Georgia Tech · Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts
School of Literature, Media, and Communication

Europe

Syllabus for LMC 3306: Science, Race, and Technology

Designing Disease: Pandemics, Race, and Misinformation

Instructor Information

Instructor
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Covid has taught us that pandemics are not just medical or biological phenomena. Its label as the "Chinese flu" and some anti-vaccination campaigns have demonstrated that disease is also socially, politically, and culturally constructed. Throughout history, preventing the contagion and controlling the outbreak of misinformation have proved almost as challenging as containing and curing the virus, especially when it comes to race and ethnicity. In the Middle Ages, Jews were blamed for poisoning wells and spreading the bubonic plague. Without evidence, some doctors claimed African Americans were more responsible than whites for spreading the Spanish flu in 1919. These notions led to further mistreatment and persecution of already-stigmatized groups. Worse, they impeded the impact of real medical and social solutions for all communities.

This class will use iconic works of world literature as access points for investigating racial politics, ethical arguments, and medical innovation in pandemics throughout history. In parallel, students will consult a diversity of scientific and cultural artifacts that address roles race and ethnicity play in public information about disease. Since we are in Metz, we will put special emphasis on Europe, France, and the Alsace-Lorraine region as we will go on outings that enhance our inquiry. For example, we will visit WWI sites to learn about war's role during the Spanish flu. We will examine medieval quarters and religious structures in Metz to trace the impact of the bubonic plague. The final aims of this course are: to listen to voices silenced during pandemics because communities have only trusted institutions or organizations with authority over health and well-being and ignored those seeking healthy lives for all through justice and social equality; to reflect on the profound assumptions rooted in the language used over time to deal with disease and pandemics.

Non-exhaustive list of texts: Albert Camus, *The Plague*, Bernard Marie-Koltès, *Roberto Zucco*, José Saramago, *Blindness* Katherine Anne Porter, "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," Maryse Condé *Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*, Decameron, Daniel Defoe, *Journal of a Plague Year*, Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, *Covid Chronicles*, anything about Zombies…

Site visits: WWI-WWII sites, North-African markets and restaurants, local Medieval churches and quarters, the Metz synagogue, other related sites in France, Germany, or Luxembourg

These core goals of the class align well with GT's new strategic plan outlined here: https://strategicplan.gatech.edu/focus/global

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

- Through course readings and discussions, students will demonstrate knowledge of the origins and types of pandemic literature and media.
- Students will be able to conduct close textual analyses of selected pandemic writing and research.
- Through course readings and discussions, students will demonstrate knowledge of the moral and ethical issues involved in the act of writing about pandemics.
- Write lucid, well-constructed arguments analyzing and interpreting texts and artifacts.
- Synthesize primary and secondary readings to completed an extended project on the course theme.
- Students will utilize travel writing as a tool for analysis of cultural and political issues relevant to pandemcis in Europe, Metz, Alsace-Lorraine, and France.
- Understand basic concepts of intercultural sensitivity, worldview structures and mindful learning
- Situate Metz, France and the Grand Est region and Europe in broad historical, cultural, and geopolitical contexts
- Develop and sharpen critical thinking skills and apply them to concepts and debates around pandemics, identity, globalization, and notions of globalism and global citizenship
- Understand and analyze socio-cultural and political developments and current societal debates in France and Europe and be capable of considering these phenomena in cross-cultural, cross-regional and cross-national contexts about disease and pandemics.

Course Requirements & Grading

Students are expected to read and prepare for intense class discussion and class work, complete one group project and one individual project, and participate in class outings.

Grading Scale

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

A	90-100% Excellent (4 quality points per credit hour)
B	80-89% Good (3 quality points per credit hour)
C	70-79% Satisfactory (2 quality points per credit hour)
D	60-69% Passing (1 quality point per credit hour)
F	0-59% Failure (0 quality points per credit hour)

See http://registrar.gatech.edu/info/grading-system for more information about the grading system at Georgia Tech.

Participation and Classroom Conduct

Good participation entails not only speaking and sharing your thoughts on a regular basis, but also being considerate and respecting the views of others. To earn high points in the participation part of the final grade, students will have demonstrated their awareness of the different functions of classroom comments by:

1. varying their discussion strategies,

2. considering what they say before they say it,

3. taking intellectual risks, and

4. always respecting the feelings of peers by not interrupting classmates while speaking and acknowledging interesting ideas.

Rubrics and Detailed Assignment Descriptions

For each assignment, you will receive a detailed assignment description well in advance of the deadline, which will include the grading rubric. I aim to return your assignments graded within one week of the due date. Delays may be longer with long travel weekends.

Course Materials

Course Texts and Materials.

Books to purchase before coming to GTE will be specified in December 2023. Most will be available digitally and articles will be provided through links and on Canvas.

Course Website and Other Classroom Management Tools

Course Canvas Site, Class Blog

Course Expectations & Guidelines

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. For information on Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code, please visit http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code/ or http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/.

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations. This includes using unacknowledged AI to complete any portion of your work. Your work is your own.

ChatGPT/AI Policy

This course is about growing in your ability to write, communicate, and think critically. Generative AI agents such as ChatGPT, DALL-E 2, and others present great opportunities for learning and for communicating. However, AI cannot learn or communicate for you, and so cannot meet the course requirements for you.

In this course, using generative AI tools in the work of the course (including assignments, discussions, ungraded work, etc.) is allowed.

As with any technology, generative AI tools need to be used critically and according to academic and professional expectations. Thus, when using generative AI tools in the work of this course, you are expected to adhere to these principles:

- **Responsibility:** You are responsible for the work you submit. In instances in which your instructor allows generative AI tool use, this means that any work you submit should be your own, with any AI assistance appropriately disclosed (see "Transparency" below) and any AI-generated content appropriately cited (see "Documentation" below). This also means you must ensure that any factual statements produced by a generative AI tool are true and that any references or citations produced by the AI tool are correct.
- **Transparency:** Any generative AI tools you use in the work of the course should be clearly acknowledged as indicated by the instructor. This work includes not only when you use content directly produced by a generative AI tool but also when you use a generative AI tool in the process of composition (for example, for brainstorming, outlining, or translation purposes).
- **Documentation:** You should cite any content generated by an AI tool as you would when quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing ideas, text, images, or other content made by other people.

Using generative AI tools in the course without adhering to these principles may be considered an infraction of the Georgia Tech Honor Code subject to investigation by the Office of Student Integrity.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404)894-2563 or http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/, as soon as possible, to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Collaboration & Group Work

Aside from group projects, all work must be your own. Work created by AI is not considered your work. If any portion of a group project is suspected of being completed by someone or something other than your group, all group members will be investigated and reported. Your written work will be checked with plagarism software. Suspected cases of plagiarism/AI use will result in reporting to the Office of Student Integrity.

Attendance Policy

You are required to attend all classes and excursions. You can miss a maximum of 2 days, no questions asked. Each unexcused absence after 2 will result in 5 points deducted from your final grade. You must have approval and justification from the GTE administration in writing for an absence to be excused. If you miss on a portfolio workshop day, you will still be expected to do the work in your peer group.

Extensions, Late Assignments, & Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams

All extensions must be pre-approved before the due date by the instructor and, if deemed necessary by the instructor, justified by the Gatech administration. Missing class does not automatically grant you an extension on an assignment due date. If you miss on a portfolio workshop day, you will still be expected to do the work in your peer group.

Student Use of Mobile Devices in the Classroom and on Guided Visits

Use of portable technology (cell phones, laptops, tablets, etc.) during class time is not permitted except for class-specific activities, which must be approved by the instructor. However, please remember that your success in this class will hinge in part on your attention to in-class discussion and content: please

refrain from using your device during class except at designated times, and do your best to focus on the task at hand. Otherwise, please leave your laptop in your bag, turn off your cell phone, and resist the urge to text your mom.

During guided visits, cell phone use for texting, surfing the internet, or calling is not permitted. You may take notes and photos, but please refrain from posting them to social media accounts until after the visit is over.

Additional Course Policies

Eating: unless pre-approved or part of a class activity, eating and chewing gum is not permitted in the classroom

Hats: wearing baseball caps or other hats are not permitted during class in the classroom or on guided visits. Hats are permitted outside during guided visits for protection from sun, rain, snow, or cold.

Contacting the instructor by email: Outside of class excursions, the instructor will respond to all emails within the business workday (9am-6pm). If you send an email after 6pm or over the weekend, do not expect a response until the following business day. Please follow the instructions given to you by the GTE administration for contacting me by phone during travel times.

Campus Resources, Physical and Mental Health Resources for Students

GTE staff and faculty are here to help guide you to the right outlet for your mental health concerns. Remember, mental health is health! The sooner you treat the issue, the sooner you will feel better. Don't hesitate to reach out.

Please refer to guide given by GTE. These will also be posted to Canvas. When in doubt, contact Paul Voss: paul.voss@georgiatech-metz.fr

Information Related to Covid-19

Students are expected to be familiar with and abide by the Institute guidelines, information, and updates related to Covid-19. Please consult your emails from GTE staff and faculty regarding changes and updates.

Recordings of Class Sessions and Required Permissions

Classes may not be recorded by students without the express consent of the instructor unless it is pursuant to an accommodation granted by the Office of Disability services. Class recordings, lectures, presentations, and other materials posted on Canvas are for the sole purpose of educating the students currently enrolled in the course.

Diversity and Inclusion

GTE and the LMC support the Georgia Institute of Technology's commitment to creating a campus free of discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or veteran status. We further affirm the importance of cultivating an intellectual climate that allows us to better understand the similarities and differences of those who constitute the Georgia Tech community, as well as the necessity of working against inequalities that may also manifest here as they do in broader society.

Teaching philosophy

The belief that learning must be natural, collective, and discussion-based is at the heart of my teaching philosophy. I do not consider myself the autocrat of this experience, but as a fellow traveler who acts as a facilitator and leader rather than a master. My goal is for students to develop, through an inquiry of creative texts, images, and technologies, the capacity for individual expression through a collaborative process. As such, they acquire a greater understanding of both diversity and universality among their peers, in their own communities, and in the world. As a teacher, there is no greater joy for me than to see students become confident individuals in class and in their production of creative materials.