

La Fundación BBVA y el Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC)
tienen el placer de invitarle a la conferencia:

Plague and Rats: Historical Transformations in Understanding a Zoonotic Disease

Professor Christos Lynteris

Professor of Medical Anthropology, University of St Andrews (Scotland-UK).

Summary:

Everyone knows that rats are hosts of bubonic plague. But how did this knowledge emerge and develop? Contrary to what is generally imagined, rats were not associated with plague in scientific works before the mid-nineteenth century. And yet the association did not emerge, as we may expect, from the bacteriological revolution, but predates it. In this talk I propose a new history of "how plague got rats" or how the disease came to be understood as a zoonosis spread by rats and their fleas; one that relies not on scientific "discovery" but on modes of relating plague and rats in complex and often incommensurable ways in the course of the third plague pandemic which, spreading to all inhabited continents by 1900, caused more than twelve million deaths. Whereas the established story is one of identification, this is one of relating; a story that explores the social, political and epistemic lives of the rat's relation to plague, as catastrophic symbol, epidemic villain and epidemiological connector.

Biography:

Christos Lynteris holds the chair in Medical Anthropology at the University of St Andrews, and is the Principal Investigator of the Wellcome Investigator Award grant The Global War Against the Rat and the Epistemic Emergence of Zoonosis (2019-2025). He was previously Principal Investigator of the ERC funded research project Visual Representations of the Third Plague Pandemic (2013-2018). His research focuses on the anthropological and historical examination of epidemics with a particular focus on zoonotic diseases, epidemiological epistemology, visual medical culture, and colonial medicine. Focusing on diseases that spread between animals and humans, his research has been foundational in the establishment of the anthropological study of zoonosis. He is the author five books the most recent being Visual Plague: The Emergence of Epidemic Photography (MIT Press, 2022), and, co-authored with Lukas Engelmann, Sulphuric Utopias: A History of Maritime Fumigation (MIT Press, 2020). You can read more about Christos's research and publications at: <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/social-anthropology/people/cl12>



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Miércoles, 18 de enero a las 15:00 CET
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