Health, Healing, and Medicine in Africa  
A Freshman Seminar  
AS 100.205, Spring 2018  

Professor  
Pier M. Larson  
Office: 338C Gilman Hall  
Office Hours: Thursday 1-3 and by appointment  
Contact: larson@jhu.edu  
http://plarson.info/  

Class Meeting Time & Place  
M 1:30-3:50, Bloomberg 176  

Scope and Purpose  
This is a reading seminar for second-semester freshmen focused on select topics in health, healing, and medicine in Africa, primarily from an historical perspective. The purpose of the course is to introduce students to a range of subjects in this broad field and to foster appreciation for the interrelatedness and complexity of African health and healing challenges. We will read and together discuss six recent books of history and anthropology. These books treat historical forms of African healing (aka “traditional medicine”), the history of malaria on the continent together with campaigns deployed against it, the training and experience of African medical students, experiments in psychiatry in the period of decolonization, and the challenges of pharmacological discoveries and patenting on the continent. No prior courses on Africa are required to take this seminar. We will read half a book each week and spend class time discussing the reading from a variety of perspectives. Required written work includes short weekly journal postings on the readings, a map quiz, a midterm essay, a book review, a group project, and a final essay.  

Required Books (Available in hard copy or electronically)  
You may purchase hard copies of the six books in the JHU bookstore or from internet vendors. Hard copies are also on print reserve in MSEL and may be checked out for short periods for reading or photocopying. You may be able to borrow library hard copies via “Borrow Direct” using the library’s online catalog (order ahead to make sure the books arrive on time). MSEL also has free electronic versions of some of these books accessible via the library catalog [I have indicated these books in brackets below]. You may also purchase electronic copies of the books from internet vendors, rather than using hard copies. A combination of these strategies will help you minimize book costs.  


**Course Requirements**

1. Attendance and participation. You are expected to attend every class and to participate in the discussion. Any absence from class must be explained before class, not after it. Participation grades assigned by the professor will be based on your record of attending class and on your verbal participation in it.

2. Weekly Journal Posts, on Blackboard. Each week, students will post short responses to the course readings on their private Blackboard Journal. Short means no more than one page of text (if it were on paper, single-spaced), generally 2-3 paragraphs. An effective journal post takes the following form. The first paragraph answers the question: What was the argument of the assigned reading? The rest of the journal post may address any or all of the following questions: What do you think about the argument, and why? What did you find interesting, enlightening, difficult, problematic, or surprising about the reading? How does the reading relate to other works we have read? What questions do you have for in-class discussion? Journal posts are due before the beginning of each class (you will be unable to post your comments after class has begun). You may wish to bring a hard or soft copy of your journal comments to class and use them as a basis for your verbal participation.

3. Map Quiz. A map quiz of modern African country names. This will be administered at the beginning of class on February 12.

4. Midterm Essay. A take-home midterm examination essay covering the first three books. This will consist of one 5-page essay answer to a general question relating to the required readings and course discussions. The midterm exam question will be available on March 6 and the essay is due before or by Friday, March 16, at 11:59 as an upload via Blackboard.

5. Book Review. Review one book listed under the “Topics and Books” at the end of this syllabus (this book must be different from the book you collectively read for your group project, see below): 5 pages. The book review is due on Friday, April 6 by 11:59 pm as an upload via Blackboard. A review should first describe the argument/plot/contents of the
book and how that argument and material relates to the topic of this course (roughly half or less of the length of the review). Then the review should critically analyze the book from your perspective. What are the implications of the argument, for example? How do the ideas in the book relate to other readings we have conducted for the class? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the argument/plot of the book? The analysis should constitute half or more of the length of your book review.

6. Group Project. The professor will assign class groups of 3-4 people each. You will remain and work with your group throughout the semester. The group will select and together research a topic after having selected, read, and discussed a book on the list at the end of this syllabus. The group will write a project report (whose total length will be 5 pages per group member: a group of 3 will write a 15-page report, a group of 4 will write a 20-page report). A timeline and instructions will be found on Blackboard; the project report is due on Friday, April 27, by 11:59 pm.

7. Final Essay. A take-home final examination essay covering the last three books. This will consist of one 5-page essay answer to a general question relating to the required readings and course discussions. The exam question will be made available on April 30 and is due before or by Thursday, May 10, at noon (this is a hard deadline, also the official registrar’s end time for the class’s final exam).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>attendance &amp; participation (instructor-assigned)</td>
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<tr>
<td>weekly journal posts (10 points/week)</td>
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<td>map quiz (African country names)</td>
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<td>midterm exam essay</td>
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<td>book review</td>
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<td>group project</td>
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<td>group peer evaluation (peer-assigned)</td>
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<td>final exam essay</td>
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**Important Dates and Deadlines**

- **February 12**: Map Quiz administered in class
- **March 6**: Midterm essay question made available
- **March 16**: Midterm exam is due by 11:59 pm
- **April 6**: Book review is due by 11:59 pm
- **April 27**: Group project is due by 11:59 pm
- **April 30**: Final essay question made available
- **May 10**: Final exam is due by noon.
Reading Schedule/Themes
Jan 29: Introduction

**Historical & Biomedical Healing in Africa: “Traditional Medicine”?**
Feb 12: Flint: *Healing Traditions*, Chapter 3 – Epilogue

**Malaria: Battling an Infectious Disease**

**Medical Schools and Hospitals: Becoming Biomedical Doctors**
Mar 5: Wendland: *A Heart for the Work*, Prologue – Chapter 4

**Struggling with the Mind: A Psychiatry for Africa**
Mar 26 Heaton: *Black Skin, White Coats*, Introduction – Chapter 3.
Apr 2: Heaton: *Black Skin, White Coats*, Chapter 4 – Conclusion.

**The Current Cancer Epidemic: A Case Study from Botswana**
Apr 16: Livingston, *Improvising Medicine*, Chapter 4 - Epilogue

**Biomedical Prospecting: Studying & Patenting African Medicines**
Apr 30: Osseo-Asare: *Bitter Roots*, Chapter 3 – Conclusion.
Topics and Books

Malaria

Mental Illness

Cholera

Bubonic Plague

Missionaries and Medicine

Medical Experimentation in Africa

Doctors
Sleeping Sickness

Maternal Health

HIV/AIDS

Nurses

Tuberculosis

Pharmacy

Polio

Leprosy
Miscellaneous


