Description: Addiction is national news. From the opioid epidemic to overusing smartphones, addiction is at the center of both public and private life today. Each of us has been touched by it—personally, among family and friends, or as part of a wide-ranging conversation made up of scientific studies, intimate confessions, policy debates, and popular media.

This course explores these dimensions of addiction in both the past and the present, using history to illuminate current research and the current crisis. Each week, we explore a different substance or behavior from historical and present perspectives, working our way from early anxieties about alcohol abuse or problematic gambling in the nineteenth century to the latest research by social psychologists, neuroscientists, and public health experts. Part of the class is collaborative (students work in teams to write op-eds about crucial issues), while part of it focuses on individual research papers that will address an addiction of the student’s choosing.