

Man and Microbes

Fall 2025

Credits: 1

Course number: IDH 2930, Class Number: **26716**

Schedule: Tuesday, period 7 (1:55 pm – 2:45 pm)

Location: Little Hall 119

Instructor

Dr. Andrei Sourakov

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Course description

“Man and Microbes” by Arno Karlen is a wonderful book and is a very timely one to read in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. It describes the history of humanity as viewed through the prism of epidemics and pandemics. The book deals with the question of how diseases arise, frequently jumping from animals to humans, and how they evolve and why. The book also places disease as a central actor in the history of civilization, which is a perspective many students will not have considered in other humanities or science courses. From ancient Rome and China to the influenza pandemic of 1918 that killed millions, “Man and Microbes” is a great introduction to the field of epidemiology and a great way to simply learn the history of humanity as well as population biology. It is written by an erudite, who is not only a writer but also a scientist. The book is written in clear and accessible language, making it a page-turner, despite occasional gruesome details that are inevitable considering the subject matter.

The course is based on reading the book, one chapter (= 12-20 pages) per week and discussing it in class.

Objectives and basis for grading

Class discussion

Grading

% by activity

Activity	% of final grade
Attendance	50
Class discussions	50

A = 95-100%

A- = 90-94%

B = 85-89%

B- = 80-84%

C = 75-79%

C- = 70-74%

D = 65-69%

D- = 60-64%

E = <60%

Current UF grading policies

See: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Class attendance, work and exam policies

Students are expected to attend all classes unless there are valid reasons for absence, and part of the grade will reflect class attendance. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Textbook (required)

Arno Karlen (1996). *Man and Microbes. Disease and Plagues in History and Modern Times*. Simon & Schuster. 266 pp. The book is very affordable: new copies are available from Amazon for \$15 and numerous used copies are listed for as low as \$6.

CLASS READING ASSIGNMENTS

WEEK 1

Aug 26

Purchase and bring to class “*Man and Microbes*”; Read Chapter 1

WEEK 2

Sept 2

CLASS DISCUSSION: *Man and Microbes*: pp. 1-12 (Ch1)

WEEK 3

Sept 9

CLASS DISCUSSION: *Man and Microbes*: pp. 13-28 (Ch2)

WEEK 4

Sept 16

CLASS DISCUSSION: *Man and Microbes*: pp. 29-46 (Ch3)

WEEK 5

Sept 23

CLASS DISCUSSION: *Man and Microbes*: pp. 47-64 (Ch4)

WEEK 6

Sept 30

CLASS DISCUSSION: *Man and Microbes*: pp. 65-78 (Ch5)

WEEK 7

Oct 7

CLASS DISCUSSION: *Man and Microbes*: pp. 79-92 (Ch6)

WEEK 8

Oct 14

CLASS DISCUSSION: *Man and Microbes*: pp. 93-110 (Ch7)

WEEK 9

Oct 21

CLASS DISCUSSION: *Man and Microbes*: pp. 111-128 (Ch8)

WEEK 10

Oct 28

CLASS DISCUSSION: Man and Microbes: pp. 129-148 (Ch9)

WEEK 11

Nov 4

CLASS DISCUSSION: Man and Microbes: pp. 149-173 (Ch10)

WEEK 12

Nov 11

Holiday

WEEK 13

Nov 18

CLASS DISCUSSION: *Man and Microbes*: pp. 175-213 (Ch11-12)

WEEK 13

Nov 25

Holiday

WEEK 14

Dec 2

CLASS DISCUSSION: *Man and Microbes*: pp. 215-230 (Ch13)