Over the course of only a few months, the COVID-19 pandemic has radically changed the way people live their lives and relate to the world around them. For many, quarantining at home or practicing social distancing on a wide scale are new experiences; however, this is far from the first time that the global spread of disease has had large and lasting impacts on the world. Pandemics and epidemics throughout history — the bubonic plague in 1347, influenza in 1918, HIV/AIDS in the late 20th-early 21st centuries, and many others — have repeatedly reshaped the ways people think, love, and go about their daily lives.

Below is an annotated bibliography of journal articles published between 2000 and 2020 that examine various pandemic or epidemic events from a historical perspective. This bibliography, while not exhaustive, should serve as a resource for beginning to consider how epidemic disease has changed the world in the past, and beginning to reckon with COVID-19’s impact on the future.


Traces the development of the "viral identity" of influenza in the period following the 1918 pandemic.

Brody, Howard. "Map-making and Myth-making in Broad Street: The London Cholera Epidemic, 1854." *Lancet* 356, no 9223 (July 1, 2000): 64-68. Debunks the apocryphal story of Dr. John Snow, a cholera outbreak, a map, and a water pump by showing that he in fact used the map to confirm a tested hypothesis rather than to discover outright the source of the outbreak.


history of pandemics in the West and more deeply assesses when and how pandemics sparked waves of hatred, blame, or violence.

Condrau, Flurin, and Michael Worboys. “Second Opinions: Epidemics and Infections in Nineteenth-Century Britain.” Social History of Medicine 20, no. 1 (2007): 147-158. Rethinks traditional conceptions of Victorian-era Britain as being filled with disease and death, and argues that “the accepted notion of a modern epidemiological transition will need to be rethought.”


Curtis, Stephan. “In-Migration and Diphtheria Mortality Among Children in the Sundsvall Region during the Epidemics of the 1880s.” Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences 63, no. 1 (2008): 23-64. Demonstrates that mortality rates among children living in industrial parishes on the outskirts of the town of Sundsvall were higher than those of children living within the town itself during the Swedish diphtheria epidemic of the early 1880s.


195-217. Examines public awareness and understanding of the influenza pandemic in the US, and argues that incorrect perceptions of the flu as a seasonal illness created an effect of "cognitive inertia" that prevented action that would have stemmed the impact of the second wave.


movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in New Brunswick, and the ways it affected and was affected by the 1918 pandemic.


Lombardi, Guido P., and Uriel García Cáreres. "Multisystemic Tuberculosis in a Pre-Columbia Peruvian Mummy: Four Diagnostic Levels, and a Paleoepidemiological Hypothesis.” Chungara: Revista De Antropología Chilena 32, no. 1 (2000): 55-60. Reviews the case of an adult male mummy from the Nasca culture found to have had TB.


Milne, Graeme J. “Institutions, Localism and Seaborne Epidemics on Late-Nineteenth-Century Tyneside.” Northern History 46, no. 2 (2009): 261-276. Uses events on Tyneside in the 1890s as a case study to reveal the relationships between commercial mobility and public health in the British Empire.


Morens, David M., Jeffery K. Taubenberger, Gregory K. Folkers, and Anthony S. Fauci. "Pandemic Influenza's 500th Anniversary." Clinical Infectious Diseases 51, no. 12 (2010): 1442-444. Examines the circumstances surrounding the first emergence of pandemic influenza, as well as what has been learned about the disease since.


of the typhoid outbreak in Uppingham, England to show how rural communities were particularly vulnerable to and ill-equipped to respond to outbreaks.


Sussman, George D. "Scientists Doing History: Central Africa and the Origins of the First Plague Pandemic." *Journal of World History* 26, no. 2 (2015): 325-54. Argues that the first plague pandemic originated further east and was brought to the Red Sea from Indian Ocean ports, contrary to the unfounded assertion by scientists that it originated in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa.

Sussman, George D. "Was the Black Death in India and China?" *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 85, no. 3 (2011): 319-55. Refutes arguments that the Black Death originated in China or India in the 14th century.


Discusses how MA legislature managed misinformation and fear of disease during an outbreak of rabies in the late 19th century.


Varlik, Nükhet. "From "Bête Noire" to "le Mal De Constantinople": Plagues, Medicine, and the Early Modern Ottoman State." Journal of World History 24, no. 4 (2013): 741-70. Examines early modern mentalities regarding plagues and medicine, arguing that it fit into an Islamic plague cosmology before the 16th century.


and historical analysis of its origins, and an examination of French funerary practices during the second plague.