

Anthropology 3BD3 The Black Death

Fall 2020



Lectures:

Tuesdays (asynchronous) 30-40 min lectures posted to A2L every Monday

Wednesday (synchronous) 3:30-4:20, guest lectures, Q and A or Exams via ZOOM

Office Hours: Tuesday 12:30-2:30 via Zoom. This will be a group chat. However, if you need an individual meeting, please email me with a specific 30 min slot, within the 2-hour block and I'll set it aside.

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Contents

Course Description	2
Course Objectives.....	3
Required Materials and Texts	3
Class Format	4
Course Evaluation – Overview	4
Two, 1 page essays (10% each)	4
Two (2) in-class exams (50 minutes each) (20% each)	4
Final exam during examination period (2.5 hours) (40%)	5
Course Evaluation – Details	5
Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings.....	6
TOPICS, READING AND LECTURE, Q and A or EXAM SCHEDULE	6
Week 1 (September 8, 9)	7
Week 2 (September 15, 16)	7
Week 3 (September 22, 23)	8

Week 4 (September 29, 30)	8
Week 5 (October 6, 7).....	7
Week 6 (October 13, 14).....	7
Week 7 (October 20, 21)	7
Week 8 (October 27, 28)	7
Week 9 (November 3, 4)	8
Week 10 (November 10, 11)	8
Week 11 (November 17, 18)	8
Week 12 (November 24, 25)	8
Week 13 (December 1, 2)	8
Course Policies	10
Grades	10
Absences, Missed Work, Illness.....	11
Avenue to Learn.....	11
Turnitin.com	11
Academic Integrity	11

Course Description

We are currently living through a pandemic! The most recent pandemic in the minds of Canadians will be SARS CoV-1, which emerged in 2002, most of you will not remember. That emergence of a Coronavirus in a wet market in Guandong, spread across 23 countries infecting an unknown number of people and killing about 8000. Today (July 16th), as I write this there are more than 13.5 million infected people with nearly 600,000 deaths. That's a mortality rate of ~5% (all sorts of issues with how this number is calculated), nevertheless the number is high. About 700 years ago, another pathogen emerged somewhere south of the Ural mountains from where it spread into the Middle East, Northern African and Western Europe killing some 30-50 million people between the years 1345-1352. This pandemic would later become known as the infamous Black Death and marked the beginning of what is today referred to as the second pandemic of plague. Today's COVID is a gentle (relatively speaking) reminder that epidemics and plagues are not new; but that they have influenced the course of human history for thousands of years and will continue to do so in the immediate future and the long run.

In this new course on the Black Death, we will carefully interrogate the origins, ecology,

and impact on people, religions, institutions, governments at the time and in subsequent generations. We'll try to answer some of the following questions, why was it so deadly, what was its economic impact on societies, how did people understand disease and infection during these times? Ultimately, we will use the Black Death as a model to contextualize and make 'sense' of 'our' current ongoing pandemic.

This course is structured around two, 30-40 min lectures which will be posted every week for asynchronous learning and a once a week 40 min synchronous time slot on Wednesdays from 3:30-4:20, which will be used for Q and A, short guest lectures as well as two exams. Don't worry, these events will be recorded and subsequently posted online at our A2L course shell in case you weren't able to attend in person:

Course Objectives

This course is an exploration of the causes and consequences of the Black Death. We will discuss the historic and contemporary views on the Black Death, with a view to understanding why "Black Death" emerged, how it evolved, why it killed so many people and how many of those themes are linked to our behavior as well as ones outside our control (those of rodents). How modification to the environment likely aided the emergence and ultimately how the pandemic transformed societies. Paul Slacks (2012) excellent book, *Plague: A Very Short Introduction*, talks specifically about the Black Death and the ramifications on medieval society, will be the only required text (apart from uploaded PDFs of academic journal articles I've posted on A2L). By the end of this course, you will:

- Better understand the complex origins of the Black Death
- Better understand the etiology of the Black Death and its relationship to earlier and later plague epidemics
- Appreciate the importance of studying historic plagues as a way to contextualize the current and future pandemics.
- Understand the anthropological framework for interpreting the biosocial origins and consequences of epidemics.
- Understand the basic evolutionary relationships of *Yersinia pestis*
- improve your critical thinking skills

Required Materials and Texts

Slack, Paul, (2012) *Plague: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Is this electronic, and if so, how do students access it. If hard copy only, perhaps mention that they will need to order via bookstore.

All additional readings (see course readings below), podcasts etc, will be posted in the appropriate weekly folders (under readings or others).

Class Format

Lectures will be posted for each week, by the end of day Monday (for that specific week). All information will be posted via the A2L course shell, so look there in the news section for information every week!

1. Tuesday: **asynchronous** lectures will consist of 30-40 min pre-recorded lectures of me speaking to a suite of slides. These .mp3/4 (or .mov) files will be posted on our A2L site, within the appropriate weekly folder.
2. Wednesday **synchronous** lectures, from 3:30-4:20. These will be 40 minute guest lecture/Q and A via ZOOM (guest lectures and Q and A's will also be posted to A2L after they occur) and/or an exam on A2L see the schedule below for specific dates and times.

Late Assignments

What is your course late policy?

The essays I have asked you to write are short (1 page) and an easy 10% of your grade. As such I hope that you'll be able to make the deadlines as suggested above. That being said, there will be a 10% drop in your mark for every day that it is late.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

Please use an MSAF to cover missed work that is worth less than 25% of your grade. An MSAF exception can be requested through your faculty office for work worth greater than 25% (with appropriate documentation).

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Course Evaluation – Overview

Two, 1-page essays (10% each)

Two (2) in-class exams (50 minutes each worth 20%)

Exam 1 Wednesday, September 30th (20%)

Exam 2 Wednesday November 4th (20%)

These synchronous exams evaluate your understanding of the course and reading materials. They will consist of varying combinations of multiple choice, fill ins, short-answers (e.g. definitions, short explanations, comparisons, etc.) stemming from guest lectures, Q and A's, and readings.

THERE ARE NO MAKE-UP EXAMS.

HOWEVER, YOU CAN MISS ONE MIDTERM (without penalty) – THE ENTIRE WEIGHT OF WHICH WILL FALL TO YOUR FINAL EXAM (held during the exam period).

Final exam during examination period (2.5 hours) (40%)

The final exam is **CUMULATIVE** -that is, it covers ALL the course material. It will consist of multiple choice, short-answers (e.g. definitions, short explanations, comparisons, etc.) and perhaps one- three essay question(s) on material from lectures, Q and A's and all readings.

Course Evaluation – Details

Essay 1 (10%). Due September 18th at the end of week 2. In one page (and one page only), using 1.5 line spacing, please write about your current experience with the COVID-19 pandemic. Try to address some of the following questions/issues that you feel comfortable sharing. Where have you been this whole time (maybe you're still there)? How have you dealt with it personally (fear, anger, frustration)? Where you working? How did you respond to the pandemic in the beginning and how did this change over time? What was your impression of the news re: the pandemic? What was your impression of the WHO briefings (if you listened)? Where there things that made you despair during these times and alternatively, perhaps hopeful? There are no wrong or right answers, I'm looking for an honest, personal essay on how you are coping during these challenging times.

Exam 1 (20%): Includes ALL material from the first 4 weeks of class up to and including Tuesday, September 29th. Exam 1 will be Wednesday September 30th from 3:30-4:20 online.

Exam 2 (20%): This second midterm will ONLY cover the material presented between the dates of October 6th up to and including Tuesday November 3rd. Exam 2 will be Wednesday November 4th from 3:30-4:20.

Essay 2 (10%). Due December 4th at the end of week 13. Details to be presented after the second exam!

Final Exam (40%). The final will cover the entire course material from lectures, guest lectures, Q and A's and all readings. However, half (50%) of the final will be based on the last four weeks of the course. **Remember if you have missed one exam the weight of your final will represent 60% of your grade.**

Teaching Assistant: Your TA will be helping me with the grading of your exams, and will be holding office hours only to discuss past test exam responses.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

TOPICS, READING AND LECTURE, Q and A or EXAM SCHEDULE

Week of (#)	Lecture Topic	Additional Reading	Guest Lecture/Q and A or Exam
Sept 7 (1)	Introduction to the course; What's in a name (i.e. Plagues and Black Death)	Slack Chapter 1	Q and A with Dr. Poinar Wednesday Sept 9 th , 3:30-4:30
Sept 14 (2)	What is THE plague? The ecology, genetics and immunity of plague. <i>Essay #1 due Friday</i>	Zeppelini et al. 2016 Salkeld et al. 2016 Hardy 2019 (extra)	Guest lecture and Q and A with Dr. Dan Salkeld (Colorado State) Wednesday Sept 16 th , 3:30-4:30
Sept 21 (3)	How do we know what we know about the Black Death? (archaeology, archives and aDNA)	Bos et al. 2011 (+ Holmes 2011) Dewitte 2016 Willmut et al. 2019 (extra) Lewis 2017 (extra)	Guest lecture and Q and A with Dr. Sharon DeWitte (South Carolina) Wednesday Sept 23 rd , 3:30-4:30
Sept 28 (4)	The three pandemics of plague <i>Exam #1 Wed Sept 30th</i>	Slack chapter 2	EXAM I Wednesday Sept 30 th 3:30-4:30
Oct 5 (5)	The genetics of plague. Genomics of Yersinia pestis and how to read phylogenetic trees	Spyrou et al. 2019 McLennan 2010 Rambaut 2017	Q and A with Dr. Poinar
Oct 11 (6)	NO CLASSES	READING WEEK	NO TUTORIALS
Oct 20 (7)	Mapping plague. Using archival data and genetics to 'map' plague	Slack Chapter 4 Earn et al 2020 Schmid et al 2015 (extra)	Guest lecture and Q and A with Dr. David Earn (McMaster) Wednesday Oct 21 st , 3:30-4:30

Oct 27 (8)	Plagues and othering	Slack chapter 3 Varlik 2011	Guest lecture and Q and A with Dr. Nukhet Varlik (South Carolina) Wednesday Oct 28 th , 3:30-4:30
Nov 2 (9)	The Aftermath of plague. Plague and peoples' responses (i.e. fear, blame, persecution). <i>Exam #2 Wed Nov 4th</i>	Slack chapter Colet 2014	EXAM II Wednesday Nov 9 th 3:30-4:30
Nov 9 (10)	Public health, quarantine and plague	Slack chapter 5 Carmichael 2020 Rawcliffe 2019 (extra)	Guest lecture and Q and A with Dr. Ann Carmichael (Indiana) Wednesday Nov 11 th , 3:30-4:30
Nov 16 (11)	The plague and art and economy	Slack chapter 6 Jones and Nevell 2016 Alfani and Murphy 2017 Alfani 2020	Guest lecture and Q and A with Dr. Lori Jones (Ottawa) Wednesday Nov 18 th , 3:30-4:30
Nov 23 (12)	The context of plague. (how did it start, population size, climate etc).	Ari et al 2012 Brooks 2017 Tian et al. 2017 (extra)	Guest lecture and Q and A with Dr. Sturt Manning (Cornell) Wednesday Nov 25 th , 3:30-4:30
Dec 1 (13)	The consilience of plague. Putting it all together. <i>Essay #2 due Friday</i>	Slack chapter 7 McCormick 2011	Q and A with Dr. Poinar (final exam preparation). Wednesday Dec 3rd, 3:30-4:30.
Dec 8	PREPERATION FOR FINAL		

Week 1 (September 8, 9)

September 8 – Introduction to the course and what’s in a name? (asynchronous)

Readings: Slack Chapter 1

September 9 – Q and A with Dr. Poinar (synchronous)

Week 2 (September 15, 16)

September 15 – What is the plague? The ecology, genetics and immunity of plague. (asynchronous)

Readings: Zeppelini et al. 2016, Salkeld et al. 2016, Hardy 2019 (extra)

**September 9 – Guest lecture and Q and A with Dr. Dan Salkeld
(synchronous)**

Essay # 1 due. (details to be provided in lecture)

Week 3 (September 22, 23)

**September 22 – How do we know what we know about the Black Death?
Archaeology, archives and aDNA). (asynchronous)**

Readings: Bos et al. 2011 (Holmes 2011), DeWitte 2016, Willmut et al. 2019
(extra), Lewis 2017(extra).

**September 9 – Guest lecture and Q and A with Dr. Sharon DeWitte.
(synchronous)**

Week 4 (September 29, 30)

September 29 – The three pandemics of plague. (asynchronous)

Readings: Slack chapter 3

**September 30 – EXAM #1 (synchronous) go to A2L during regular class
time!**

Week 5 (October 6, 7)

October 6 – The genetics of plague and the three pandemics.

Readings: Spyrou et al. 2019 (read from the subheading marked *Yersinia pestis*
evolution), Mclennan 2010 and Rambaut 2017.

October 7 – Q and A with Dr. Poinar

Week 6 (October 13, 14)

READING WEEK. HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

Week 7 (October 20, 21)

October 20 – Mapping the plague. Using archival data and genetics to map plagues trajectory.

Readings: Slack chapter 4, Earn et al. 2020 and Schmid et al. 2015 (extra).

October 21. Guest lecture and Q and A Dr. David Earn

Week 8 (October 27, 28)

October 27 – Plagues and othering

Readings: Varlik 2011

October 28 - Guest lecture and Q and A with Dr. Nukhet Varlik

Week 9 (November 3, 4)

November 3 – The aftermath of plague. Plague and people's responses

Readings: Slack chapter 3, Colet 2104

November 4 – Exam #2 go to A2L during regular class time!

Week 10 (November 10, 11)

November 10 – Quarantine and plague

Readings: Carmichael 2020, Rawcliffe 2019 (extra)

November 11 - Guest lecture and Q and A with Dr. Ann Carmichael

Week 11 (November 17 and 18)

November 17 – The plague and art and economy

Readings: Slack chapter 6, Jones and Nevell 2016, Alfani 2020, Alfani and Murphy 2017 (extra).

November 18 - Guest lecture and Q and A with Dr. Lori Jones

Week 12 (November 24 and 25)

November 24 – The context of plague

Readings: Ari et al. 2012, Brooks 2017, Tian et al. 2017 (extra)

November 25th - Guest lecture and Q and A with Dr. Sturt Manning

Week 13 (December 1 and 2)

December 1 – The consilience of plague. Putting all the pieces together..

Readings: Slack chapter 7, McCormick 2011

December 2 - Q and A with Dr. Poinar

Essay # 2 due. (details to be provided in lecture)

Course Policies

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

There are no make-up exams, unless of course you are ill for TWO exams at which point, please contact me asap and we'll see what can be accommodated.

Avenue to Learn

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ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

AUTHENTICITY / PLAGIARISM DETECTION

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

COURSES WITH AN ON-LINE ELEMENT

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

ONLINE PROCTORING

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

REQUESTS FOR RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC TERM WORK

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.