

## **JSIS 586: Influenza Pandemics in Perspective**

### **Professor:**

Celia Lowe (Anthropology and International Studies), [lowe@uw.edu](mailto:lowe@uw.edu)

### **Class Meetings:**

Fridays, January 25th, February 1st, February 15th, 9:30-11:20, Denny 211  
and

Flu Forum, Simpson Center, Communications 202

Friday, Feb 8<sup>th</sup> 2:30-4:00

and

Talk by Rob Wallace, Simpson Center, Communications 202

Monday, Feb 11<sup>th</sup> 12-1:30

### **Course Description:**

Over the past decade and more, avian and swine flu pandemics, as well as a renewed awareness of the devastating 1917 global influenza pandemic, have brought influenza into the spotlight, and a series of subsequent political, ethical, historical questions to the fore. How do recent influenza outbreaks and programs for pandemic preparedness indicate the ways that disease etiologies are simplified, coded, and re-coded to reflect larger patterns of globalization and neo-liberal governance? For example, why are influenzas now approached as problems of “security” rather than public health? How might contemporary food provisioning systems, industrial agriculture, and human-animal relations be implicated in the emergence of disease, such that some want to call new highly pathogenic influenzas “viruses of our own making”? How do global political and economic inequalities play a key role in creating the potential for devastating pandemics, and determine how we respond to these threats?

In September 2011 flu research hit the headlines once again, but not because virus-trackers had identified the threat of a new pandemic. In this case what mobilized anxieties and galvanized debate was the announcement that researchers at the Erasmus Medical Center in Rotterdam had successfully engineered a mutant H5N1 virus that was transmissible between mammals. This generated intense debate about the ethics and politics of biomedical research that raises a number of deeply perplexing/perennial problems: Is there research scientists should not undertake? How should such research with dangerous organisms be regulated, and what responsibilities do scientists have to assess and to communicate its risks?

This microcourse will prepare students to engage with the Flu Forum and with Rob Wallace’s talk, and to think through issues of global health, international studies, and science and technology studies in relation to their own research. (maybe add Asian studies if we use that prefix from JSIS)

**Assignments:**

Students are asked to read all assigned readings and come to the Forum prepared to discuss them. In addition, students are asked to write one short paper that responds to one or more aspect of the Flu Forum, Rob Wallace's talk, and assigned readings. This paper might take the form of discussant's comments for a conference panel, or a response or review paper. Students will present their responses as part of the discussion on the last day.

**Grading:**

Students will be assigned either credit or no credit for the course. To receive credit, students must arrive in class prepared to discuss readings, and they must write and discuss in class a short response paper that seriously engages the issues under discussion.

**Schedule of Readings and Discussions:****Class One:**

Celia Lowe. 2010. "Viral Clouds: Becoming H5N1 in Indonesia" in *Cultural Anthropology* Vol. 25(4): 625-649.

Lenny Hogerwerf et. al. 2010. "Persistence of HPAI Avian Influenza Virus defined by AgroEcological Niche" *Ecohealth* 7: 213-225.

D. Ann Herring and Stacy Lockerbie. 2010. "The Coming Plague of Avian Influenza" in *Plagues and Epidemics: Infected Spaces Past and Present*. Oxford: Berg Press.

**Class Two:**

Matthew Sparke. 2011. "H1N1, Globalization and the Epidemiology of Inequality" in *Health and Place*.

H5N1 Controversy Timeline and Document Repository

<http://labs.fhcrc.org/cbf/Papers/index.html>

**Feb 8, Flu Forum**

**Feb 11, Wallace Lecture**

**Class Three:**

Students will present and discuss in class their written responses to the Forum.