

Another Silent Spring:

Thinking about Environment and Health in the Era of COVID-19

An Online Lecture Series

Sponsored by the School of History,
The Center for Ecological History and
the Center for Medical History,
Renmin University of China

Conveners: Shen Hou and Hao Chen

In his essay “Another Silent Spring” published in 2020, Donald Worster wrote: “This springtime an eerie silence has fallen over the world’s cities and towns, as governments order their citizens to stay home, avoid unnecessary travel, and keep away from large-group gatherings. Urban streets, rural highways, brand-new airports, and the new generation of bullet trains are all emptier than before, for they are the dreaded paths that the corona virus (Covid-19 or SARS-Cov2) takes to spread from continent to continent and reach its next victims.

“There is no shortage of noise when humans begin to panic and shout for revenge. We are in a fighting mood, and the fight once more is against nature. The non-human world is being blamed not only for the current wave of sickness but also for upheaval in trade, manufacturing, transportation, jobs, currencies, stock prices, education, climate and biodiversity conferences, immigration, and hospitals. Eventually, after the first waves of panic begin to subside, we may be ready to think about why this epidemic has occurred.”

This spring 2021 is a good time for historians to reflect on this silence and on the deep historical roots leading up to it. Therefore, we are inviting eight leading scholars from different parts of the world to present their research on the subject, to share their thoughts about health and environment in the era of COVID-19, and to encourage more people to add their rational thinking when the silence is broken.

The lectures will be held on VooV (please see the attachment for instructions on how to download and use VooV), open to the audience all over the world. We will post the meeting link and the time in the announcement of each lecture.

Lecture Calendar

Lecture 1

Mar. 17 (Wednesday)

Christof Mauch (The Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society; Ludwig-Maximilian-Universität München), “The Plague Comes to America: Racism, Science and Politics in US History”

Lecture 2

April. 3 (Saturday)

Andy Horowitz (Tulane University), “New Orleans’s History, America’s Future: Katrina, Covid, and the Climate Crisis”

Lecture 3

April 14 (Wednesday)

Ari Larrisa Heinrich (Australia National University), “How China Became the ‘Sleeping Lion’: Frankenstein’s Diplomacy”

Lecture 4

April 27 (Tuesday)

Mary Augusta Brazelton (University of Cambridge), “Mass Immunization and Disease Control in Modern China: From Public to Global Health, 1937-78”

Lecture 5

May 8 (Saturday)

Jennifer Derr (University of California, Santa Cruz), "The Alternate Histories and Analytical Possibilities of the Environmental Body: The View from 20th-Century Egypt"

Lecture 6

May 29 (Saturday)

Conevery Valencius (Boston College), “Health and Environment in the Early United States”

Lecture 7

June 8 (Tuesday)

Frédéric Keck (CNRS Laboratoire d’anthropologie sociale), “Pandemic Preparedness: From Avian Influenza to SARS-Cov”

Lecture 8

June 24 (Thursday)

Marco Armiero (Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm), “Wasteocene. Stories of Contamination and Commoning”