OLLI at SBU Lecture Series presents:
Dr. Jon Epstein

Wednesday, May 5, 2021
Virtual via Zoom*
3:30- 4:30 pm

Topic to be discussed:
HOW DO PANDEMICS LIKE COVID-19 HAPPEN
AND HOW DO WE PREVENT THE NEXT ONE?

The majority of epidemics are caused by zoonotic pathogens - viruses or bacteria originally carried by animals, and make their way into humans via a process called 'spillover.' Many zoonotic diseases, including Ebola, SARS, COVID-19, influenza and HIV, are caused by zoonotic viruses carried by wildlife. The major drivers of zoonotic disease emergence are human activities that influence the way that we, or our domestic animals, come into contact with wildlife. Among the most important human activities that cause epidemics are land-use change (e.g. deforestation), livestock production without adequate biosecurity (systems that protect livestock from infectious diseases); and wildlife trade. We’re living in an unprecedented moment in history when outbreaks of new zoonotic diseases are increasing in frequency due to a rapidly growing human population putting increasing pressure on natural systems. While the science of how and where zoonotic viruses are most likely to emerge has advanced significantly over the past two decades, our challenge now, as a global community, is to shift our efforts from simply being better able to respond to epidemics once they begin, to preventing them from ever happening.

In this presentation, we’ll discuss the ecology of emerging zoonotic diseases, examples of how zoonotic viruses such as SARS, Ebola, Nipah virus and others have emerged; what we know about the origins of COVID-19; and what we need to do now, to prevent the next pandemic.

This speaker was referred by OLLI at SBU Workshop Leader:
Bruce Stasiuk
Dr. Jonathan Epstein is the Vice President for Science and Outreach at EcoHealth Alliance, a science-based NGO in New York City. A veterinarian and epidemiologist, his research focuses on the ecology of zoonotic viruses that impact animals and people, particularly those associated with bats, such as Nipah virus, Ebola, and emerging coronaviruses (SARS, MERS, and SARS-CoV-2). In 2004, Dr. Epstein was part of the team that discovered that bats were the reservoir for SARS CoV in China and in 2012 he and colleagues first identified MERS CoV in bats and camels in Saudi Arabia. Dr. Epstein has served as a technical consultant for the World Health Organization, the OIE, FAO, the National Academy of Medicine’s Forum on Microbial Threats and the Smithsonian Institute’s National Museum of Natural History, where he co-created the exhibit Outbreak: Epidemics in a Connected World. He holds adjunct appointments at Tufts University, Columbia University, and Mt. Sinai School of Medicine. Dr. Epstein has published his research in leading journals including Science, Nature, PNAS, and Cell, and his work has been extensively featured in the news and other media, including the NY Times, CCN, the PBS documentary Spillover: Zika, Ebola & Beyond, NPR and 60 minutes. For more information, visit ecohealthalliance.org

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