

Pandemics in Historical Perspective

Overview of this special issue of *The Middle Ground Journal*

by Jeanne E. Grant, Chief Editor

This is a special summer issue of the journal. Given COVID-19's prevalence and disruption to lives everywhere, the journal's editors decided dedicating time and space to exploring pandemics and history as well as responses to pandemics and history would be a useful way to give contemplation to a virus's global impact. A month or two ago, people began adjusting physically, mentally, and emotionally to "lock-down" or "stay-at-home" directives. A month or two ago, educators began scrambling to convert classes from face-to-face to "online" or "distance learning" formats and a remarkable number of resources sprung up, being shared via social media and email inboxes. And so, the editors solicited concise contributions from colleagues, and colleagues of colleagues, who could write about some aspect of a pandemic in historical perspective. The contributions illustrate how pandemics and responses to pandemics can be understood in different, specific contexts.

Sarah Pesola, an undergraduate at Metropolitan State University and the journal's chief intern, starts the special issue with a list of open-access resources and her recommendations about them. Every Friday, or nearly every Friday, another article will be published. Dr. Maura Chhun's article will provide insight into the 1918 influenza pandemic's impact and interaction with another crisis in British-controlled India. Dr. Sumiko Otsubo's article will provide more insight into the 1918 influenza pandemic but in Japan and its use of hospital ships and patient ships. Dr. Roberto Padilla will discuss cholera during the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), specifically by examining through a cultural lens how the Japanese army medical bureau responded to the disease. Kevin Mercer's article will take the special issue into a pedagogical

direction by discussing an assignment idea involving historical artefacts and the current pandemic.

The articles, as they are published, will be open to moderated comments. We invite readers to comment or to ask questions of the authors. Check back each week to see the next article and to see how the conversation has evolved.