

## **A Plague on Both Your Houses: the archaeology of epidemic disease**

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<b>Start date</b>	13 May 2017	<b>End date</b>	13 May 2017
<b>Venue</b>	Madingley Hall Madingley Cambridge		
<b>Tutor</b>	Trish Biers	<b>Course code</b>	1617NDX042

**Director of Programmes** Emma Jennings  
**For further information on this course, please contact** Public Programme Coordinator, Clare Kerr  
[clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk) or 01223 746237  
**To book** See: [www.ice.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk) or telephone 01223 746262

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### **Tutor biography**

Dr Trish Biers is a bioarchaeologist and osteologist in the Repatriation Osteology Laboratory, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC. She is also an Affiliated Researcher at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge. As a human skeleton and mummy specialist, she teaches for the Institute of Continuing Education about disease, death rituals in the past, and ancient cultures of South America. She has excavated all over the world but specialises in Ancient Peru which she blogs about on her website <http://www.deadtories.com>. She has 20 years of experience working in museums and doing archaeological fieldwork.

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## Course programme

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09:30	Terrace bar open for pre-course tea/coffee
10:00 – 11:15	<b>Session 1: The Power of Pathogens: Disease and Archaeology</b>
11:15	Coffee
11:45 – 13:00	<b>Session 2: The Black Death and Medieval Miracles</b>
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:15	<b>Session 3: Death and Maiden: Syphilis; The White Death:</b>
15:15	Tea
15:30 – 16:45	<b>Session 4: The Columbian Exchange: Smallpox</b>
16:45	Day-school ends

In the first lecture, you will learn about the organisms that can infect us and make us sick: pathogens. We will first take a look at the various types of pathogens that exist, and then learn about what it means to be infectious, and what it means to cause disease. After that, we will cover the various methods by which pathogens can transmit from one person to the next, thereby causing an epidemic. We will also discuss the field of palaeopathology, the study of ancient disease in the human context.

In the second lecture, we will consider the devastating effects of the Black Death throughout Britain and Europe, and learn about ways people coped with the psychological trauma of this disease through demonology and miracles.

The third lecture will be about two diseases that still present themselves today but have a rather long and torrid place in human history, syphilis and tuberculosis. We will examine war-time propaganda about the erotic dangers of love and lust abroad and then delve into the life of the unfortunate lovers who often suffered from consumption.

And finally, the fourth lecture takes us into the New World where the Aztec Emperor Moctezuma dazzled Spanish barber surgeons with his healthy physique, and his healers with their approach to holistic medicine. And how did the aftermath of smallpox restructure a nation?

We will finish the day with a sensory exploration of medicine, magic, and ancient artefacts.

## **Course syllabus**

### **Aims:**

- To define the archaeological and historical periods of epidemic disease throughout history.
- To identify the context of the socio-economic and cultural experiences that contributed to the spread of disease and the importance of archaeology to uncovering pathogen patterns.
- Have a better understanding of the impact of conquest and colonialism on the evolution of disease and how the aftermath of epidemics reshaped society.

### **Content:**

New biomolecular methods into the investigation of human remains from archaeological cemeteries have revealed insight into epidemic disease in the past. This course tackles some of the key epidemic episodes throughout history and discusses how they were spread and the residual effects from their disappearance. From smallpox in the New World to the Black Death in England, we will explore epidemic disease through art, literature, medicine, and archaeology. The course focuses primarily on archaeological evidence for the past but is informed by ethnographic and documentary sources that enrich our understanding of disease evolution, myth and rituals, as well as the practices of daily life that can affect our health.

### **Presentation of the course:**

This course will be taught via illustrated lectures using PowerPoint, documentary sources, maps, student discussion, and an artefact-handling mini-session.

### **As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:**

1. Discuss the importance of archaeological evidence in studying epidemic disease in the past, specifically, articulate the origin and symptoms of major pathological conditions in antiquity through paleopathology.
2. Recognise the principal sources of archaeological evidence, in addition to documentary sources, their strengths and weaknesses.
3. Identify the broad effects of epidemic disease on an indigenous population, particularly at periods of new contact.
4. Evaluate the importance of archaeological and historical evidence to the understanding of epidemic episodes in contemporary society and recognise patterns in human behaviour that influence these episodes.

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## Reading and resources list

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Listed below are a number of texts that might be of interest for future reference, but do not need to be bought (or consulted) for the course.

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Author	Title	Publisher and date
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Roberts and Manchester.	2007. <b>The Archaeology of Disease.</b>	Cornell University Press; 3rd edition (February 15, 2007)
Barnes, Ethne.	2007. <b>Diseases and Human Evolution.</b>	University of New Mexico Press.
Crawford, Dorothy H.	2009. <b>Deadly Companions: How Microbes Shaped Our History.</b>	Oxford University Press; Reprint edition.
Kelly, John.	2006. <b>The Great Mortality: An Intimate History of the Black Death, the Most Devastating Plague of All Time.</b>	Harper Perennial; Reprint edition.

### Website addresses:

[www.deadtortures.com](http://www.deadtortures.com)

<http://www.who.int/en/> The World Health Organisation

<http://www.spatialepidemiology.net/default.php>

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## Additional information

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### Venue

Details of how to find Madingley Hall can be found on our website:

<http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/who-we-are/how-to-find-the-institute>

### Refreshments

Tea and coffee and lunch will be provided. If you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies and have not already advised us, please inform our Admissions Team on [ice.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:ice.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk) or +44 (0)1223 746262.

**Note** Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

*Information correct as of:* 09 March 2017