**14thc. Plague Narratives (Assignment 1)**

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| Write a friend or a family member—a letter, an email, a cluster of text messages, even a series of tweets—in which you discuss a few of the narratives about the 14th c. Plague that you’ve read.  The point is to write something informal with a specific person in mind. Questions to guide your writing:   * What do these texts have in common? * How do they differ? * How do these accounts differ from the eye-witness accounts that you have been reading about Covid-19? |

**Contemporary Covid-19 Narratives (Assignment 2)**

*You have two options.*

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| **1)** write a narrative (a brief memoir) of your own experiences with Covid-19 since March 2020. A more extensive version of this assignment would be to create a family scrapbook and invite members of your family, a group of friends, or coworkers to contribute their stories to an anthology that you organize.  The advantages of writing your own narrative (or collecting narratives in your immediate circle) is that nothing teaches better than *doing*: by taking on a brief memoir, you will learn how to write about personal experiences in a very specific historical context. Keep in mind that *you yourself are a bona fide witness to a world-changing pandemic*, as much as Petrarch and al-Wardi and other writers of the past were, and as much as the hundreds who are writing and making art in the present, and doing so in public spaces.  In fact, we have a place for you to share your narrative/s for others to read. (If you so choose: no pressure!) Imagining a large group of readers whom you don’t know may well influence how you tell your story. Consider contributing to [*A Journal of the Plague Year: An Archive of COVID19*](https://covid-19archive.org/s/archive/page/welcome)*.* This is a digital repository dedicated to collecting images, oral histories, videos and stories about the global experience of COVID-19 in order to create a lasting historical record. (Victoria Cain, in the Department of History at NU, is one of the project leads.) | **2)** Find four or five narratives on the Net that are particularly resonant or exemplary—that is, you think that they capture our moment well—and write an essay explaining why (include the texts or links to them). What continuities and discontinuities do you see between these contemporary narratives and the narratives about the 14th c. Plague that you read? Consider point of view, style, tone, detail, and content.  A more extensive version of this assignment involves creating your own mini-anthology of Covid-19 stories—around ten, say. You could aim for coverage; that is, try to represent as many voices across the world as possible (given the small number of entries for your anthology), or focus on a theme: stories from your hometown, stories from a place on the other side of the world from you, stories that reflect diverse experiences: people your age; doctors, nurses, and EMTs; grocery store employees; women, people who identify as LGBTQ, people of color; people facing severe economic hardship.  Compared to writing your own story, doing the work of finding a narrative has advantages: you will most likely read, or skim, several stories before you land on a handful that you would like to share (and take a look at the *Plague Year* archive for stories). This browsing will teach you something about the conventions of the genre: do you see a pattern to how people tell their stories? What is your response when someone breaks with those conventions? What do you appreciate about these stories? What makes them work well—or not? Write a brief preface to your anthology (collect the texts or provide links) in which you explore some of the issues these questions raise. |