MICB 430: final reading

Dec 1 agenda

Assuming our final week (Nov 24) of paper presentations proceeds as normal, we will spend our final day of class together discussing the following articles, which focus on microbiology and immunology in current news and social issues.

Task

Read the following two articles and consider the reading questions below. We'll use these questions to launch our discussion on Dec 1.

1. Ed Yong. "How Public Health Took Part in Its Own Downfall." *The Atlantic*, 23 Oct. 2021, https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2021/10/how-public-health-took-part-its-own-downfall/620457/. Accessed 18 Nov. 2021.

2. Travis J. De Wolfe, Mohammed Rafi Arefin, Amber Benezra, María Rebolleda. "Chasing Ghosts: Race, Racism, and the Future of Microbiome Research." *mSystems*, 12 Oct. 2021, https://doi.org/10.1128/mSystems.00604-21.

Reading questions for *The Atlantic* article by Ed Yong

1. What does Yong consider the "downfall" of public health? What did public health "abandon"?

2. What was the unifying concept in the field of public health at the start of the 20th century? What has the field's focus shifted to in this century?

3. What was a major turning point that contributed to public health's shift?

4. What surprised you about this article?

5. What is your main take-home from reading this?

Reading questions for perspective in *mSystems* by De Wolfe et al.

1. What are De Wolfe et al.'s goals in writing this article?

2. Why do De Wolfe et al. consider descriptors such as "traditional" or "Western" ghost variables? Why do the authors consider associative factors more rigorous, and the consideration of structural drivers important?

3. What is an example of a "problematic use of race" in microbiome literature?
    a. What is scientifically problematic about this example?
    b. What is socially problematic about this example?

4. Are their concepts from this perspective that you can see applying in your current or future work, regardless of whether you are in microbiome research?