This class explores the unfolding disaster of the COVID-19 pandemic in historical perspective. We’ll compare the COVID-19 pandemic to past disease outbreaks—such as tuberculosis, the 1918 flu, polio and AIDS—investigating how people have understood and responded to these outbreaks. More broadly, we’ll examine the history of American responses to acute crises, like the Great Depression and Hurricane Katrina. We will also examine how the development of the U.S. and the world have shaped our prospects for dealing with COVID-19, by looking at the history of globalization, health care policy, and the media. Finally, we’ll explore how diseases—such as the Black Plague and smallpox—have fundamentally shaped human history, in order to think about how COVID-19 might shape our future. While looking to the past and the future, we will also work on a public history project that will document the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic—an event that is bound to be one of the key historical events of the 21st century.