



HISTORY OF SCIENCE 2220 (670)
Introduction to the History of Medicine
Summer 2026

Instructor: Dr. Lawrence Burns
Email: lburns9@uwo.ca

Course Information

Calendar Description:

An overview of the development of medicine from antiquity to the present, including the growth of medical sciences, concepts of disease, therapies, and the history of medical practice and institutions.

Prerequisite(s):

Antirequisite(s):

Extra Information: 3 lecture hours.

Course Weight: 1.00

Breadth: Category C

Subject Code: HISTSCI

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

HS 2220 (670) – History of Medicine

Summer 2026

Instructor: Lawrence Burns

Email: lburns9@uwo.ca

Office hour: see OWL page for updated time.

Course description: We will survey the development of medicine from antiquity to the present, guided by three main lines of inquiry: 1) what is disease?, 2) what is medicine?, and 3) who should care for the sick? First, in order to *understand disease*, we need to know what health is and how the body works. However, these concepts have been interpreted differently throughout history according to prevailing cultural, religious, and scientific norms. Identifying these norms or standards will help us to answer the narrower question, *what is medicine?* More specifically, when did medicine come into existence? Was it when we turned to others in the hopes that they would heal us, e.g., by drilling holes in our skulls, or was it when a physician could provide a differential diagnosis and recommend effective treatment based on sound clinical (i.e., scientific) data? Finally, the *responsibility to treat the sick* is an ancient duty. However, the profession that currently swears an oath to respect that duty has changed dramatically. We will chart the course of that development by focussing on the shifting relationship between the physician “at the bedside” and the scientist “at the bench”.

There are no prerequisites or antirequisites for this course.

Required text:

- Duffin, J. 2021 *History of Medicine: A Scandalously Short Introduction*. Third Edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. (Paperback: \$54.95/eBook: \$44.95)
- Other required readings will be hyperlinked via OWL.

This is a fully online course that will use King’s learning platform, OWL (Brightspace), and other educational resources based on the needs of the course. This class is designed to be asynchronous, meaning we will not have a regular, mandatory time when the entire class must be online.

Lecture material will be posted on **Tuesday** and **Thursday** of each week (see Schedule of Lectures and Readings on OWL)

Course assignments:

Test 1 (May 21):	20%
Test 2 (June 18):	25%
Written Assignment (July 16):	20%
Final Exam (see Brightspace):	35%

The written *assignment* will be approximately 1500 words and will primarily involve course material (with some minor additional research).

The *tests* and the *final exam* will test: (a) retention of facts (i.e., names, dates, therapies, organs, diseases, movements, etc.) in addition to (b) comprehension of primary and secondary texts and (c) understanding of the concepts and comparisons developed in class and in the readings. The *tests* will involve short answer, long answer, true-false, and/or multiple choice questions. The *final exam* will also include long answer questions. **Tests are submitted online within a 24-hour window** (you may select when you write it within that time). **Late penalty** for assignments is 2%/day.

Changes to syllabus. Some readings may be moved or altered depending on changing circumstances.

AI Tools. Within this course, use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as ChatGPT, translation tools, and grammar-checking tools) is not permitted for written work submitted for evaluation. Unauthorized use of AI will be subject to academic discipline.

Learning Objectives:

1. Students will analyze historical data and trends in medicine both to value the past on its own terms, and to monitor and understand the practice of medicine in the present.
2. Students will apply different theoretical and methodological approaches to study the history of medicine.
3. Students will develop some basic knowledge of human anatomy, physiology and pathology (e.g., in reference to circulation, respiration, neurological function, and the immune system).
4. Students will be able to critically evaluate the development of scientific approaches to medicine.
5. Students will be able to appreciate the humanistic and holistic elements of medicine.
6. Students will understand how socio-economic factors determine health outcomes.

King's University College General Course Policies 2025-2026

1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences

Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at [here](#).

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course. Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course. For further information, please see:

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising/academic-consideration-requests-and-student-absence-portal>

Absences from Final Examinations

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/exams/index.html.

Please note, Friday Make-Up Exams may only be written with the instructor's consent.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

2. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King’s University College:

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King’s University College: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/personal-counselling>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html>

Academic Support Services at King’s University College:

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising>

GBSV Support:

King’s is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/campus-safety-and-reporting/gender-and-sexual-violence>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing Care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by [email](#) or by calling 519-661-3568.

See also https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the

health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/campus-safety-and-reporting/student-code-of-conduct>

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

4. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at [here](#).

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check

with you instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar- checking tools) are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality Reports - TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

5. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member.

Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

6. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

7. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.