

# USC Mann

Alfred E. Mann School of Pharmacy  
and Pharmaceutical Sciences

## FA-2025: RXRS-201: The History and Geography of Drugs

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**Office Hours:** Details available via link in Brightspace.

**Course Weight:** 4 units

**Days/Time:** Mon; Wed; 3:30pm-4:50pm

**Location:** MRF-340

**Catalogue description:** Global perspectives; discovery and use of drugs (legal/illegal); poisons. How they helped shape, modify, or change history as described in classical literature through present day.

### Introduction

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From the earliest days of human civilization, our curiosity about the natural world has driven us to discover and explore plants and substances that affect our bodies and minds. This journey has yielded compounds with medicinal benefits, mood-altering properties, and even toxic effects. These discoveries stem from the intricate relationships between plants, animals, and humans, often learned through observing which plants animals consumed when they were ill.

In this course, we will delve into the geography of drugs, examining their distribution, production, and utility across different cultures and times. From ancient remedies to religious rituals and communal stress relief, drugs have played diverse roles throughout history. Early drugs primarily derived from plants, occasionally incorporating animal materials and minerals. Their discovery relied on trial and error or careful observation of human and animal reactions

## **RXRS 201: The History and Geography of Drugs**

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to ingestion.

Early civilizations blurred the lines between food and drugs; utilizing psychoactive substances to expand their influence through appeasement, agricultural incentives, and competitive celebrations. The economic and political implications of drugs created extensive trade networks and illicit smuggling routes, highlighting their profound impact on societies.

Additionally, poisons have been wielded as tools of politics and economics, catering to various human desires. The concept of addiction evolved across cultures and eras, shaped by beliefs, social norms, and political pressures. This course aims to illuminate our complex relationship with both legal and illegal drugs; showcasing their pivotal role in shaping human history and geography. Discover how these substances continue to influence our consciousness, health, and societal debates into the future.

### **Objectives**

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This course is designed to meet the requirements of the GE H (Global Perspectives: Traditions and Historical Foundations) for undergraduates. Students will explore how humans used drugs and poisons to change the economic, political, cultural and/or social settings of their time. Moreover, this course will examine the historical and cultural foundations of drug use from a contemporary and historical perspective by studying literary, political, economic, philosophical, legal, ethical, and religious traditions as they relate to drug use. As an example, the “opium wars” of the nineteenth century between Britain and China and the implications of these historical events are one example of how we will explore links between illegal use of prescription opioids and the increase in accidental opioid overdose deaths. Students will also learn about the historical use and misuse of poisons for good and evil. The Sumerians as far back as 4500 B.C. documented the toxic effects of certain plants and developed poisons such as curare for hunting. In Greek literature, the death of Socrates in 399 B.C. represented one of the earliest recorded incidents where a poison was used for political reasons. In recent time, polonium-210 was used to kill the Russian spy, Alexander Litvinenko. A recent public inquiry concluded that President Putin probably approved the assassination. Differences surrounding the ethics of the development and deployment of poisons and biological agents (for example, as a weapon) will be presented that are designed to lead to lively discussions during class.

Chapters from the core textbook will be supplemented with a variety of source materials including online resources, media outlets and cinema.

Objectives for this course include:

- Compare the historical nature of the discovery of drugs and poisons throughout the world

## **RXRS 201: The History and Geography of Drugs**

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- Associate the historical and recent biological, psychological, social-psychological, and sociological perspectives related to drug use and abuse
- Evaluate the consequences of improper drug use and abuse and its relationship to health, economy, wellbeing, and society as presented in the literature
- Describe the use of chemical and biological warfare in antiquity and modern day
- Compare and contrast the concurrent practice of Eastern and Western medicines
- Summarize course material and explore connections across historical eras in the development of drugs
- Identify and detail the historical conceptions of drug addiction and drug abuse

### Communication Method

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If you have questions or concerns, please contact Dr. Church via email ([tdchurch@usc.edu](mailto:tdchurch@usc.edu)). Your email will be attended to as quickly as possible within a 48-hour window. For more urgent or pressing issues, please contact Dr. Church via telephone at 323.442.0241. Voicemail messages will be addressed within a 24-hour window during the work week.

### Evaluation and Grading:

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Evaluation will be based on two exams, a final examination, three in class projects, and two written reaction / reflection essays.

<i>Description</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>Weight</i>
Exam 01	65 pts	(15%)
Exam 02	65 pts	(15%)
In-class projects (@ 20 pts each)	60 pts	(10%)
Final exam	130 pts	(30%)
Written Essays (@ 25 pts each)	50 pts	(30%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>370 pts</b>	<b>(100%)</b>

**30% Exam 01 and Exam 02:** Exam 01 (15%) will cover the first five weeks of course material. Exam 02 will cover weeks 6-10. Both exams will consist of a series of questions involving multiple choice, T/F and fill-in the blank questions accounting for ~60% of the exam. There will

## **RXRS 201: The History and Geography of Drugs**

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also be short answers and longer questions requiring critical thought and its articulation in written responses ~40% of the exam. These exams will help students generate a critical assessment of key topics in this course, to develop a suitable argument, and to convey their ideas and interpretations through the written word.

**10% In-Class Projects:** (each worth 3.33% of your class grade) There will be 3 in class projects over the course of the semester. These projects are designed to reinforce course material by having students work in small groups to accomplish specific objectives and apply knowledge from lecture and readings. Specific details will be provided on the day of the in-class project.

**30% Final:** The Final Exam will be in the form of take-at-home exam. The final exam will be composed of short written answers to demonstrate the students' knowledge regarding topics covered in the course. This latter part of the final exam will allow students to express their ideas based on facts derived from the course.

**30% Two Short Essays:** (each worth 15% of your class grade) The short essays will be written outside of class and submitted via Brightspace under the Assignments Tab. These short essays are designed to help students generate a critical assessment of key topics in this course, to develop a suitable argument, and to convey their ideas and interpretations through the written word. The short essays will be response / reaction papers to the course material and will require two things: summarize the material covered in class and provide a reaction to the material. Students are free to choose which topics they wish to write about from the predefined topic blocks and must submit 2 response / reaction papers throughout the semester.

**Please note, below** is the grading scale breakdown.

<b>Percent</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>
93-100%	A
90-92%	A-
88-89%	B+
83-87%	B
80-82%	B-

## **RXRS 201: The History and Geography of Drugs**

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78-79%	C+
73-77%	C
70-72%	C-
60-69%	D
59% and below	F

***Make-up exams.*** Makeup exams will be allowed only with pre-approval of the instructor or with an acceptable, documented reason. Acceptable reasons for makeup exams include severe illness, family emergencies or other unavoidable events including dangerous weather conditions and car accidents. Exam format for makeup exams may be different than the original exam and will likely utilize a short answer format.

Students will be asked to complete an anonymous critical evaluation of the course at its completion.

### **Use of Artificial Intelligence**

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There is an expectation about AI (e.g., ChatGPT and image generation tools) use for this class. Learning to use AI is an emerging skill, and discussions about appropriate use are welcome. It is recommended that you take the opportunity to meet with your professor to get guidance with the use of these tools during office hours or after class. Keep in mind the following:

- AI tools are allowed to help you brainstorm topics or revise work you have already written.
- If you supply minimum-effort prompts, you will get low-quality results. You will need to refine your prompts to get good outcomes. This will take work.
- Proceed with caution when using AI tools and do not assume the information provided is accurate or trustworthy. If it gives you a number or fact, assume it is incorrect unless you either know the correct answer or can verify its accuracy with another source. You will be responsible for any errors or omissions provided by the tool. It works best for topics you understand.
- AI is a tool, but one that you need to acknowledge using. Please include a paragraph at the end of any assignment that uses AI explaining how (and why) you used AI and indicate / specify the prompts you used to obtain the results. A screenshot of the prompt and generated response should be included as an appendix. Failure to do so is a

## **RXRS 201: The History and Geography of Drugs**

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violation of academic integrity policies.

- Be thoughtful about when AI is useful. Consider its appropriateness for each assignment or circumstance. The use of AI tools requires attribution. You are expected to clearly attribute any material generated by the tool used. Failure to do so is plagiarism.

### **Course Content Distribution & Synchronous Session Recordings**

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USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment. Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation.

Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. (Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook, page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. (Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook, page 13).

### **Course Readings**

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Required Readings (selected, short, easy to read chapters)

**Terry David Church.** (2023). *Hidden History: Drugs, Geography, and Human Addiction*. Kendall Hunt Publishing Co.

Supplemental Readings (selected essays, videos, and other media)

Other topical materials including but not limited to the syllabus, supplemental reading assignments and additional handouts will be posted on <http://brightspace.usc.edu/>.

**RXRS 201: The History and Geography of Drugs**

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**Course Outline**

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This course will be in the format of a directed seminar/lecture under the guidance of the instructor for the specific session. During each biweekly session the instructor will engage the students with questions and draw comments or interpretations primarily based on the assigned reading. Students are expected to ask questions and participate in an interactive fashion.

Week	Date	Topic	Assigned Readings	Deliverable
1	25 Aug 27 Aug	Course Overview Introduction	Hidden History, Chapter 1	
2	1 Sep 3 Sep	No Class Paleolithic and Neolithic	Hidden History, Chapter 2	
3	8 Sep 10 Sep	Ancient Egypt In Class Project	Hidden History, Chapter 3	In Class Project
4	15 Sep 17 Sep	Ancient Greece Ancient Rome	Hidden History, Chapter 4 & 5	Week 3 Essays Due
5	22 Sep 24 Sep	Silk Road and Maritime Empires Exam 01	Hidden History, Chapter 6 & 7	Week 4 Essays Due Exam 01
6	29 Sep 1 Oct	Americas – The New World Exploited Opium Wars	Hidden History, Chapter 8 & 9	Week 5 Essays Due
7	6 Oct 8 Oct	Renaissance Poisons (Dr. Culty) 19 <sup>th</sup> Century Quackery	Hidden History, Chapter 10 & 11	Week 6 Essays Due
8	13 Oct 15 Oct	In-Class Project 19 <sup>th</sup> Century Innovation		Week 7 Essays Due In Class Project

**RXRS 201: The History and Geography of Drugs**

Week	Date	Topic	Assigned Readings	Deliverable
9	20 Oct 22 Oct	Ethical Issues Legal Concerns	Hidden History, Chapter 13	
10	27 Oct 29 Oct	20 <sup>th</sup> Century Regulations Exam 02	Hidden History, Chapter 13	Week 9 Essays Due  Exam 02
11	3 Nov 5 Nov	1970s Disco 1980s Drug Panic	Hidden History, Chapter 12	Week 10 Essays Due
12	10 Nov 12 Nov	Raves & EDM Bioterrorism	Hidden History, Chapter 12, 14	Week 11 Essays Due
13	17 Nov 19 Nov	Pain & Opioids (Dr. Jakowec)  Cannabis	Hidden History, Chapter 14	Week 12 Essays Due
14	24 Nov 26 Nov	Alcohol (Dr. Davies) Thanksgiving Recess		Week 13 Essays Due
15	1 Dec 3 Dec	Student Reports / In Class Project  History of Addiction	Hidden History, Chapter 15	Written Report Due 2pm on 1 Dec  In Class Presentations
<b>Final Exam</b> <i>Final Exam 15 Dec 2025 at 2pm</i>				

## Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, comprises the integrity of the person who



## **RXRS 201: The History and Geography of Drugs**

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commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

### **Students and Disability Accommodations:**

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USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at [osas.usc.edu](http://osas.usc.edu). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu).

## **RXRS 201: The History and Geography of Drugs**

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### Support Systems:

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[Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

[Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment](#) - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

**RXRS 201: The History and Geography of Drugs**

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Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

[USC Emergency](#) - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[USC Department of Public Safety](#) - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or [otfp@med.usc.edu](mailto:otfp@med.usc.edu)

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

## Short Essays (2 in total)

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Grading will be based upon the quality of your analysis and how clearly you present the information within your essay. You are expected to incorporate key terms and concepts you have learned in this course. Points will be deducted for grammar, punctuation, spelling, and technical errors.

These are reaction / response essays to the material covered in lecture; your essays must consist of:

- A. **An Introduction paragraph**, which contains a minimum of four sentences that introduces your question or topic; and establishes a foundation for the remainder of your essay. This section functions like a roadmap to tell us what you will be discussing in the body of your essay.
- B. **Body paragraph(s)**, which present the major content of your answer. Include at least one body paragraph with a minimum of four sentences within the paragraph.
- C. **A conclusion paragraph**, which contains a minimum of four sentences and summarizes the major points contained in the body paragraphs.

In writing a good reaction paper, it is not enough to simply praise the strengths or criticize the weakness of the lecture or reading material. More than that, students must be able to justify their “reaction”. It is important to provide the reasons why, for example, the information related to prohibition was compelling, or why the argument of a particular historical figure resonates a strong message with you.

## How to Write an Academic Reflection Paper

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Step One: To beginning working on a reflection paper, you need to read the article thoroughly while taking notes. No matter what type of article you are reflecting on, for example, an activity, book/newspaper, or academic essay, you will want to highlight key ideas and concepts.

Step Two: Start writing your reflection paper by summarizing the main concept(s) from your notes. Your essay should include all the information needed for your readers to understand the main points of the article on which you are reflecting. It can be helpful to add charts, diagrams, and lists to deliver your ideas to the reader in a better fashion.

## **RXRS 201: The History and Geography of Drugs**

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Step Three: Reflection papers require that you write your opinion on the report week topic, supporting it with your observations from the lecture, textbook, or outside materials combined with your individual experiences. As opposed to an academic essay where you present your reader with the views of other academics and writers, in a reflective essay, you get an opportunity to share your point of view—however, avoid using “I” statements. It is **YOUR** opinion, and it is incumbent upon you to express your thoughts in a manner that is understandable and clear for your reader. To help get started, answer some of the basic questions below:

- How did the material (article, chapter, lecture, etc) affect you?
- How does the material catch your attention (or does it all)?
- Has the material changed your mind about something? If so, explain how.
- Has the material left you with any questions? If so, what are those questions?
- Were there any unaddressed critical issues that did not appear in the material?
- Does the material relate to anything from your past experiences?
- Does the material agree or disagree with any of your past reading experiences?

**NOTE:** You do not need to answer each of the questions above in your essay, these questions are intended to assist you in getting started with the writing process.

### Format Requirements

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Carefully follow the format requirements below. Any variation will result in lost points or no credit.

- Margins = 1 inch
- Font type = Arial, Times New Roman, or any Sans type font
- Font size = 11 point
- 2 sources (in-text and works cited / bibliography)
- **3 pages (double spaced) – (references not included)**
- Use week number to indicate your topic (e.g. Week 3 – Rome)
- Filename should have your last name and first name (e.g. **Trojan Tommy ShortEssay1**)
- Acceptable file formats:
  - Word (DOC or DOCX)
  - **No other formats will be accepted!**

### Direct Quotations

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These essays are expected to be written in your own words therefore no more than 5% of the essay should be quoted or copied word – for – word. If you submit an essay with more than 5%

## **RXRS 201: The History and Geography of Drugs**

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quoted material, you will be penalized one point for each percentage above 5%. If you submit an essay with more than 15% quoted material, you will receive an automatic zero.

### Citations

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***THIS IS NOT AN APA paper***; however, you are expected to demonstrate understanding of the rules of plagiarism and expected to use citations appropriately, which include in-text and full citations with a Reference page.

- **REFERENCES** – use *in-text citations* throughout your essay and provide a complete *Works Cited / Bibliography* at the end.
- You are expected to cite at least **2** sources (class books and articles, articles from journals, books, etc) per essay. You will be penalized **-5** points for each missing resource (**-10** points for missing both resource).

**Do NOT** use Wikipedia or any other similar form of wiki to write these essays.

**RXRS 201: The History and Geography of Drugs**

**General Topics and Weekly Submission Dates**

(Essays are due the week after their presentation date, see table below for submission dates)

Essay Topic	Essay Topic	Essay Topic Selection	Due Date <i>(by 2pm)</i>
Week Number			
3	Ancient Egypt	Essay 01  Choose a topic week	15 Sep
4	Greece & Rome		22 Sep
5	Silk Road & Maritime Empires		29 Sep
6	Opium Wars & Americas		6 Oct
7	Renaissance Poisons & 19 <sup>th</sup> Century		13 Oct
9	Ethical and Legal Issues	Essay 02  Choose a topic week	27 Oct
10	20 <sup>th</sup> Century Regulations		3 Nov
11	1970s Disco and 1980s Drug Panic		11 Nov
12	Raves & EDM		18 Nov
13	Pain & Opioids and Bioterrorism		24 Nov

Students will sign up to submit topics through Brightspace by going to the Groups tab and selecting the Reaction Paper Sign-up link.

Students are required to submit 2 reaction / response papers based on the weekly class topics summarized in the table above. Once the due date has passed, no papers will be accepted for that topical week. Which means an essay on prehistoric drugs (Week 2) cannot be submitted when we are in Week 9.

**RXRS 201: The History and Geography of Drugs**

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**Penalties for Late Submissions**

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Essays and in class projects have specific due dates. Late materials are subject to the following penalties.

<b>Starting Grade</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>On Time</b>	No penalties
<b>1 Day – 3 Days Past Deadline</b>	20% reduction of score
<b>4 Days – 6 Days Past Deadline</b>	40% reduction of score
<b>7 Days – 10 Days Past Deadline</b>	60 % reduction of score
<b>&gt;11 Days Past Deadline</b>	Will not be accepted for grading