

## [CFP: Pandemics, Public Health, and Statecraft in Twentieth-Century U.S. History](#)

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Call for Papers

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Subject Fields:

American History / Studies, Health and Health Care, History of Science, Medicine, and Technology, Political History / Studies, Public Health

The literature on modern American pandemics is vast and continues to unfold in new directions, as scholars of medicine pay closer attention to the cultural politics of public health and the complex links between capitalism, racism, and infectious diseases. Yet, coverage of epidemics among historians of U.S. statecraft remains far from even. The historiography of the twentieth-century American state says comparatively little about even world-historic outbreaks like the 1918 Influenza pandemic, probably because of an ingrained assumption that epidemics are peripheral, episodic events that do not influence state formation. This conference aims to repair this neglect by setting forth why the history of infectious disease deserves to figure more prominently in accounts of the twentieth-century state.

The COVID-19 crisis has prompted an avalanche of journal articles, books, and op-eds on the history of infectious diseases. We envision a conference that will leverage this renewed interest in pandemics in the service of new insights into the theory and history of state power. How might the history of the American state - its structure, modes of operation, and periodization - look different when pandemics and public health move to the centre of our analytical framework? How does the history of state power, in turn, deepen our understanding of past epidemics? The conference organizers particularly welcome interdisciplinary answers to these questions, drawing together insights from the work of historians, political scientists, sociologists, and legal scholars. Ultimately, we hope to show that while the scale, impact, and nature of each pandemic may differ, they collectively reveal enduring features of American statecraft.

Topics might include (but are not limited to):

- How pandemics have been agents of state development in modern U.S. history.

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- Carcerality, penal power, and the history of pandemics.
- Public health and the theory of state power.
- The relationship between pandemics and political debates over universal healthcare.
- Transnational and global responses to pandemic diseases.
- Pandemics, public-private partnerships, and the 'Associational State'.
- Sexuality, the state, and HIV/AIDS.
- Pandemics, federalism, and the 'Compound Republic'.

Individual paper proposals and three-person panel proposals are equally welcomed. If submitting an individual paper, please send a brief CV (no more than two pages) and a 150-250-word abstract of the proposed paper. Panel proposals should contain a 200-300-word abstract for the panel and a brief CV (no more than two pages) for each participant and the chair. Please email submissions and enquiries to Stephen Colbrook - [stephen.colbrook.19@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:stephen.colbrook.19@ucl.ac.uk) - by March 31, 2022. We hope to host the conference in-person at University College London between 3 and 4 July 2022, but we will pivot to a virtual event if the COVID-19 situation deteriorates.

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