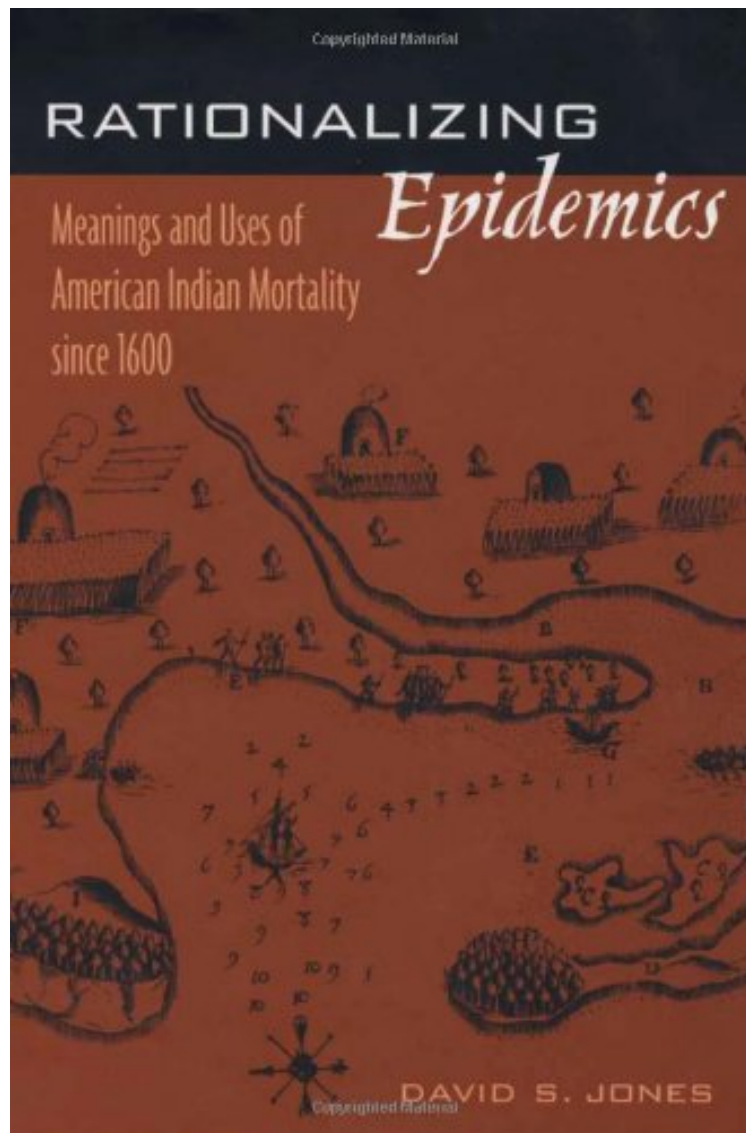


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Rationalizing Epidemics: Meanings and Uses of American Indian Mortality since 1600

David S. Jones

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David S. Jones : Rationalizing Epidemics: Meanings and Uses of American Indian Mortality since 1600 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Rationalizing Epidemics: Meanings and Uses of American Indian Mortality since 1600:

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Tragic encounters By G. Hodgson In 1604, sixteen years before the Pilgrim Fathers staggered ashore in Plymouth Bay in a snowstorm, Samuel de Champlain visited the site that was to be

Plymouth and left us a neat map on which the main features --- the Town Brook, Plymouth's Long Beach and Clark's Island among them --- can be clearly seen. You can also see all the signs of a thriving, healthy native American community, with huts, smoking fires, gardens and cleared woodland, not to mention dozens of drawings of Indians. By the time the Pilgrims arrived, Patuxet, the Wampanoag village on the site where they built Plymouth, was dead. Every single native American had died in an epidemic of what was probably smallpox, except Squanto, who was saved only because an English slaver kidnapped him and sold him in the Malaga slave market in Spain, from which miraculously he managed to return. David Jones shows how wherever Europeans who had acquired immunity to viral diseases in their childhood --- Spaniards in Hispaniola in the 1520s, Englishmen, Frenchmen and Dutch in the 1620s, and Brazilians in the and Americans in Alaska as late as the twentieth century --- fearful mortality struck the indigenous population. Something between 90 and 95 percent of the native American inhabitants of eastern Massachusetts, for example, succumbed to European infections in the early seventeenth century. Europeans had been on the coasts of New England and the maritime provinces of Canada as fishermen and traders for more than a century when the Pilgrims arrived, and European diseases had taken hold, to become even more dangerous when settlers brought children with them. David S. Jones has analyzed the story of this series of medical catastrophes coolly, with empathy, compassion and great erudition. This is an impressive example of medical history.

Ever since their arrival in North America, European colonists and their descendants have struggled to explain the epidemics that decimated native populations. Century after century, they tried to understand the causes of epidemics, the vulnerability of American Indians, and the persistence of health disparities. They confronted their own responsibility for the epidemics, accepted the obligation to intervene, and imposed social and medical reforms to improve conditions. In *Rationalizing Epidemics*, David Jones examines crucial episodes in this history: Puritan responses to Indian depopulation in the seventeenth century; attempts to spread or prevent smallpox on the Western frontier in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; tuberculosis campaigns on the Sioux reservations from 1870 until 1910; and programs to test new antibiotics and implement modern medicine on the Navajo reservation in the 1950s. These encounters were always complex. Colonists, traders, physicians, and bureaucrats often saw epidemics as markers of social injustice and worked to improve Indians' health. At the same time, they exploited epidemics to obtain land, fur, and research subjects, and used health disparities as grounds for "civilizing" American Indians. Revealing the economic and political patterns that link these cases, Jones provides insight into the dilemmas of modern health policy in which desire and action stand alongside indifference and inaction.

Rationalizing Epidemics is a superb work of scholarship. By contextualizing his deep and thorough research in original documents within the larger literature on the history and nature of epidemics, Jones has produced a profound account of how epidemics are social and cultural phenomena, not just biological. This book will be of great interest to scholars of American Indian history and the history of medicine, and with its engaging and accessible writing style, it promises to be a book that students and the general public will appreciate as well. (Nancy Shoemaker, University of Connecticut) An imaginative and insightful approach to health and disease among American Indians, *Rationalizing Epidemics* represents a remarkable accomplishment. The breadth of reading and depth of research, the subtlety used in explaining each case, and the original approach to the material are altogether impressive. Jones's book undoubtedly will be a major contribution to American history. (Daniel H. Usner, Jr., Vanderbilt University) The book is thoroughly researched with an impressive list of references. The style is straightforward and clear. The author's efforts are worthy and the book is enthusiastically recommended... Readers will find this book enjoyable and informative. (Everett R. Rhoades *Journal of the American Medical Association* 2005-02-16) This is an important contribution that deserves careful reading... Finely written, this well-constructed argument will reward both advanced students and the general public interested in the theme. (Noble David Cook *American Historical*) The 50-plus pages of endnotes in Jones's *Rationalizing Epidemics* amply illustrate the exhaustive data collection and primary-source review involved in the construction of this sweeping and persuasive work. His thought-provoking use of a wealth of archival evidence to support an explanatory model with regard to the meanings of catastrophic epidemics among Native Americans sets a new standard for historical research and interpretation. (Joan Weibel-Orlando *Current Anthropology*) About the Author David Jones is a resident in psychiatry at McLean Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital.