

INVITATION

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The University of Johannesburg's Centre for Philosophy of Epidemiology, Medicine and Public Health (CPEMPH) invites you to a Hybrid Public Lecture with Professor Alex Broadbent, Durham University

The Biggest Science You Never Heard Of

It's safe to say that when epidemiology hit the news in 2020, a lot of people quietly consulted a dictionary (except perhaps for scientifically illiterate classicists, who feared a skin disease). Epidemiologists used to routinely joke about how nobody had heard of their science (and sometimes thought it had to do with the epidermis, or skin). No longer. But ignorance has been replaced by misunderstanding, since most epidemiology has nothing to do with the very specific sort of infectious disease modelling that became prominent in the Covid-19 pandemic. This is not "the public's fault", but the result of active messaging on the part of institutions and people seeking power and influence. Nor is it really "epidemiology's fault", since epidemiology itself is a young science whose core expertise is a matter of ongoing internal debate—again, something that is not more widely understood. This lecture explains how one specialism within one subdiscipline of epidemiology came to stand for the whole of epidemiological expertise, to the detriment of both the accuracy of epidemic forecasting and socioeconomically disadvantaged people globally. It also makes some suggestions about where the true epidemiological expertise lies, what the true skillset of the epidemiologist is, and how epidemiology can define itself as a science. A curious consequence of these suggestions is that some of the most prominent epidemiologists of the pandemic may not be epidemiologists at all.

Alex Broadbent is Professor of Philosophy of Science at Durham University and Visiting Professor at the University of Johannesburg. He is Co-Director of the Durham-Johannesburg Centre for Philosophy of Epidemiology, Medicine, and Public Health, and co-leads the Measurement Lab of the Wellcome Discovery Research Platform for Medical Humanities.

DATE: Thursday, 17 August 2023 | **TIME:** 15h30 (CAT)

VIRTUALLY: Join here: <https://zoom.us/j/97570046209>

IN-PERSON ATTENDANCE: Register here: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_hm9FsOkeQUGjS9XiNZO1hA#/registration

VENUE: The University of Johannesburg, Auckland Park Kingsway Campus Library, Nadine Gordimer Auditorium (Level 5).

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