



## **Honors 308W/310W/312W: Pandemics and People: Health in an Unjust World**

**Spring 2021**  
**CRNs: 22276, 22277, 24529**  
**3 cr. hrs.**

Instructors: Dr. Martin Brock, Dr. David Coleman  
Class Meeting Times: Online, Synchronous, 9:30-10:45 TR  
Office Hours: Via Zoom appointment  
Contact: [martin.brock@eku.edu](mailto:martin.brock@eku.edu)  
Or [david.coleman@eku.edu](mailto:david.coleman@eku.edu)

### **Course Catalog Descriptions:**

**HON 308W: Honors Seminar in the Humanities:** \_\_\_\_\_. (3) A. Prerequisite: ENG 102 or 102R or 105(B) or HON 102 and Admission to the Honors Program; or departmental approval. A topics course in the humanities meeting the goals of the Honors Program. May be retaken with different topics to a maximum of six hours. Gen. Ed. E-3B [AH].

**HON 310W: Honors Seminar in History:** \_\_\_\_\_. (3) A. Prerequisite: ENG 102 or 102R or 105(B) or HON 102 and admission to the Honors Program; or departmental approval. A topics course in history meeting the goals of the Honors Program. May be retaken with different topics to a maximum of six hours. Gen. Ed. E-5A [SB].

**HON 312W: Honors Seminar in the Social and Behavioral Sciences:** \_\_\_\_\_. (3) A. Prerequisite: ENG 102 or 102R or 105(B) or HON 102 and Admission to the Honors Program; or departmental approval. A topics course in the social and behavioral sciences meeting the goals of the Honors Program. A service-learning version of HON 312W may also be offered. Students may earn up to six hours from any combination of HON 312W/312S, providing the topics differ. Gen. Ed. E-5B [SB].

### **Course Description:**

The concept of Pandemic is dirty, complex, emotionally and physically wrenching, and divisive. We either wear masks and socially distance ourselves, or live in fatalistic denial. Is our immediate concern ourselves, or is it our brothers and sisters? What is striking is that probing these questions only emphasizes that viral infection, the denial of environmental justice, and racism oddly mirror each other. And at the core is that society is at a crossroads as to the nature of truth. This course will explore the phenomenon of pandemics in human society from interdisciplinary perspectives—scientific, social, and political as well as historical, literary, and philosophical.

### **EKU General Education Goals Addressed in This Course:**

Students will be able to:

1. Use appropriate methods of critical thinking and quantitative reasoning to examine issues and to identify solutions. (GE Goal two)
2. Analyze the historical and social contexts of cultural, economic, political, religious, and scientific developments. (GE Goal three)

3. Analyze the social and behavioral influences that explain how people relate to each other, to institutions, and to communities. (GE Goal four)
4. Analyze the values, cultural context, and aesthetic qualities of artistic, literary, philosophic, and/or religious works. (GE Goal six)
5. Distinguish the methods that underlie the search for knowledge in the arts, humanities, natural sciences, history, and social and behavioral sciences. (GE Goal seven)
6. Integrate knowledge that will deepen their understanding of, and will inform their own choices about, issues of personal and public importance. (GE Goal eight)

**EKU General Education Student Learning Outcomes:**

**HON 308W/310W/312W (Humanities/History/Social Sciences)**

Students who successfully complete this course will:

1. Gather, synthesize, and critically analyze information and present it in a well-written format.
2. Verbally articulate complex information in an interesting presentation.
3. Comprehend the major concepts of the course.
4. Express ideas about the arts and humanities through sentences that are clearly formulated, grammatically correct, and stylistically competent.
5. Accurately locate particular works and/or cultural movements in relation to relevant contexts.
6. Understand the methods used in the arts and humanities.
7. Understand the research methods used in the social and behavioral sciences.
8. Integrate relevant information, concepts, perspectives, and principles.
9. Apply relevant concepts and theories of the social and behavioral sciences in different contexts.
10. Establish a conclusive position regarding a topic in the social and behavioral sciences and identify consequences.
11. Demonstrate a writing process that produces effective documents appropriate to course level.
12. Understand the research methods used in the social and behavioral sciences, and to obtain and analyze quantitative data.
13. Demonstrate understanding of connections between and methods appropriate to history and the humanities.

**Grading:**

Reading Responses	140 (10 each x 15, lowest score drops)
Attendance/Participation	40
Research Project Topic Description and Initial Bibliography	10
Research Project Preliminary Text	10
Research Project Oral Presentation	20
Research Project Creative/Applied Project	20
Research Project Final Text	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>

(A=270-300; B=240-270; C=210-240; D=180-210; ≤179=F)

\*Note on grading: The “Reading Response” assignments constitute nearly half of your grade for this course. We do not expect perfection on these, but we do expect a good faith effort that demonstrates clearly that you have done your assigned reading and have engaged the material in a thoughtful manner. Note that earning a “10/10” on a Reading Response assignment will require evidence of thoughtful engagement with the material. Please use standard English and complete sentences in composing your Reading Responses (i.e. no outline or “bullet points”). Reading responses must be in your own words.

**Readings:**

Albert Camus, *The Plague*

John Fabian Witt, *American Contagions: Epidemics and the Law from Smallpox to COVID-19*

Additional Readings linked on Blackboard

## Course Schedule

See Blackboard for PowerPoints and Reading Assignments

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings (text or in Blackboard)</b>	<b>Assignment (n.b. all assignments are to be submitted via Blackboard unless otherwise indicated)</b>
1/19	Intro, expectations, overview (MB and DC)	PPT: Introduction to course and syllabus	
1/21	COVID-19 as disease - body's responses 1: infectiousness (MB)	PPT: Basic biology NYT article on coronavirus biology	Reading Response 1 (due by 1/26): One issue that arises with disease, but also in all aspects of our existence is the role of complexity. Some complex systems were indicated in today's session. In a well-written paragraph (half-page) describe what your current impression of complexity means, and indicate one component from today's lesson for a complex system that would be unstable, and state your reason for its instability.
1/26	Broader view of disease - kinds of agents; kinds of responses (MB)	PPT: Categories of diseases	Reading Response 2 (due by 1/28): In a well-written paragraph (half-page), respond to the question (using ideas presented in this session) of what we mean by disease, and what do you feel are minimum criteria for a disease to be "epidemic" or "pandemic."
1/28	Body's responses 1: Antibodies (MB)	PPT: Antibodies and PDF: "Introducing the antibody"	None
2/2	Body's responses 2: Cellular immunity (MB)	PPT: T-cell action and look over PDF: Introducing the Antibody	Reading Response 3 (due by 2/4): Respond to the question (using ideas presented in this and the previous session as well as from the readings) of how our immune system can maintain stability in spite of its huge complexity? Also provide an example from outside medical topics, but within your personal experience to help justify your response.
2/4	Population response: How pandemics alter social biology (MB)	PPT: Antigen presentation; NYT articles (2) on vaccines	Reading Response 4 (due by 2/9): Classical vaccination was through giving either a dead or attenuated version of a virus. But from today's readings, we see we have changed the game considerably. What is new about this, and why is it expected to work?
2/9	Science: How does science work? (MB)	PPT: How do we know?	None
2/11	How can we treat disease? Historical approaches (MB)	PPT: Development of modern scientific ideas about disease, Read "Snow's Map of London" and reading on Koch	Reading Response 5 (due by 2/16): A pretty strong case can be made that epidemiology is primarily a social science. Consider what the social sciences comprise (sociology, etc.), then how have the methods for developing knowledge and

			control of disease we have described in the previous few lectures and readings intersected with the social sciences? Be brief, but show how the literature you have read for this class indicates that knowledge of the social sciences is an essential addition to purely natural science data.
2/16	Treating disease: sanitation and quarantine (MB and DC)	Witt: pp 1-60	Reading Response 6 (due today 2/16 before class): Dr. Witt argues that there have been two main approaches to epidemics in the history of American law: Sanitationism and Quarantinism. While he argues both positive and negative aspects of each, he seems to come down much harder against the quarantine state. Why is this so, and why is this question particularly critical in the midst of COVID when quarantinism is such a necessary aspect of our lives?
2/18	Being human in a pandemic (MB and DC)	BBC: The 432 year old manual Witt: pp 60-	Reading Response 7 (due today 2/18 before class): TBD
2/23	Statistical modeling of disease (Dr. Kay)	“Exponential Growth Bias: The Numerical Error Behind Covid-19.” at <a href="https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200812-exponential-growth-bias-the-numerical-error-behind-covid-19">https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200812-exponential-growth-bias-the-numerical-error-behind-covid-19</a>	Reading Response 8 (due today 2/23 before class): What is exponential growth bias and how can we combat it?
2/25	Statistical solutions (Dr. Kay)	“How Did We Develop a COVID-19 Vaccine So Quickly?” at <a href="https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/how-did-we-develop-a-covid-19-vaccine-so-quickly?fbclid=IwAR2Zx-T2WkGWKd0uW9JFnFyaZgWdVdEL21QCubwdqmUcEUgomTmlmajeIfE">https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/how-did-we-develop-a-covid-19-vaccine-so-quickly?fbclid=IwAR2Zx-T2WkGWKd0uW9JFnFyaZgWdVdEL21QCubwdqmUcEUgomTmlmajeIfE</a>	Reading Response 9 (due today 2/25 before class): What evidence presented by Solis-Moreira regarding the speed of vaccine development do you find most convincing and why?
3/2	Review, Feedback, and Fresh Questions (MB and DC)	None	N.b.—Around this date, professors will email each student with Attendance/Participation grade for first half of the course.
3/4	Pandemics and Premodern Transformations (DC)	Boccaccio, excerpts from the <i>Decameron</i> Watch Carol Symes video (and take notes)	Reading Response 10 (due today 3/4 before class) 1. Of all responses to the so-called “Black Death” pestilence of the late 1340s in Florence, Italy as described by Boccaccio, which do you find most interesting and why?

			2. In a well-developed paragraph (perhaps 6-10 sentences), explain the core argument advanced by Professor Carol Symes in her lecture and provide at least two specific examples of the sorts of evidence that she uses to support her argument.
3/9	Introduction to Research Projects (DC)	None. Those of you who prefer to read slowly, however, may want to go ahead and get a start on reading the Camus novel (see the March 18 assignment below and be sure to read the “response question” that you will need to bear in mind as you read)	
3/11	<b>No Class</b> <b>N.B.—Initial Bibliography and Topic Description are due at 11:59pm. Submit to Blackboard</b>		
3/16	1918-1919 Influenza Pandemic (DC)	Reading: Janice Hume, “The ‘Forgotten’ 1918 Influenza Epidemic and Press Portrayal of Public Anxiety”	Reading Response 11 (due today 3/16 before class) Making specific reference to evidence and examples from the reading, compose a well-organized paragraph (perhaps 8-12 sentences) in which you explain why Hume believes that issues of public memory are important to public health policy.
3/18	“Absurdism,” Imagination, and Experience: Albert Camus’ <i>The Plague</i> (DC)	Camus, <i>The Plague</i> , pp. 1-164	Reading Response 12 (due today 3/18 before class): The fictional plague in Oran described by Camus is obviously very different in nature and social impact than the COVID-19 pandemic that we have experienced over the past year. As you read Camus, think about the ways in which his characters’ experiences resemble and differ from those that you and those close to you (friends & family) have had during our recent pandemic. Making explicit reference to at least two characters and at least two different elements of the book’s plot, describe two similarities or differences (or one of each) between these characters’ experiences of pandemic and those that have impacted you and/or those close to you over the past year or so.
3/23	Humanity and Meaning in Albert Camus’ <i>The Plague</i> (DC)	Camus, <i>The Plague</i> , pp. 167-308	Reading Response 13 (due today 3/23 before class):

			As you read the second half of the book, bear in mind the things you learned about Camus in our last class and think about the larger philosophical or moral lessons that Camus may be trying to communicate through this novel. Making specific reference to at least two characters and at least two elements of the book's plot to illustrate your argument, compose a well-organized paragraph in which you explain what you find to be the book's most important lesson.
3/25	The History of death in New York City: How does COVID-19 rank among its antecedents? (MB)	PPT:	Reading Response 14: TBD
3/30	Modern Pandemics: HIV, Ebola (MB)	PPT: TBA	Reading Response 15: TBD
4/1	Representations of disease in art (MB)	PPT: TBA NYT: What can we learn from the art of pandemics past? (read prior to class)	No assignments related to this lecture. However: <b>N.b.: Research Project Preliminary Text due today. Post to Blackboard before coming to class.</b>
4/6	<b>No class:</b> Individual zoom conferences (MB and DC)		
4/8	<b>No class:</b> Individual zoom conferences (MB and DC)		
4/13	Public Health in a Pandemic: Dr. Michelyn Bhandari, ECU Department of Public Health (guest)	Continue work on Research Project	
4/15	Nursing in a Pandemic: Dr. Lisa Jones, ECU Dept. of Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing (guest)	Continue work on Research Project	
4/20	Education in a Pandemic: Dr. Richard Day, ECU Department of Curriculum and Instruction (guest)	Continue work on Research Project	N.b.—Around this date, professors will email each student with Attendance/Participation grade for second half of the course.
4/22	Student presentations (Students)		<b>N.b.: Research Project Final Paper and Creative due before coming to class. Post to Blackboard. Creative/Applied Project also due. Email directly to Dr. Brock and Dr. Coleman</b>
4/27	<b>No class</b>		
4/29	Student presentations (Students)		
5/4	8-10 am(!) Student presentations (Students)		

**Student Progress:**

Students will receive feedback via Reading Responses before the midterm.

**Participation/Attendance:**

Attendance is expected at all class sessions. If you have to be absent for medical or other excused reason, please inform the instructors (beforehand if possible, as soon as possible if not).

**Attendance Statement (COVID-19)**

Students should make every effort to attend to all assignments on time every week. An acceptable excuse may be an illness (including self-isolation or quarantine), a University provided excuse, or an emergency resulting in unavoidable absence. Students will not receive a grade penalty for missing class due to self-isolation or quarantine, but should notify the instructor as soon as they are aware of the need to miss class. Students are expected to make up missed work.

**Official E-mail**

An official EKU e-mail is established for each registered student, each faculty member and each staff member. All university communications sent via e-mail will be sent to this EKU e-mail address.

**Accessibility Accommodation Statement**

Eastern Kentucky University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. Students registered with the Center for Student Accessibility (CSA) should request accommodation letters from the CSA office. The Center for Student Accessibility will email your academic adjustment letter to you, or you may stop by the office for a hard copy. You will provide your letter to the course instructor(s) immediately. We strongly recommend that you discuss the accommodations needed with your instructor(s). Students who need an accommodation for a documented medical, mental health, or learning difference may register online at [accessibility.eku.edu/applying-services](http://accessibility.eku.edu/applying-services). If you have questions, you may email the CSA office at [accessibility@eku.edu](mailto:accessibility@eku.edu) or telephone at (859) 622-2933. The Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) does not consider pregnancy a disability. Students needing accommodations due to pregnancy should contact EKU's Office of Institutional Equity, Lindsey Carter, Director, Office of Institutional Equity, Title IX Coordinator, Jones 416, (859) 622-8020, [Lindsey.Carter@eku.edu](mailto:Lindsey.Carter@eku.edu).

**Academic Integrity Statement**

Students are advised that EKU's Academic Integrity policy will strictly be enforced in this course.

The [Academic Integrity policy](#) is available at the [policy website](#). Questions regarding the policy may be directed to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards.

For current University policies and regulations, please go to EKU's [Policy Website](#).

**Discrimination and Harassment, Title IX, and Prevention Statement**

EKU is committed to maintaining a respectful and inclusive environment for students, faculty, administrators, staff, and visitors that is free of all forms of discrimination and harassment, including sexual misconduct. The University supports and promotes a safe, violence-free campus through Green Dot Prevention and Education programming. To learn more about Green Dot, request a presentation, or get involved, go to <http://greendot.eku.edu/>.

EKU's commitment also requires those deemed to be mandated reporters to report any incident that has affected any member of the University Community that might implicate the University's Policy on Discrimination and Harassment to the University's Title IX Coordinator and/or the Office of Institutional Equity.

If you would like to obtain confidential help from someone who does not have to report the information, please go to <http://titleix.eku.edu/resources> for resources. The Policy on Discrimination and Harassment is available [here](#).

Reports of incidents that might implicate the Policy on Discrimination and Harassment as well as any questions regarding the Policy may be directed to:

Lindsey A. Carter

[Director of the Office of Institutional Equity & Title IX Coordinator](#)

Jones 416

[Lindsey.Carter@eku.edu](mailto:Lindsey.Carter@eku.edu)

859-622-8020

**Add/Drop Withdraw**

The last day to drop a full semester course without a "W" appearing on the university transcript is January 26. The last day to drop a class without a drop fee is March 15. The last day to drop a class (with the fee required by EKU drop policy) is April 4. See all calendar details at <https://colonelscompass.eku.edu/>.