No disease in the 18th century affected colonial America more than smallpox. Many different solutions to this problem were implemented from quarantining the sick to inoculating them. The practice of inoculations was not invented in the colonies. Cotton Mather’s a high ranking church clergy men studied up on inoculations and recommended the practice to Dr. Zabdiel Boylston who on June 26th 1721 inoculated his six year old son. The people of Boston were terrorized and filled with fear when this smallpox epidemic ripped through their town. They were desperate for a cure. The practice of inoculations, however, was met with mixed emotions and a heated pamphlet war and even some acts of violence ensued. Religion during this time was used to argue for and against vaccines. During this time, however, smallpox continued to rage on against all the towns’ best efforts. Votes to restrict distribution of inoculations were taken and passed. Attempts to pass a law that banned inoculations were seen but did not get approved. Arguments about the safety of inoculations were met with counter arguments of its dangers. The careless administration of the inoculation was also criticized and discussed. Popular public disputes on this matter were brought on by William Douglass and Cotton Mather. Mather’s suggested inoculations and to seek guidance from religious advisers who could guide them to the proper medical cures. Douglass defended the integrity of the medical profession against those men he viewed as not being qualified to make medical decisions. While this argument against the clergy’s idea of inoculation raged on many others took their stand against the clergy too. In the end Mather’s
inability to fully understand the inoculations he was administering caused negative feedback to form and damaged the success they had obtained.

This document is extremely important for many reasons. First, it gives some great historical insight into the very first attempts of inoculations/vaccinations in the United States. It also paints a picture of an early anti-vaccination movement that formed when this smallpox vaccine was developed. This article allows us to see that for as long as vaccines have been available in America there has been a public misunderstanding of them, a fear of them, and a movement against them being administered to the public. These early forms of anti-vaccination discourse are very interesting to read about and relate to present day anti-vaccination discourses. Also the way in which the anti-vaccination message was spread is very interesting to take note of. From this article we see that Pamphlets were used as far back as 1720s to distribute anti-vaccination messages. Pamphlets are still being used today as well. It is very important to understand how the early anti-vaccination discourse began so we can understand our current anti-vaccination discourses and how they developed and came to be.


This is the official website of the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (VICP). This website has everything you need to know about the VICP. It talks about how it was created, the departments of government involved in running it, the vaccines covered under its compensation program, the steps and requirements necessary to fill out a claim, the problems it has been plagued with thus far since its creation in 1986 and the 5-year strategic plan it implemented in 2005 to fix these problems. This is a very in-
depth website and provides a wide variety of information and data on pretty much anything that pertains to the VICP. Among all the data provided, I feel the VICP’s mission statement is very important to focus on. The mission statement of the VICP is, “To process National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (VICP) claims expeditiously and fairly utilizing current vaccine safety research to determine injuries thought to be caused by vaccines, and raise awareness about the existence of the VICP.” This statement allows you to see what the VICP is trying to do and then lets you explore all the resources they provide to see how they are going to accomplishing their mission.

This website is created and maintained by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). It is extremely well organized, the information and data provided is trustworthy, and the website is easy to navigate through. The VICP is a very important program that Congress passed in 1986. Its three main goals for being created were to protect manufacturers, keep vaccine supply high, and compensate those injured by vaccinations. This website shows that in 2005 a review of these goals was conducted and found that they were not all being met to the standards that were originally expected, especially the last one. To correct this, the HRSA developed a 5-year strategic plan that is to end this year. This website and the information it has on the history of the VICP and its 5-year strategic plan will be a valuable resource to use when the results of this 5-year strategic plan are compiled. That is just one example of the important and usefulness of this website. In fact this website is probably the most important website I used while conducting my research all semester. It has an infinite amount of knowledge pertaining to the VICP. It also gives a good view into the goals of the government or at least the stated goals of the government. I think it is also important to note that one of the main reasons the VICP was created in 1986 was
to provide compensation to those injured by vaccinations. The government, however, has failed to meet this goal although they post this goal all over the website and in both the mission statement as well as the vision statement. It is actions by the government such as these that I feel fuel the fire for anti-vaccination discourse against the government and corporations due to lack of trust and broken promises.


This article covers legislation recently adopted by the U.S. Congress in November 2005 in which President Bush outlined a national preparedness strategy for a pandemic influenza outbreak. It discusses how Congress provided manufactures of pandemic vaccines with near-total immunity from civil lawsuits while no providing individuals injured by vaccines any compensation through the Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (VICP). The article then goes into this problem of not providing alternate compensation and how this is in fact getting into a broader problem in the American approach to vaccine-injury compensation. The article describes the current provisions for vaccine injury compensations set up by the VICP. Then the article discusses the rationales for government compensation and gives many arguments in support of it. This article draws on the rationale for a vaccine injury compensation program from utilitarian ideas and nonconsequentialist ideas and also from rationales that mix the two ideologies together. This article mainly dives into the rationales for imposing certain mandatory duties on individuals during times of emergency as well as times of normalcy and then also the rationales for providing those individuals burdened from these requirements proper compensation.
This is a very important article because it goes in-depth on what the government is attempting to do to provide compensation for those people injured by vaccinations. It addresses the reason and goals that compensation is necessary and gives many rational arguments why the government should compensate. The rational arguments given are very useful and easy to understand. Most anti-vaccination discourse is based on some person or groups rationale no matter how twisted or warped it might be. Understanding well thought out and intelligent rationales for why vaccinations and compensation are necessary might allow you to better understand these other less thought out and intelligent forms of discourse. If nothing else it might allow you to at least see the flaws in their ideology. This article also gives good insight into how the government responds to threatening pandemics like influenza that come on quick. It shows how the government’s first concern at least in 2005 was to protect the manufactures and insure a steady supply of the vaccine to the public even if it was not 100 percent tested or safe. It also shows a lack of concern for the individuals the government is trying to protect and might be a good example of how some anti-vaccination discourses that do not trust the government form. Although the VICP has already been established to provide compensation to those who have been injured it is important to know how to justify why it was created. Knowing why it was created in the first place will better allow people to understand the function it is serving now and what needs to change to allow it to serve the original function it was created to serve.

This paper deals with the constitutional and moral implications of mandatory immunization laws. There is no federal laws mandating immunization but the Supreme Court has clearly taken the side of state laws making mandatory vaccinations legal. State laws then linked mandatory vaccination laws to school admittance, which then generated many exemption laws that vary from state to state. Some exemptions are medical exemptions, religious exemptions, philosophical exemptions, and personal exemptions. Several studies in the paper suggested that the increased number of exemptions have a negative health effect on those being exempted as well as those being vaccinated. This paper discusses how public health officials have to balance between the rights of individuals not to vaccinate and the social risks to the community not vaccinating poses. Although 48 states offer religious exemptions the courts have ruled that state laws making vaccines mandatory does not conflict with the 1st Amendment and ones right to free exercise of religion. The paper, however, addresses many areas of gray that comes with decisions based on mandatory vaccination laws and religious exemptions. In discussing these gray areas it talks about conscription by the government in times of need, mandatory vaccination laws, conscientious objector exemption laws, and key court rulings that dealt with the rights of individuals and the rights of society to be protected. With the expansion of conscientious objector exemptions states are having problems determining the sincerity of “personal beliefs” and how much “burden of proof” is the appropriate amount. Many different suggestions for fixing the current exemption laws are suggested and their pros and cons are both addressed. The paper also addresses that with no federal law or Supreme Court ruling this problem will persist. One final important thing to note about this paper is it is just reviewing non-medical exemptions such as religious, philosophical and conscientious objector exemptions.
This is an extremely important paper when trying to understand some of the anti-vaccination discourses used today. This is a very well written article and the information on the types of anti-vaccination discourses are not derived from opinion or bias but rather real existing non-medical exemption laws. It gives a brief review of the federal and state government’s view on vaccinations as well as laws they have passed. Non-medical exemptions and medical exemptions are two completely different forms of exemptions that need to be approached separately. They are derived from different rationales and different reasons. This paper does a great job of explaining the non-medical exemptions such as religious, philosophical and conscientious objector exemptions and the constant struggle public health officials are faced with when trying to find a balance between individual rights and the safety of the general public. This is a very important concept to understand when assessing exemption laws.


This article discusses the link in society between vaccines and autism and how there is no evidence to support the link between the two. Even though no scientific evidence has ever been shown to link vaccines with causing illnesses, parents of autistic kids still like to use this as an excuse for their children’s problems. The large amount of lawsuits made against vaccine manufacturers in the 1980s led to many manufacturers ceasing to produce vaccines. This made the government fear the loss of herd immunity so it developed the VICP. The article gives a quick and simple breakdown of the reason the VICP was established and the goals it hopes to accomplish. It also explains how a VICP claim is awarded and what a person has to do to win compensation. The article
also provides other ways in which families filing claims can go around the VICP and sue the manufactures, although these ways are not widely pursued. This article also discussed how the original research team and head researcher Andrew Wakefield, who originally released the study that linked the MMR vaccine to autism, was under review by Britain’s General Medical Counsel. They were investigating his study and were going to determine if his false finding should cost him his medical license. This article also presented a graph devised from the claims that had been filed with the VICP between 1989 and 2007.

This is a very good and relevant article. It is written in such a way that anyone with an average education can understand it. It contains a ton of very important information and is not to long. The fact that its information is clear and concise is very important for its ability to reach many people. One very interesting point it presents is the fact that although no scientific evidence has ever been shown to link vaccines and autism, parents still like to use this excuse to explain their child’s condition. This is a form of vaccine denialism that is helping anti-vaccine discourse spread throughout the country and world. Vaccinations are an easy scapegoat for parents to use to explain why their child formed autism as oppose to accepting personal responsibility. The chart presented on the claims filed with the VICP during 1989-2007 is very neat and easy to read. No biased appears to be present throughout the article. This article is not that long but is packed with useful and current information. The author of this article did an extremely good job in getting to the point of many different hot topic issues that have to deal with vaccinations. The information in this article is presented differently than most science based writings. This article has to do with legal matters of vaccinations and the author is a lawyer not a researcher or scientist. It is important when researching vaccination and
anti-vaccination discourse to explorer discourse from outside the medical and scientific field. Only by doing this will the research conducted really show the opinions and true understanding of the general public not just the science community.


This document discusses the history of a very important figure in the vaccination movement of the United States. Cotton Mather was a minister from Boston who promoted and researched the practice of smallpox inoculations. He first learned about the practice of inoculation from his slaves and the slave traders from Africa. All of them gave the same account that it was safe, it worked and nobody ever died. When smallpox broke out in Boston, Cotton Mather told the physicians of the city about the practice of inoculation but it fell on deaf ears. Only one physician, Dr. Zabdiel Boylston, was bold enough to try the new operation. Dr. Boylston decided to first try this operation on his young, healthy son in the middle of summer. Although the conditions for the experiment were in the favor of the smallpox killing his son, the procedure worked. Many people protested inoculations both verbally and violently. Others saw the negative effects of the procedure as worth the risk and used the 6th Commandment to justify why they would undergo the dangerous procedure. Many of the people gave personal accounts that praised the operation but the literature and accounts spread around Boston claimed that the procedure was the practice of the devil and people wished for death during it. Some used religion as an anti-vaccination argument. Dr. Boylston related the practice of inoculation to God’s mercy and said it was our God given right and duty to use the cure he gave to mankind.
This is a very important article for many reasons. It discusses how the idea of inoculation/vaccination actually arrived in America. It also shows how there were many adverse affects to vaccines back then, like there are today, that made people form anti-vaccination opinions. The vaccination and anti-vaccination discourses that are discussed in this story are very important to take note of because they are discourses that people still use today. Even over 200 years ago people were using religion and the will of God to justify vaccinating and not vaccinating. I feel it is also important to take note of the similarity between the outbreaks of fear caused by disease now and the outbreaks of fear caused by disease back then. People feared being sick and dying painful, miserable deaths. For some this fear is enough to drive them to get vaccinated and accept the risks that come with it. Others still view vaccinations as an unrefined method that is not worth the risks involved. It is also important to notes that the people who were most vaccinated in society and who knew about vaccinations the most when it was first developed were the lower class (slaves) and uneducated. Nowadays the upper class and educated are the ones who are most vaccinated and informed.


In this article Dr. Zabdiel Boylston discusses his account of performing the first smallpox inoculation in the American Colonies on June 26th, 1721. He explained how he was driven to do the operation on his son because he feared for his son’s life, since he had seen how terrible smallpox was if you were infected by it naturally. He discussed how he used the practice of inoculations on many different kinds of patients and it worked well with all. Then he explained how the six people that did die did not die from the inoculations but from other complications. Dr. Boylston stressed the importance of
having the inoculation done by a trained physician and being cared for by trained nurses. He explained how this would greatly increase the rate of recovery. After he conducted his experiment he determined that inoculations worked and that it was much safer to get smallpox from inoculations than the natural way. Dr. Boylston then gave several accounts of who he inoculated and the success he was met with. He ended by praising the discovery of inoculations and its success in curing mankind of smallpox.

This is a very important article for several reasons. The VICP has a list of ailments that if you obtain one after a vaccine you are eligible for monetary compensation. This, however, is a lot simpler than it sounds since the VICP also has a habit of refuting claims and explaining the causes of vaccines away as the results of other medical problems. Dr. Boylston does this as well when he talks about the six deaths among his inoculated patients. Instead of attributing their deaths to his inoculation procedure he gave several different reasons for why they died none of which were his fault. Also one of the biggest anti-vaccination and vaccination discourses is the desire of parents to protect their children. Different patients view the act of vaccinating their children or the act of not vaccinating their children as protecting them. Dr. Boylston was familiar with the raw nature and gruesome outcome of getting smallpox and was driven to first try his inoculation technique on his own six year old child out of his desire to protect him from this horrible disease. This desire to protect his child by vaccinating him is a common theme used for and against vaccinations today. It is important to understand where and how these anti-vaccine discourses started to fully understand how to deal with them today. This article is also written with a biased. Dr. Boylston rarely discusses any negative effects of inoculations and stresses how safe they are even though we know from other readings that this was not the case. This is a very good article to get
a historical glimpse at biased pro-vaccination discourse from the first doctor to vaccinate someone in the United States.


In this article a Boston physician by the name of William Douglas decries the dangerous infatuation with smallpox inoculations. He detests the use of God as a reason for inoculations and views them as illegal and ungodly. His belief that inoculations are illegal is easily seen when he states, “Poysoning and spreading infection, are by the penal Laws of England Felony. Inoculation falls in with the first without any Contradiction…” He thought anyone who did this procedure and killed a patient should also be charged and put to death. He also discusses how there are even precautions that could be taken to make this dangerous operation a little safer but even these precautions are being disregarded by the inoculators. Dr. Douglas also question why, if inoculations are so safe, do inoculators not take proper precautions to ensure they limit the amount of deaths caused by this new medical practice. Instead they are rather careless with their new medical technique and how they administer the inoculations to the public. He then states that all the carelessness that was involved caused many senseless deaths. He ends by addressing a couple important discoveries he has made from observing the disease and the practice of inoculations over six months.

This is a very important article because it is a very early example of a physician who is openly anti-vaccinations. He uses the arguments of law and science to defend his points against vaccinating. One of the biggest problems driving anti-vaccination discourse today is the lack of trust people have in what they view as money hungry vaccine manufacturing companies. The government has taken measure to protect these
companies and in turn they produce inferior products that they release to the market. Many of these vaccines are pushed off the assembly line before they have been fully tested and ultimately some people have negative affects to them. William Douglas stresses the lack of precautions the inoculators take and stresses that their careless ways are causing a lot of senseless deaths. He uses this argument as one of his main anti-vaccination arguments. Although the amount of inoculations distributed in Boston in the 1700s is nowhere near the number distributed nowadays there is still a sense of distrust that forms between those getting the inoculations and those carelessly giving it out. The sense that manufacturers rush production, carelessly produce and thoughtlessly distribute inoculations/vaccinations is an underlying theme that occurred both in Boston in 1720s and still today.