

**University of Toronto,**  
Faculty of Arts and Science,  
Department of Political Science,

Academic Year 2022-2023

## **Topics in Comparative Politics III: Epidemics and Phobia** **POL379H1 F; LEC0301**

**Class time:** Wednesday 12:00 - 2:00 p.m.

**Instructor:** Prof. Ato Kwamena Onoma

**Office:** 3079 Sydney Smith Hall

**Email:** [ato.onoma@utoronto.ca](mailto:ato.onoma@utoronto.ca)

**Class time:** Wednesday 12-2pm

**Class location:** OI 5150

**Office Hours:** Wednesday 10-11am (or by appointment through email)

**THEMES:** This class will explore the relationship between epidemics and phobia with an emphasis on mapping, explaining and making sense of the forms that phobia takes during public health crises. We will also examine the extent to which epidemics constitute defining moments that inflect longstanding social dynamics. The following are some questions that we will explore: What is the relationship between health-related xenophobia and other forms of xenophobia? Do epidemics always coincide with xenophobia? Why are some groups scapegoated while others are not? Which members of scapegoated groups are targeted during epidemics? How do epidemics play into *intra*-group interactions? This course will help students to reflect on broader questions of mobility and inter and intra-communal relations while advancing their knowledge of the more specific issues of epidemics and phobia.

**FORMAT AND REQUIREMENTS:** This is a lecture with a significant discussion segment. This course will be in-person. The course will be divided into two sections with each building up to a discussion jamboree that will be followed by a major take-home assessment. *Section 1* will provide students with a general grasp of the problem of xenophobia and help them grasp the dominant literature on xenophobia linked to public health crises. Focus on will be on the character, scope, forms, and motivations of such xenophobia as well as its links with non-epidemic era xenophobia. This section will culminate with the mid-term take-home open book exam. *Section 2* will undertake a more critically interrogation of the dominant literature on the relationship between epidemics and xenophobia. It will detect its gaps and flaws and explore ways of further enriching it.

**PREREQUISITES:** 1.0 POL credit

## ASSESSMENT

- *Class attendance (12%)*: Presence in class throughout the course of the semester will earn you 12% of the final grade.
- *Class participation (24%)*: Informed and sustained participation informed by course readings during all classes, excluding discussion jamborees will earn you a further 24% of the final grade.
- *Mid-term take home, open book exam (25%)*: You will have one week to submit your response (4 double-spaced pages each, Times New Roman, font 12: around 1400 words) to one out of three questions posed by the instructor. All papers should be submitted to the instructor at the beginning of class on October 26, 2022. This is a hard deadline. A 2% (of 30% of the total grade for this course) penalty will be assessed each day, including weekends on all unauthorized late submissions. Keep a copy of your exams until the corrected assignment is returned to you.
- *Participation in discussion jamboree 1 (7%)*: Each student should compose and bring to class two questions touching on the content treated in Section 1 of the course. Write your name on the printed sheets with the questions. We will put all the questions in a box and students will randomly select and discuss questions throughout the class. Students will be graded based the quality of their questions and the extent of their participation in discussions.
- *Participation in discussion jamboree 2 (7%)*: Each student should compose and bring to class two questions touching on the content treated in Section 1 of the course. Write your name on the printed sheet with the questions. We will put all the questions in a box and students will randomly select and discuss questions throughout the class. Students will be graded based the quality of their questions and the extent of their participation in discussions.
- *Final take home, open book exam (25%)*: You will have two weeks to submit your response (4 double-spaced pages each, Times New Roman, font 12: around 1500 words) to one out of three questions posed by the instructor. You will receive the questions no later than November 22, 2022. All papers should be submitted to the instructor at his office between 9am and 3pm on December 12, 2022. This is a hard deadline. A 2% (of 34% of the total grade for this course) penalty will be assessed each day, including weekends on all unauthorized late submissions. Keep a copy of your exams until the corrected assignment is returned to you. Submit late responses to the instructor by email.

**ABSENCE:** Students who absent themselves from class should complete the Absence Declaration form available to them directly on ACORN. Students should also inform the instructor of their absence.

**EXTENSIONS:** The deadlines for submission of assignments are hard deadlines. Extensions will only be granted in extraordinary circumstances. To discuss an extension, come to office hours at least one week before the assignment is due. I do not discuss extensions by email. *Any late submissions that have not been granted an extension by the instructor prior to the deadline will not be marked and will receive a grade of zero.*

**PLAGIARISM:** “Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and will be dealt with accordingly. For further clarification and information on plagiarism please see Writing at the University of Toronto <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources>”.

**ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS:** The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/> as soon as possible.

**COURSE MATERIALS:** The materials below are required readings that must be completed before class. Most are available electronically either as links through the library’s website or as PDFs . You can locate the electronic links and PDF files under library resources on the course page in Quercus. Readings that are not available electronically can be found on short term loan – Course Reserve at Roberts Library.

## SECTION I

### *Week 1 (September 14): The problem of xenophobia*

- **Preoccupation:** What is the nature of the problem of xenophobia?
- **Readings:**
  - Geschiere, Peter. and Francis Nyamnjoh. 2000. “Capitalism and autochthony: The seesaw of mobility and belonging.” *Public Culture* 12 (2): 423-452.
  - Landau, L. 2012. “Introducing the demons.” In *Exorcising the Demons Within: Xenophobia, Violence and Statecraft in Contemporary South Africa*, edited by Loren Landau. pp. 1-25. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
  - Siddique, Sharon. and Leo. Suryadinata. 1981. “Bumiputra and Pribumi: Economic Nationalism (Indiginism) in Malaysia and Indonesia.” *Pacific Affairs* 54 (4): 662-687.

***Week 2 (September 21): The murky waters of xenophobic discourses***

- **Preoccupation:** What is the epistemological weight of xenophobic discourses? To what extent do they help us make sense of social interactions?
- **Readings:**
  - Geschiere, Peter and Stephen Jackson. 2006. "Autochthony and the Crisis of Citizenship: Democratization, Decentralization, and the Politics of Belonging." *African Studies Review* 49 (2): 1 - 7.
  - Jackson, Stephen. 2006. "Sons of which soil? The language and politics of autochthony in Eastern D.R. Congo." *African Studies Review* 49 (2): 95-123.

***Week 3 (September 28): Epidemics and xenophobia: Scope, forms and location***

- **Preoccupation:** What is the historical and geographic scope of xenophobia related to outbreaks of infectious diseases? What types of epidemics have spurred hatred towards those cast as other? To what extent is epidemic era phobia linked to broader angst over invading foreigners?
- **Readings:**
  - Dionne, Kim Yi and Fulya Turkmen. 2020. "The politics of pandemic othering: Putting COVID-19 in global and historical context." *International Organization* 74 (S1): E213-E230.
  - Ticktin, Miriam. 2017. "Invasive others: Toward a contaminated world." *Social Research* 84 (1): xxi-xxxiv.

***Week 4 (October 5): Epidemics and xenophobia: Motivations***

- **Preoccupation:** Why do outbreaks of infectious diseases coincide with phobia targeting others?
- **Readings:**
  - Trauner, Joan. 1978. "The Chinese as medical scapegoats in San Francisco, 1870-1905." *California History* 57 (1): 70-87.
  - Eichelberger, Laura. 2007. "SARS and New York's Chinatown: the politics of risk and blame during an epidemic of fear." *Social Science and Medicine* 65 (6): 1284-1295.

***Week 5 (October 12): Epidemics and xenophobia: Media as predators***

- **Preoccupation:** What role does media play in the stigmatization of communities as disease vectors?
- **Readings:**
  - White, Cassandra. 2010. “Déjà vu: leprosy and immigration discourse in the twenty-first century United States.” *Leprosy Review* 81 (1): 17-26.
  - Monson, Sarah. 2017. “Ebola as African: American media discourses of panic and otherization.” *Africa Today* 63 (3): 2-27.

### **Week 6 (October 19): Discussion jamboree I**

## **SECTION II**

### ***Week 7 (October 26): The link between epidemics and xenophobia***

- **Preoccupation:** Do epidemics always coincide with xenophobic outbursts?
- **Readings:**
  - Cohn, Samuel. 2012. “Pandemics: waves of disease, waves of hate from the Plague of Athens to A.I.D.S.” *Historical Journal* 85 (230): 535-555.
  - Cohn, Samuel. 2007. “The Black Death and the burning of Jews.” *Past and Present* 196 (1): 3–36.

***October 26, 2022: Hand in your printed take home, open book mid-term exams to the instructor at the beginning of class.***

### ***Week 8 (November 2): Targeting patterns***

- **Preoccupation:** What are some migrants and migrant communities targeted in epidemic-related xenophobic outbreaks while others are spared?
- **Readings:**
  - Onoma, Ato. 2020. “Xenophobia’s contours during an Ebola epidemic: Proximity and the targeting of Peul migrants in Senegal.” *African Studies Review* 63 (2): 353-374.
  - Fujii, Lee Ann. 2011. “Rescuers and killer-rescuers during the Rwandan genocide: Rethinking standard categories of analysis.” In *Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue*, edited by Jacques Sémelin, Claire Andrieu, and Sarah Gensburger. pp. 145-157. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

**Week 9 (November 16): Breaching boundaries**

- **Preoccupation:** How do we make sense of kindness towards others during epidemic-era xenophobic outbursts?
- **Readings**
  - Napier, David. 2017. "Epidemics and xenophobia, or, why xenophilia matters." *Social Research* 84 (1): 59-81.
  - Onoma, Ato. 2020. "Epidemics, xenophobia and narratives of propitiousness." *Medical Anthropology: Cross-cultural Studies in Health and Illness* 39 (5): 382-397.

**Week 10 (November 23): Beyond dichotomies**

- **Preoccupation:** To what extent is the self/other dichotomy useful in reading social cartographies, including during epidemics?
- **Readings**
  - Napier, David. 2012. "Nonself help: how immunology might reframe the Enlightenment." *Cultural Anthropology* 27 (1): 122-37.
  - Stoller, Paul. 2012. "Immunology and the between." *Cultural Anthropology* 27 (1): 175-180.
  - Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 2012. "The other who is also oneself: Immunological risk, danger, and recognition." *Cultural Anthropology* 27 (1): 162-67.

**Week 11 (November 30): Epidemics and intra-group interactions**

- **Preoccupation:** How do epidemics impact intra-group relations? Does epidemic era phobia necessarily spare in-group members?
- **Readings:**
  - Onoma, Ato. 2021. "The allure of scapegoating return migrants during a pandemic." *Medical Anthropology: Cross-cultural Studies in Health and Illness* 40 (7): 653-666.
  - Onoma, Ato. 2018. "Epidemics and intra-communal contestations: Ekeh, 'les Guinéens' and Ebola in West Africa." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 56 (4): 595-617.

**Week 12 (December 7): Discussion jamboree II**

***Monday December 12, 2022: Submit printed take home, open book final exam between 9 and 2pm in the office of the instructor, 3079 Sydney Smith Hall.***