MLA alumni-
Consider taking an MLA seminar this winter 2020!

MLA 322: Coffee, Sugar, and Chocolate: Commodities and Consumption in World History, 1200-1800
Thursdays, 7:00-9:30pm
Paula Findlen
Ubaldo Pierotti Professor of History and Professor, by courtesy, of French and Italian

When you take your daily coffee or tea, possibly adding a spoonful of sugar, do you stop to think why and how this ordinary habit was formed for millions of people throughout the world? Many of the basic commodities that we consider staples of everyday life became part of an increasingly interconnected world of trade, goods, and consumption between 1200 and 1800. This seminar offers an introduction to the material culture of the late medieval and early modern world, with an emphasis on the role of European trade and empires in these developments. We will examine recent work on the circulation, use, and consumption of things, starting with the age of the medieval merchant, and followed by the era of the Columbian exchange in the Americas that was also the world of the Renaissance collector, the Ottoman patron, and the Ming connoisseur. This seminar will explore the material horizons of an increasingly interconnected world, the era of the Dutch East India Company and other trading societies, and the rise of the Atlantic economy. It concludes by exploring classic debates about the “birth” of consumer society in the eighteenth century. How did the meaning of things and people’s relationships to them change over these centuries? Which commodities matter and why? What can we learn about the past by studying things?

MLA 352: Viruses in the News
Tuesdays, 7:00-9:30pm
Robert Siegel
Professor (Teaching) of Microbiology and Immunology

Viruses in the News is an introduction to human virology focusing on viruses that feature prominently in the news or other media including social media and entertainment. Viruses that are currently in the limelight include Zika, Ebola, measles, polio, chikungunya, influenza, HIV, HCV, enterovirus 68, and smallpox. But the cast of characters is likely to change even as the course unfolds. Viruses are fascinating biological entities that are on the border between the living and the inanimate. In this class, we will use viruses as a lens to look at general aspects of infectious disease and biology, and more broadly on the challenges, triumphs, and priorities of contemporary society. We will use an
interdisciplinary approach to virology including history, biology, taxonomy, evolution, epidemiology, clinical presentation, immune response, treatment, vaccination and prevention, public health implications, emergence of novel viruses, and aspects of eradication. Equipped with information from this class, you will be able to approach questions such as: Why do you need to get an annual flu shot? How is Ebola spread? Where did Zika come from?
Additionally, we will examine policy issues related to scientific integrity, access to health care, and the role of media especially with regard to vaccination. We will also look at the role of viruses in culture and the arts.
This course will cover a fair bit of biology. However, no prerequisites or prior knowledge of biological processes is required.

Details
Classes are $800 for alumni. We do require that you participate fully in the course--doing the reading and participating in class discussions. The choice to do a paper is up to you. If you wish to take it for a grade, you will need to submit a paper. You will have access to the library, and you will be added to the seminar Canvas site for class details and readings.

Please let me know if you have any questions or would like to sign up. Current students have priority for enrollment, and I may not be able to confirm your spot until current students have had a chance to enroll.

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