

HIST 651: History of Medicine

Spring 2026 – Tuesdays, 3-5:50 pm – Beering Hall 1242



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Office Hours: Sign up on [Calendly](#) or email to schedule a different time.

Course Description

This course introduces graduate students to key issues in the history of medicine since the nineteenth century with a primary focus on the United States. In addition to engaging with a wide range of scholarship by historians, students will also have the opportunity to explore connections between their specific research interests and emerging themes in the history of medicine.

Required Books

Allan M. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States since 1880*, Oxford University Press, 1985.

Keith Wailoo, *Drawing Blood: Technology and Disease Identity in Twentieth-Century America*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

John Christopher Feudtner, *Bittersweet: Diabetes, Insulin, and the Transformation of Illness*, University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

Robert Aronowitz, *Risky Medicine: Our Quest to Cure Fear and Uncertainty*, University of Chicago Press, 2015.

Richard A. McKay, *Patient Zero and the Making of the AIDS Epidemic*, University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Susan L. Smith, *Toxic Exposures: Mustard Gas and the Health Consequences of World War II in the United States*, Rutgers University Press, 2017.

Jaipreet Virdi, *Hearing Happiness: Deafness Cures in History*, University of Chicago Press, 2020.

Catherine Mas, *Culture in the Clinic: Miami & the Making of Modern Medicine*, The University of North Carolina Press, 2022.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Participation (30%): Your participation grade will be calculated based on your thoughtful engagement in each class session. On weeks that a book is assigned, you are expected to read the book carefully and come prepared to discuss the book in detail. I recommend that you take notes while reading the book, and I will provide you with a list of questions that I recommend you reflect on when reading. You should also make note of any questions that come up for you, any critiques that you have about the book, and whether the book connects in some way (in terms of content and/or methodology) to your own research interests. In evaluating your participation in class, I will be noting not only what you contribute to class discussions, but how well you listen to and reflect on the insights of your peers. If you find it challenging to participate during class, please reach out to me so we can develop a plan. I am happy to work with you!

Reading Responses (20%): Each week that we have an assigned book, you will be asked to submit a reading response of 400-500 words. The reading response can take many different forms, but it should not be a summary of the book. Instead, you might pose one or more questions suitable for class discussion, make connections between the book and prior readings, and/or reflect on aspects of the book that you found particularly compelling, surprising, or troubling. Your reading response should demonstrate your careful engagement with the book. During our class meeting, I may draw from your reading response to help facilitate discussion. Reading responses are due by noon on the Monday before class.

Discussion Leader (10%): You will be asked to serve as the discussion leader one time during the semester. As discussion leader, you will start class off with an 8–10-minute presentation with slides (PowerPoint, Google Slides, Pages, or something comparable). The presentation should provide some background information about the author, include a brief summary of the book, reflect on how the book has been received (look at book reviews, see if the book has won awards, etc), and pose questions for our seminar discussion. After the presentation, you will then lead the discussion. A copy of your presentation and discussion questions should be shared with me by noon on the Monday before class.

Primary Source Presenter (5%): You will be asked to serve as a primary source presenter one time during the semester. As primary source presenter, you should identify a primary source related to the topic of the book that we are reading for the week and present it to the class. The primary source can be a physical object (shared in person or digitally), an image, an advertisement, a short film clip of up to 5 minutes, artwork, etc. You will share the primary source with the class, note how the primary source connects to the book, and then pose several discussion questions to the class that are related to the primary source you identified. You should plan to speak for no more than 5 minutes, without slides (unless you need to show your primary source by using a slide). Please share your primary source, a 1-2 sentence description of your object, and discussion questions with me by noon on the Monday before class.

Book Review (10%): You will have the opportunity to review a book of interest to you and present an overview of the book to the class. We will work together to select the book you will review during the Week 4 individual meeting, where you will come with four possible options. The book you choose to review must be written by a historian of medicine, published in an academic press, be related to the topic of your final conference paper, and I must approve the book ahead of time. The review itself should be 750-850 words in length and follow the structure and style of a book review published in the *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* or the *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*. The book review and a copy of your presentation slides are due on Brightspace by noon on February 23 and you will give a 5-minute presentation of your book in class on February 24.

Conference Paper (20%): You will give a conference-style presentation on a topic within the history of medicine that is of interest to you. The presentation should be 13-15 minutes in class and will be followed by a Q&A session with your classmates. The corresponding paper should be roughly 1700-2000 words, not including references. You are expected to do primary research for this conference paper. Additional details will be provided in class and on Brightspace.

Depending on which group you are assigned to, your conference paper and slides are due by noon on April 20 or 27 and your in-class presentation will take place on April 21 or 28.

Final Course Reflection (5%): At the end of the semester, you will be asked to reflect on your work and learning in the course. The written response should be 650-850 words. Additional details will be provided on Brightspace. The assignment is due on Monday, May 4 at noon.

Grade Scale

A 93-100	A- 92-90	B+ 88-89	B 83-87	B- 82-80
C+ 78-79	C 73-77	C- 72-70	D 60-69	F 0-59

Additional Information: I am happy to discuss your grades with you at any point during office hours, but grades will not be discussed over email due to Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations. You must complete all assignments, including participation, to pass the class. To ensure an open atmosphere in the class, please do not post any images, videos, chats, lecture notes, or other material from class without written permission from the instructor and each student in the class. Posting of any such material from class is grounds for an automatic F for the semester and referral to the Dean of Student's Office.

Detailed Class Schedule

Week 1 – Introduction – January 13

- Overview of the course and introductions.
- No reading or assignment due today.

Week 2 – Responses to Sexually Transmitted Diseases – January 20

- Reading: Allan M. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States since 1880*, Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Assignment: Reading response due by noon on the Monday prior to class.

Week 3 – Medical Technologies and Disease Identification – January 27

- Reading: Keith Wailoo, *Drawing Blood: Technology and Disease Identity in Twentieth-Century America*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.
- Assignment: Reading response due by noon on the Monday prior to class.

Week 4 – Individual Research Interest Meetings – February 3

- Reading: You will select your own reading this week to prepare for an individual meeting to discuss how you can draw from your specific research interests as you prepare for the

book review and conference paper assignments. Please sign up for a 30-minute meeting with Michelle on February 3-5.

- Assignment: By noon on Monday, February 2, please submit a 400-500 word reading response that includes (a) a list of four possible books written by historians of medicine that you would be interested in reviewing for Week 7, with 1-2 sentences per book about why each book sounds interesting to you and (b) a summary of two distinct topics that you might want to explore for your final conference paper.

Week 5 – Therapeutics and the Transmutation of Disease – February 10

- Reading: John Christopher Feudtner, *Bittersweet: Diabetes, Insulin, and the Transformation of Illness*, University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- Assignment: Reading response due by noon on the Monday prior to class.

Week 6 – Risk, Disease Concepts, and Interventions – February 17

- Reading: Robert Aronowitz, *Risky Medicine: Our Quest to Cure Fear and Uncertainty*, University of Chicago Press, 2015.
- Assignment: Reading response due by noon on the Monday prior to class.

Week 7 – Book Review Presentations – February 24

- Reading: Carefully read the book that you selected for your book review assignment. Please note that the book must be approved by me ahead of time.
- Assignment: (a) Submit your book review and presentation slides by noon on Monday, February 23 through Brightspace and (b) Provide a 5-minute presentation of your book in class on Tuesday, February 24 and be prepared to answer questions.

Week 8 – Reconsidering Narratives of the AIDS Epidemic – March 3

- Reading: Richard A. McKay, *Patient Zero and the Making of the AIDS Epidemic*, University of Chicago Press, 2017.
- Assignment: Reading response due by noon on the Monday prior to class.

Week 9 – Mustard Gas, Human Experimentation, and Therapeutics – March 10

- Reading: Susan L. Smith, *Toxic Exposures: Mustard Gas and the Health Consequences of World War II in the United States*, Rutgers University Press, 2017.
- Assignment: Reading response due by noon on the Monday prior to class.

Week 10 – Spring Break

Week 11 – Conference Paper Working Session – March 24

- Reading: Work on reading secondary literature and identifying primary sources related to your conference paper topic.
- Assignment: Come to class ready to work on your conference paper and prepare for your presentation next week. There is no need to submit anything through Brightspace this week.

Week 12 – Conference Paper Overviews – March 31

- Reading: Work on reading and research related to your conference paper.
- Assignment: Give a 5-minute presentation in class outlining your progress on your conference paper, including an overview of any challenges you are currently having. Additional details will be provided on Brightspace. We will have time to discuss each project and offer advice. Please provide your presentation slides on Brightspace by noon on Monday, March 30.

Week 13 – Combining Memoir and Historical Scholarship – April 7

- Reading: Jaipreet Virdi, *Hearing Happiness: Deafness Cures in History*, University of Chicago Press, 2020.
- Assignment: Reading response due by noon on the Monday prior to class.

Week 14 – Immigration and American Medicine – April 14

- Reading: Catherine Mas, *Culture in the Clinic: Miami & the Making of Modern Medicine*, The University of North Carolina Press, 2022.
- Assignment: Reading response due by noon on the Monday prior to class.

Week 15 – Conference Paper Presentations: Group 1 – April 21

- Reading: None
- Assignment: Group 1 students will each give a 13-15-minute conference presentation, followed by a Q&A period. Please provide your paper and slides on Brightspace by noon on Monday, April 20.

Week 16 – Conference Paper Presentations: Group 2 – April 28

- Reading: None
- Assignment: Group 2 students will each give a 13-15-minute conference presentation, followed by a Q&A period. Please provide your paper and slides on Brightspace by noon on Monday, April 27.

Final Course Reflection due on Brightspace by noon on Monday, May 4

Course Policies and Expectations

My commitment to you: You can expect me to be engaged and available. Please email me and come to office hours to discuss any course-related matter. I am also happy to serve as a support for you on other matters, such as your academic plans, or discuss any challenges that you may be dealing with. If I don't have expertise in the area you would like help with, I will do my best to point you in the right direction.

Office hours: I encourage you to use [Calendly](#) to schedule a time to meet with me during regular office hours or email me to schedule another time. If you need to cancel a meeting, please do so at least 24 hours in advance.

Email Policy: Expect a timely (but not immediate) response to emails. I plan to respond to email within 24 hours during weekdays when Purdue is in session. For example, if you send me an email at 3 pm on a Friday, I will reply to you by 3 pm on the following Monday. I also ask you to respond to any course-related emails that require a reply within 48 hours during weekdays.

Attendance Policy: This course follows the [University Academic Regulations regarding class attendance](#), which state that students are expected to be present for every meeting of the classes in which they are enrolled. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class and lateness will be noted. For cases that fall under excused absence regulations, you or your representative should contact or go to the [Office of the Dean of Students \(ODOS\) website](#) to complete appropriate forms for instructor notification. Under academic regulations, excused absences may be granted by ODOS for cases of grief/bereavement, military service, jury duty, parenting leave, or certain types of medical care. The processes are detailed, so plan ahead.

Electronic devices: An electronic device such as a laptop or tablet is permitted ONLY if you are using it to take notes during our class discussion or to refer to notes you took while reading the book. If electronic devices are used for other purposes, your participation grade will be significantly reduced.

Late work policy: Please let me know if you are struggling to complete work so we can brainstorm strategies to effectively manage the course workload. I am here to help! Late assignments will not be accepted without penalty (10% deduction per day) except in extraordinary circumstances, with a note from the dean's office.

Accessible education: I'm committed to making the course accessible to all students. Purdue University strives to make learning experiences accessible to all participants. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, you are welcome to let me know so that we can discuss options. You are also encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center at: drc@purdue.edu or by phone at 765-494-1247.

Citation practices: Please properly cite any sources that you use in the preparation of assignments for this course.

Academic Honesty: All individual assignments submitted for this course are expected to be your own, including your own research and writing. Incidents of academic misconduct in this course will be addressed by the course instructor and referred to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (OSRR) for review at the university level. Any violation of course policies as it relates to academic integrity will result minimally in a failing or zero grade for that particular assignment, and at the instructor's discretion may result in a failing grade for the course. In addition, all incidents of academic misconduct will be forwarded to OSRR, where university penalties, including removal from the university, may be considered.

Freedom of Expression: In this class, students are encouraged to exercise their right to free inquiry and expression. You are welcome to express any view on the subject matter introduced by the instructor or other class members within the structure of the course. While you are responsible for learning the content of this course, you remain free to take a reasoned exception to the views presented and to reserve judgment about matters of conscience, controversy, or opinion. When you encounter ideas that you find offensive, unwise, immoral, or wrong-headed, you are encouraged to engage them with reasons, evidence, and arguments. Your course grade will be based on your academic performance, not on the opinions you express. Our commitment to freedom of expression means that no relevant ideas or positions are out of bounds, but disruptive or disorderly behavior, threats, or harassment are strictly prohibited and will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students. See the University's "Commitment to Freedom of Expression" and "Bill of Student Rights" in the University Policies and Statements module on Brightspace.

AI/Chatbot Policy: The use of chatbots for writing and research is strictly forbidden unless I make an exception in writing for a particular circumstance. Submitting AI-generated writing or research as your own is academic dishonesty and carries the same penalties as [plagiarism](#).

Copyright Policy: See the University Policies and Statements section of Brightspace for guidance on Use of Copyrighted Materials. Effective learning environments provide opportunities for students to reflect, explore new ideas, post opinions openly, and have the freedom to change those opinions over time. Students and instructors are the authors of the works they create in the learning environment. As authors, they own the copyright in their works subject only to the university's right to use those works for educational purposes. Students may not copy, reproduce, or post to any other outlet (e.g., YouTube, Facebook, or other open media sources or websites) any work in which they are not the sole or joint author or have not obtained the permission of the author(s).

Syllabus Revisions: I may update the syllabus during the semester as needed, in which case I will make an announcement in class and on Brightspace.

Resources and Additional Information

Mental Health and Wellness Support:

- If you find yourself beginning to feel some stress, anxiety and/or feeling slightly overwhelmed, try [Therapy Assistance Online](#) (TAO), a web and app-based mental health resource available courtesy of Purdue Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).

TAO is available to all students at any time by creating an account on the [TAO Connect website](#), or downloading the app from the App Store or Google Play. It offers free, confidential well-being resources through a self-guided program informed by psychotherapy research and strategies that may aid in overcoming anxiety, depression and other concerns. It provides accessible and effective resources including short videos, brief exercises, and self-reflection tools.

- If you need support and information about options and resources, please contact or see the [Office of the Dean of Students](#). Call 765-494-1747. Hours of operation are M-F, 8 am- 5 pm.
- If you find yourself struggling to find a healthy balance between academics, social life, stress, etc., sign up for free one-on-one virtual or in-person sessions with a [Purdue Wellness Coach at RecWell](#). Student coaches can help you navigate through barriers and challenges toward your goals throughout the semester. Sign up is free and can be done on BoilerConnect. Students in Indianapolis will find support services curated on the [Vice Provost for Student Life website](#).
- If you're struggling and need mental health services: Purdue University is committed to advancing the mental health and well-being of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of mental health support, services are available. For help, such individuals should contact [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) at 765-494-6995 during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or by going to the CAPS offices in [West Lafayette](#) or [Indianapolis](#).

Public Speaking Support: The [Presentation Center](#) in the Brian Lamb School of Communication is an excellent resource, and I am always happy to meet with you individually to support the development of your presentation skills.

Academic Support: The [Academic Success Center](#), located in Wiley Hall, Room C215, provides a variety of proactive, practical and approachable academic support services for undergraduate students.

Library Support: Visit [Ask a Librarian](#) to connect with helpful resources and services provided by the Purdue Libraries and School of Information Studies for course assignments and projects.

Brightspace: Access the course via Purdue's [Brightspace](#) learning management system. Begin with the Start Here tab, which offers further insight to the course and how you can be successful in it. It is strongly suggested that you explore and become familiar not only with the site navigation, but also with content and resources available for this course. See the Student Services widget on the campus homepage for resources such as Technology Help, Academic Help, Campus Resources, and Protect Purdue.

Nondiscrimination Statement: Purdue University is committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the University seeks to develop and nurture diversity. The University believes that diversity among its many members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of

ideas, and enriches campus life. A hyperlink to Purdue's full Nondiscrimination Policy Statement is included in our course Brightspace under University Policies and Statements.

Basic Needs Security: Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. There is no appointment needed and Student Support Services is available to serve students 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Emergency Preparation: In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor's control. Relevant changes to this course will be posted onto the course website or can be obtained by contacting the instructors or TAs via email or phone. You are expected to read your @purdue.edu email on a frequent basis. A link to Purdue's Information on Emergency Preparation and Planning is located on our Brightspace under "University Policies and Statements." This website covers topics such as Severe Weather Guidance, Emergency Plans, and a place to sign up for the Emergency Warning Notification System. I encourage you to download and review the *Emergency Preparedness for Classrooms document (PDF) or (Word)*. The first day of class, I will review the Emergency Preparedness plan for our specific classroom, following Purdue's required Emergency Preparedness Briefing.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is one of the highest values that Purdue University holds. Individuals are encouraged to alert university officials to potential breaches of this value by either emailing integrity@purdue.edu or by calling 765-494-8778. While information may be submitted anonymously, the more information is submitted the greater the opportunity for the university to investigate the concern. More details are available on our course Brightspace under University Policies and Statements.