

McMaster University Discovery Program

Plagues and the People of Hamilton A Social Sciences Inquiry Course

September 7- December 14, 2013, Saturdays 10 am - 2 pm, including lunch

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Course Description

This course is an introduction to the hidden history of epidemics in Hamilton and how the citizens of the city made sense of and responded to these distressing experiences. You will

- experience places in Hamilton marked by epidemics
- see the city in a new way
- develop a framework for thinking about epidemics today
- develop reading and research skills
- develop skills in interpreting and evaluating works of history, art, and culture
- develop your own creative expressions in writing, art, or in media such as photography or video
- develop a project (for example, writing, drawing, photography, blogging, etc.) in which you express something that has touched you about Hamilton's experience with disease, past or present

The course theme, "Plagues and the People of Hamilton", will focus on how the people of Hamilton coped with epidemics in the past. Understanding something about Hamilton's past will give us a framework for thinking about current and

future epidemics. We will look at histories of the city that provide background on

- why Hamilton was established here in the first place
- what some of its opportunities and challenges have been
- how the city continues to change

We will

- visit places, hidden and visible, where epidemics have left their mark on the social and environmental history of Hamilton and its people
- examine and reflect on stories that have been told about this city
- read books, watch films, study photographs, and engage with specialists as they discuss our subject
- take a series of photographs of places we visit and share our interpretations of what those photographs mean to us

Along with exploring the ways in which epidemics have affected the people of Hamilton in the past, you will develop a project in class that gives voice to your new way of seeing the city and its people, in light of that history.

You might examine and contemplate

- the hidden history of your neighbourhood or another part of the city
- architecture in a certain part of the city
- a landmark or place that you now see differently
- a person, family or ethnic group in Hamilton's history
- a personal experience that has taken on new meaning because of the course

You might do this by creating

- a story using photographs, video, artwork
- a series of drawings, a map, or a graphic (cartoon-style) story

- a representation of your ideas in some other medium of expression

Purpose and Objectives of the Course

Overall, this course aims to foster your creativity as you find different ways to give voice to the Hamilton you have come to know through exploring our subject matter. You will develop your own ideas and methods for revealing your perspective on Hamilton. Knowing the stories of a place and finding ways to weave a person's own stories into them is a powerful way to feel at home in that place. By creating a whole series of different stories about Hamilton, you will be contributing to making Hamilton home for more people.

Class Format

The class meets every Saturday for twelve weeks (September 7 – December 8, 2013) from 10 am to 2 pm. We will meet at McMaster University. Lunch is provided by the McMaster Discovery Program.

10 am to 11:30	Lecture and discussions with the professor, Ann Herring.
11:30 to 12:30	Lunch
12:30 to 2 pm	Workshop led by the coordinator, Jeanette Eby, and the student support team.

During the first half of each class (lecture and discussion), Ann Herring will offer background information on the week's topic and lead discussions based on the sections of the course texts you are to read for each week. You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Occasionally, we will have special visitors come as guest speakers to the class.

During the second half of each class (workshop), you will develop your projects. These projects may be individual or group projects. During each workshop

Jeanette Eby and the support team of McMaster students will be available to help you plan, organize, find materials for, and complete your projects. Occasionally, the class will make “field trips” during the workshops, such as to the Hamilton Steam Museum, Gore Park, and other places of significance to the course.

Ann is responsible for organizing the curriculum for the class and for structuring the readings and responding to the projects. Jeanette is responsible for helping you make the arrangements (home and caregiving arrangements, transportation, etc.) you need to make in order to attend the course every week. Ann and Jeanette will work closely together to ensure good coordination between the two parts of the course as well as with your personal arrangements.

Important Notes

Attendance policy

The course will succeed only if you are committed to attending all classes. A good learning environment depends on students and teachers knowing each other and being able to depend on each other to be prepared for class and be ready to contribute to discussion. If you miss a class, you will be expected to make up the work. If you miss more than 2 classes and haven't contacted the Coordinator to explain the reason you missed the class, you may be asked to stop attending the course.

Feedback on assignments

There will be no grades in this course, but Ann Herring will provide written comments on the final projects once they have been completed.

Working with and respecting one another

Students, professor, coordinator, and student support team will all treat one another with courtesy. Everyone's voice is important and is to be respected.

Obtrusive behaviour that interrupts, impedes, or belittles others' work in the course will not be allowed.

We will support you

Jeanette Eby, the Coordinator, will work closely with Ann Herring and the student support team to ensure that you are supported, encouraged and on your way to success in the course. Jeanette will make sure that your caregiving and transportation needs are met, and she will be present at each class and weekly workshop session. Jeanette is the person to speak with if you need to miss a class and want to make up the work. Jeanette will be available each week outside of class by phone and email, and for a drop-in time where you can visit and talk about the readings and assignments, your project, and to work through any questions or concerns you may have.