strengths and limitations in approximately 800 - 1000 words.

FINAL PROPOSAL OR HISTORIOGRAPHIC PAPER – 35%

Students will complete either a research project proposal or historiographic paper related to the global history of biomedicine and the biomedical sciences, demonstrating the ability to identify a significant research question, situate it within relevant scholarship, and develop a plan for an original project using appropriate sources. Full guidelines will be distributed separately, and students will workshop their drafts with peers before final submission.

GRADING SCALE

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

EXTENSIONS AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS

If you require an extension, let me know two working days prior to the due date to ensure that the extension can be granted. I understand that exceptional and emergency circumstances can arise, and I will do my best to accommodate these occurrences. We are working with a limited amount of time so extensions will only be granted if you email me two days prior to the due date and/or in the case of exceptional circumstances.

If you do not request an extension two working days prior to the due date and are not experiencing exceptional and/or emergency circumstances, you will be penalized for late work. I cannot accept any late work after the final day of class.

RESUBMISSION AND REGRADING

Students cannot revise and resubmit assignments to be graded again.

If you feel that you have received an unfair grade, you must wait at least 24 hours after receiving your grade before reaching out to me with these concerns. I will not debate grades over email. If you feel that you have received an unfair grade and wish to discuss this with me, you must come to student hours so we can discuss your concerns.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNED READINGS

***Note: I reserve the right to change the syllabus as needed throughout the semester. If a change must occur, I will let students know in advance.**

Date	Assigned Readings
25 August	<p>Unit 1 - What is the History of Medicine?</p> <p>Read:</p> <p>Course Syllabus</p> <p>Charles Rosenberg, "Framing Disease: Illness, Society, and History," in <i>Explaining Epidemics and Other Studies in the History of Medicine</i> (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 305 – 318.</p> <p>Warwick Anderson, "Where is the Postcolonial History of Medicine?" <i>Bulletin of the History of Medicine</i> 72, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 522 – 530.</p> <p>Beth Linker, "On the Borderland of Medical and Disability History: A Survey of the Fields," <i>Bulletin of the History of Medicine</i> 87, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 499 – 535.</p>
1 September	<p>Read:</p> <p>Courtney E. Thompson and Kylie M. Smith, eds. <i>Do Less Harm: Ethical Questions for Health Historians</i> (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2025).</p> <p>Due (before class):</p> <p>Syllabus quiz</p>
8 September	<p>Unit 2 - Clinical Encounters</p> <p>Read:</p> <p>Michel Foucault, <i>Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception</i> (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1963, original, English translation published in 1973).</p>

15 September	<p>Read:</p> <p>Annmarie Mol, <i>The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice</i> (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).</p>
22 September	<p>Read:</p> <p>Catherine Mas, <i>Culture in the Clinic: Miami and the Making of Modern Medicine</i> (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022).</p>
29 September	<p>Unit 2 – Transforming Medicines</p> <p>Read:</p> <p>Abena Dove Osseo-Asare, <i>Bitter Roots: The Search for Healing Plants in Africa</i> (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).</p>
6 October	<p>Fall Break – No Class.</p>
13 October	<p>Read:</p> <p>Gabriela Soto Laveaga, <i>Jungle Laboratories: Mexican Peasants, National Projects, and the Making of the Pill</i> (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).</p>
20 October	<p>Read:</p> <p>Liz. P.Y. Chee, <i>Mao's Bestiary: Medicinal Animals in Modern China</i> (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021).</p>
27 October	<p>Unit 3 – Collecting Samples, Making Evidence</p> <p>Read:</p> <p>Warwick Anderson, <i>The Collectors of Lost Souls: Turning Kuru Scientists into Whitemen</i> (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).</p>
3 November	<p>Read:</p> <p>Joanna Radin, <i>Life on Ice: A History of New Uses for Cold Blood</i> (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).</p> <p>Due (before class):</p> <p>Book review</p>

10 November	<p>Read:</p> <p>Steven Epstein, <i>Impure Science: AIDS, Activism, and the Politics of Knowledge</i> (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).</p>
17 November	<p>Unit 4 – Circulations and Spaces</p> <p>Read:</p> <p>Nana Osei Quarshie, <i>African Pharmakon: The Asylum as Shrine from Slavery to the Return</i> (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2025).</p>
24 November	<p>Read:</p> <p>Beans Velocci, <i>Sex Isn't Real: The Invention of an Incoherent Binary</i> (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2026).</p>
1 December	<p>Read:</p> <p>Adriana Petryna, <i>When Experiments Travel: Clinical Trials and the Global Search for Human Subjects</i> (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).</p>
8 December	<p>No class.</p>