Doctoral Seminar: History and Philosophy of Epidemiology (EPID 891)  
Fall 2009, Mondays 12:00-1:50PM, Rosenau Hall 235  
Faculty: Steve Wing, Frieda Behets

1 August 31: Introduction

Objectives; review of syllabus, expectations and course requirements; introductions.

What is epidemiology? Why study history & philosophy of epidemiology?

2 September 14: From 19th Century Origins to 20th Century Debates. Theme: Classification and causation.


3 September 21: John Snow and the roots of modern epidemiology


4 September 28: Modern Epidemiology. Theme: Individuals and populations.


5 October 5: Philosophy of Science. Theme: Demarcation and change in science and epidemiology


Case study:


6 October 12: Objectivity in Science and Epidemiology. Theme: Construction of scientific knowledge


7 October 19: Statistics in Epidemiology Theme: Chance, determinism, and statistical inference (Note University Day 10:00-1:00)


8 October 26: Contemporary Epidemiology. Theme: Setting research agendas.


9 November 2: Epidemiologic Transitions. Theme: Transformation of disease in populations


10 November 9: Biomedical vs. Population Approaches to Public Health. Theme: The causes of cases and the causes of incidence. Guest speaker: Beverly Rockhill


Case study: genetic testing


Commentary topic title, bibliography , and outline due at end of class 10

11 November 16: Agriculture, infections, and public health systems. Theme: Complex systems.


Case study: industrial agriculture

Barber D, Miller G, McNamara P; Sundberg P; Vogel LP; Blackman BT; White DG, McDermott PF, Meng J; McDonald LC; Sorenson TL, Wegener HC, Frimodt-Moller N. Correspondence, New Engl J Med 2001; 346: 777-779.

12 November 23: Conflicted Science. Theme: Conflicts of interest in epidemiology


13 November 30: Peer Review and Authorship. Theme: Theory and practice of creating the scientific literature.


Further reading:

Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy. On being a scientist: responsible conduct in research. National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, Institute of

14 December 7: Epidemiology, Policy and Advocacy. Theme: Epidemiology in practice.


