In the winter of 1347 a deadly epidemic reached Europe’s Mediterranean ports and quickly spread inland. Two years later, the disease, known to later generations as the Black Death, had killed about 40% of Europe’s population and shaken Medieval European society to its very core. The Black Death, moreover, occurred as Europe was experiencing what may very well have been the most calamitous century in its long and turbulent history. The disease hit Europe during the opening phase of the Hundred Years’ War; a mere two decades after the Great Famine which had killed 3 million people in seven years; in the midst of the worst crisis the Medieval Church ever suffered; and just a few years before Europe’s peasant population began going into bloody revolts. This was a society in crisis. This course aims to understand the causes, immediate impact, and long-term consequences of this catastrophe and to try to appreciate how a highly developed society deals with extreme crisis.

Prerequisites: HIST 300 and ENG 214

Learning Outcomes
1. Students will learn and be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the Black Death, its causes, and its impact on European society, both short and long term (Department Undergraduate Objective 1).
2. Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to analyze and interpret historical evidence, both primary and secondary, by their participation in class discussions and the research paper (Department Undergraduate Objectives 2 & 3).
3. Students will have to demonstrate an ability to do extensive research in primary and secondary sources on a topic of their choice pertaining to the Black Death. They will also have to effectively communicate the results of this research in a 20-25 page research paper due at the end of term (Department Undergraduate Objective 4).

Required Books

John Aberth, From the Brink of the Apocalypse: Confronting Famine, War, Plague and Death in the Later Middle Ages (New York, 2000)
Christine M. Boeckl, Images of Plague and Pestilence: Iconography and Iconology (Kirksville, MO, 2000)
Samuel Cohn, The Cult of Remembrance and the Black Death: Six Renaissance Cities in Central Italy (Baltimore, 1992)

All articles can be accessed through e-reserve

**Grades**
Class Participation: 15% (missing classes will impact this part of the grade. I expect every student to participate in every class)
Book Review: 20%, 1000-1250 words. On any of the above secondary sources, except Gottfried (due the day we discuss the book in class)
Lead a class discussion: 5%
Research Paper Abstract: 10%
Final Research Paper: 20-25 Pages 50%

**Readings**
All readings are to be done by the time of our weekly meetings.

**Part I: Before the Black Death**
Week 1
Class Introduction

Week 2

Week 3
Jordan, *The Great Famine*

**Part II: The Course of the Black Death**
Week 4
Gottfried, *The Black Death*, chs. 1-5

Week 5
Week 6
Gottfried, The Black Death, ch. 6
Horroxx, The Black Death, 158-206

ABSTRACTS DUE

Week 7
Individual Meetings on Research Paper

Week 8
Spring Break

Part III: Impact

Week 9
Horroxx, The Black Death, 248-351

Week 10
Caciola, Nancy. "Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture" in Past and Present 152 (1996) 3 – 45

3
Week 11
Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*

Week 12

Week 13
Cohn, *The Black Death Transformed*

Week 14
Aberth, *From the Brink of the Apocalypse*

Week 15
Finish Research Papers

Week 16
Gottfried, *The Black Death*, ch. 7

RESEARCH PAPERS DUE