Public health, its institutions and policies, focuses on disease, illness and death in a community or some other polity. In its modern form, public health has its origins in the rapid, massive urbanization, often associated with industrialization, that occurred in the US and on the continent of Europe during the 19th century. The population of these cities suffered devastating epidemics and a stunningly high endemic rate of disease. Public health practitioners developed tools to characterize the morbidity and mortality they perceived and mobilized state and private resources to decrease both. In their actions, as in their perceptions, these practitioners were deeply influenced by contemporary factors and forces. Beginning in the 19th century, this course will trace the history of public health through various phases, periods characterized by changing social organization, disease patterns, disease theories, populations of interest, professional training, cultural values and social expectations.

At the heart of the course are three questions to which you should continually return. First, what is the social basis for the existence of disease? Specifically, how does the organization of society at a particular point in time facilitate or create the conditions for the patterns of pathology and death found in its populations? Secondly, why does a society frame disease as it does and how does that social construction of disease change over time? Finally, what factors influence society’s response to perceived problems of disease and death? In addition to dominant scientific ideas, these may include state development or interests, politics, and responses to contemporary issues of economics, class, race, and gender.

Although primarily concerned with the social history of public health, the course will also refer to present public health issues. We will examine whether, and to what extent, they are heir to the public health past. A subsidiary question will be whether history, as a craft and methodology, can prove useful in elucidating those contemporary issues, and influence public health policy. Finally, we will consider to what extent present public health problems frame the questions historians of public health currently ask.
Assignments:

*The independent study course consists of readings, short essays, discussion and a term paper. Students will be expected to read carefully the weekly assignments and be prepared to analyze them in class. For 6 classes of their choosing, each student will be responsible for writing short, critical papers, 3-4 pages in length (25% of the final grade). In each of the 6 papers, the student should summarize at least two of the assigned readings, critique the arguments of the author(s) and compare the arguments to those of other writers assigned that week and previously. If possible, link the historical analysis to contemporary public health problems. A student should send the paper to me by the Sunday morning before our Tuesday class so that I can email them to the other students to read. Papers will be part of the discussion during our meeting. (20% of the final grade will depend upon attendance and participation in class discussion).

*Each student will write a research essay of approximately 10-15 pages using newspapers, magazines and the scientific literature to examine a discrete event or topic, preferably one with contemporary public health resonance. If possible, look for a controversial issue (regarding gender, race, class, scientific evidence. Students will make a presentation of their research during the last session. (5% of grade) The paper is due and must be handed in no later than May 17). (50% of grade)


Sessions and Topics:

Week 1 Introduction
Required Reading:

Additional Suggested Reading:
Week 2: Urbanization, Industrialization and Population: Mobilizing for the Public’s Health

Required Reading:

Additional Suggested Reading:

Week 3 Disease in Places and Bodies: Miasma, Immorality and Poverty

Required Reading:

Additional Suggested Reading:
Week 5  Emergence of the Germ Theory of Disease Transmission

Required Reading:

Additional Suggested Reading:

Week 6  Public Health: Scientific and Organizational Complexity

Required Reading:
Additional Suggested Reading:

Week 7 Beyond Microbes: Economic and Political Determinants of Health in the 20th Century: Pellagra
Required Reading:

Additional Suggested Reading:

**Week 7 Disease: Ethnicity, Class, Gender and Germs**

**Required Reading:**
Naomi Rogers: A Disease of Cleanliness: Polio in New York City, 1900-1990, in Hives of Sickness, pp. 115-130 or

**Additional Suggested Reading:**

**Week 11 Which Public’s Health? Race, Racism, and the Ethical Implications**

**Required Reading:**
*From Tuskegee’s Truths: Rethinking the Syphilis Study, Susan M. Reverby (ed.) Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000:
*Selected Letters between the United States Public Health Service, the Macon County Health Department, and the Tuskegee Institute, 1932-1972, pp. 73-115.

Additional Suggested Reading:
From Tuskegee’s Truths: Rethinking the Syphilis Study, Susan M. Reverby (ed.) Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000:
J.C. Fletcher: A Case Study in Historical Relativism: The Tuskegee, (Public Health Service) Syphilis Study, pp. 276-298.
E.V. Rivers et al.: Twenty Years of Follow-up Experience in a Long-Range Medical Study, pp. 125-131.

Week 12 The Apparent Epidemiologic Transition and Chronic Disease Public Health: Lung Cancer

Required Reading:
*Berkson J: Smoking and Cancer of the Lungs, Staff Meetings of the Mayo Clinic (1960) 35: 367-385. OR

**Additional Suggested Reading:**


**Week 12 The Apparent Epidemiologic Transition and Chronic Disease Public Health: Heart Disease**

**Required Reading:**


*Greene, J: Prescribing by the Numbers: Drugs and the Definition of Disease, Chapter 1.

Additional Suggested Reading:

Week 13  The AIDS Challenge to the Public Health Status Quo
Required Reading:
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1993 Revised Classification System for HIV Infection and Expanded Surveillance Case Definition for AIDS among Adolescents and Adults, *MMWR* (December 18, 1992) 41(RR-17). Available at http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00018871.htm

Additional Suggested Reading:

**Weeks 14 Reflection and Conclusions.**

*Student presentations based on research paper assignment. Conclusion*