

Rationale for Plant Pathology 455/International Studies 455 Bioterrorism: An Overview

Bioterrorism has a long history from the Assyrian times through the Middle Ages to the present time. Since 9/11, however, the U.S. government has increasingly focused its attention and tremendous resources on the problem of national and global terrorism. Today, nearly 30 years after signing the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the threat of biological weapons is generally perceived as increasing (Tucker, 2004). Many countries are suspected of possessing or actively seeking a Biological Weapon (BW) capability, and only until the autumn 2001 anthrax-tainted letter attacks did the US government finally rivet its attention on bioterrorism. The extent and targets of the terrifying dangers of biological weapons in a new type of warfare are largely unknown among the U.S. population as well as our own undergraduate students.

Considering the importance of bioterrorism awareness to human existence, and the fact that we have no extensive coverage of this topic in other courses, it is clear that a new course covering the history, government infrastructures and vulnerabilities of soft targets would be a worthy addition to undergraduate offerings. Vulnerable soft targets will include our food and fiber system, food plants, food animals and livestock as well as human beings via public health. Undergraduate students will need a bioterrorism awareness course to be able to identify the main issues, state of national preparedness, and what we as a nation are doing about it. Upon satisfactory completion of the course students will be able to:

- *Outline the broad history of bioterrorism and how it differs from other types of warfare.
- *Describe Homeland Security and other government program initiatives to combat bioterrorism.
- *Demonstrate a working knowledge of the vulnerability of soft targets in agriculture such as food crops, animals and livestock as well as human health via public health coverage.
- *Describe the current organized initiatives to combat bioterrorism.

Instructor: C.R. Curtis (course facilitator), with lecture sections by M. J. Boehm, Jeffrey Lewis, Mo Saif, Jeff Lejeune, Randi Love and guest lecturers in selected areas of expertise.

Text: Miller, J., S. Engelberg, and W. Broad. 2002. *Germs*. Simon & Schuster, OR Alex P. Schmid and Albert J. Jongman. 2005. *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, and Literature*. Transaction Publishers.