

INTL 4615: The Politics of Disease Control

University of Georgia

Spring 2020, TTh 11:00am-12:15pm

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Welcome!

This is a class about how governments solve (or fail to solve) a core problem facing any society - how to limit the damaging effects of disease. Recent global epidemics like Ebola and Zika have demonstrated that disease can threaten social order and prosperity. What may be harder to perceive is the crucial and complex role that governments play in preventing and controlling disease. Our purpose will be to better understand the link between political institutions and disease outcomes. We begin by asking why disease is such a difficult social problem. We then use contemporary and historical examples of successful and failed attempts at disease control to understand how governments respond in the face of this challenge.

How will you be graded?

I will administer two **exams**, one at midterm and the other at the end of the semester. The end-of-semester exam will focus on concepts covered in the second half of the course. Good performance on the exams requires engagement with the all of the course materials, including readings, lectures and class discussion.

Table 1: Assignments

Item	Prop. of grade
Midterm exam	25%
End-of-semester exam	25%
Paper	25%
Participation	25%

Details on the exams will be provided as they approach. I will offer an optional final exam, which you can use to replace your lowest exam grade. This optional, comprehensive final exam will be administered at the official time and location set by the university. I repeat, the final is optional. If you choose to take the final, I will use the two highest of your three exam grades in computing your final grade. In other words, the final counts for 25% of your grade if you score higher than the lowest of your two exam scores, and does not count otherwise.

You will also have a **writing assignment**, due on the final class meeting. Instructions for the paper will be distributed later in the semester. Participation is a key element of the class. Your **participation** grade will be based on both attendance, which I will take periodically throughout the semester, and on the quality of your contributions to in-class discussions.

Make-up and extension policy: It is your responsibility to attend all scheduled class meetings, including the times when exams are offered. No make up exams will be allowed. No extensions for assignments will be granted.

Ground rules

You are responsible for being self-motivated, self-directed, active learners. I expect you to comply with university policy and use common sense. You should complete all of the course assignments and participate fully in all of our activities. A complete list of the course policies is posted on my website.

Goals and teaching philosophy

When this course is finished, you should:

- Understand how social choice concepts apply to disease control
- Be familiar with a wide range of examples of disease control, focusing on the role of governance
- Improve your ability to think critically about these topics

As your professor, it is my responsibility to create an environment that fosters your learning. This includes keeping materials up to date on the course elc, and otherwise providing a well-organized course. You are responsible for taking advantage of that environment. If any aspect of the course is impeding your learning, please communicate that to me in whatever way you feel most comfortable.¹

Course Schedule

Most readings will be available via UGA's electronic course reserves system (password: collective). Please let me know if you have trouble locating the readings.

Weeks 1-2: Foundations

Topics:

- Expectations for the course
- Foundations of social science
 - Stylization
 - Hypotheticals
- Public goods and collective action problems

Required reading:

- Selection from [Krugman \(1995\)](#)*
- [Troesken \(2015, Preface\)](#) *

*These readings are available on elc

Weeks 3-5: Vaccination as a collective action problem

Topics:

- Vaccination today

¹A note about my name: Feel free to call me Micah or Professor Redman or Professor Gell-Redman.

- Vaccination in the past
- Smallpox eradication

Required reading:

- Packet of vaccine news articles on ELC. These will be our jumping off point for discussion.
 - [Obaro and Palmer \(2003\)](#) For context
 - [Nyhan et al. \(2014\)](#) and [Nyhan and Reifler \(2015\)](#) Parallel experiments
 - [Troesken \(2015, Chapter 4\)](#) Historical chapter on smallpox in the U.S./abroad
 - [Stepan \(2011, Chapter 6\)](#) Smallpox eradication
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Weeks 6-8: Disease control and environmental quality

Topics:

- Control of diseases linked to water quality
- Control of diseases linked to air quality
- Externalities in the provision of public goods

Required reading:

- [Troesken \(2004, Selected chapter\)](#)
- [Cutler and Miller \(2005\)](#)
- [Frerichs \(2016, Selected chapters\)](#)
- [Clay and Troesken \(2010\)](#)

March 5, midterm exam

March 6, writing assignment topic submitted via email

March 9-13: Spring Break

Weeks 10-13: HIV and malaria

Topics:

- HIV and ethnic diversity in Africa and Brazil
- HIV and stigma
- Malaria eradication in the past and today

Required reading:

- [Lieberman \(2009\)](#), Chapter 4
- [Humphreys \(2001\)](#), Chapter 3)
- On the current efforts to eradicate malaria [Newby et al. \(2016\)](#)
- Additional readings on ELC

Apr. 10. First draft of paper submitted.

Week 14: Coda, Democracy and disease

Topics:

- Cross-national and subnational studies of democracy and disease
- Causal relationships with observational data
- Building a model of the governance of health

Required reading:

- [Besley and Kudamatsu \(2006\)](#)
- [Dreze and Sen \(1989\)](#), Chap. 11)
- [Miller \(2008\)](#)

Apr. 21 End of semester quiz

Final draft of writing assignment due May 1

Final exam, May 5, 12-1:30pm, university designated location

References

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- Clay, Karen and Werner Troesken. 2010. "Did Frederick Brodie Discover the World's First Environmental Kuznets Curve? Coal Smoke and the Rise and Fall of the London Fog." NBER Working Paper No. 15669.
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- Frerichs, Ralph R. 2016. *Deadly River: Cholera and Cover-Up in Post-Earthquake Haiti*. Cornell University Press.
- Humphreys, Margaret. 2001. *Malaria: Poverty, Race and Public Health in the United States*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore MD.
- Krugman, Paul. 1995. *Development, Geography, and Economic Theory*. MIT Press chapter The Fall and Rise of Development Economics.
- Lieberman, Evan. 2009. *Boundaries of Contagion: How Ethnic Politics Have Shaped Government Responses to AIDS*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Miller, Grant. 2008. "Women's Suffrage, Political Responsiveness, and Child Survival in American History." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 123(3):1287–1327.
- Newby, Gretchen, Adam Bennett, Erika Larson, Chris Cotter, Rima Shretta, Allison A Phillips and Richard G. A. Feachem. 2016. "The path to eradication: a progress report on the malaria-eliminating countries." *The Lancet* 387:1775–1784.
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Troesken, Werner. 2004. *Water, Race and Disease*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Troesken, Werner. 2015. *The Pox of Liberty: How the Constitution Left Americans Rich, Free, and Prone to Infection*. University of Chicago Press.