

SOC 463: Sociology of Disaster

Colorado State University

Fall Semester 2008

M, W, F – 1:00-1:50 p.m.

C-108 Aylesworth

Professor: Dr. Lori Peek
Phone: 970-491-6777
Email: lori.peek@colostate.edu
Web Page: <http://lamar.colostate.edu/~loripeek/>
Office: B-237 Clark
Office Hours: W, F – 2:15-3:45 p.m.

Teaching Assistant: Laura Ridenour
Phone: 970-491-1086
Email: laura.ridenour@gmail.com
Office: B-266 Clark
Office Hours: M – 9:30-11:00 a.m.; Th – 2:30-4:00 p.m.

Course Overview:

Disasters can result from forces of nature, such as floods, wildfires, hurricanes, and earthquakes; technological accidents, such as plane crashes, oil spills, and chemical releases; or terrorism and other willful acts of violence. Disasters may be slow-moving in their onset or sudden and unexpected. What these events share in common is their potential to cause widespread community disruption, displacement, economic loss, property damage, death and injury, and profound emotional suffering.

Disaster risk is on the rise in the United States and around the world. The number of natural disasters recorded globally has increased fourfold over the past three decades, growing from fewer than 100 events in 1975 to more than 400 in 2005. The economic costs, damage to the built and natural environments, and human consequences of these major disasters have been severe. Adjusting for inflation, economic losses associated with natural disasters are now estimated to be 15 times higher than they were in the 1950s, and from 1994-2003, disasters caused approximately \$67 billion in losses each year. During the same period, more than 255 million people were affected annually by disasters, and these events claimed an average of 58,000 lives every year.

The objective of this course is to introduce students to the sociological examination of disasters. This course begins with the premise that disasters are fundamentally social events that reflect the ways that we live and structure our communities and societies. Throughout the semester, we will study conflict models and theories of social vulnerability that emphasize social, economic, geographical, political, and cultural factors that put people differentially at risk before, during, and after disasters. We will also investigate how vulnerable social groups, such as racial and ethnic minorities, low-income populations, women, children, and the elderly, are affected by and cope with hazardous conditions and events.

Course Materials:

Dyson, Michael Eric. 2006. *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster*. New York: Basic Civitas Books.

Erikson, Kai. 1994. *A New Species of Trouble: The Human Experience of Modern Disasters*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company.

Fothergill, Alice. 2004. *Heads Above Water: Gender, Class, and Family in the Grand Forks Flood*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Klinenberg, Eric. 2002. *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Additional required readings are available electronically via RamCT.

Course Requirements and Grading Criteria:

Readings: This course is organized around a set of readings that will be used to guide lectures and class discussion. The readings will also be used as a basis for the examinations and content analysis essay. Students are expected to complete all readings prior to the class period for which they are assigned. Not all reading topics will be discussed in the lectures, but you are still responsible for all of the material covered in the required readings. University courses are intense, and it is imperative that you stay on schedule with the readings.

Attendance (40 points): Your attendance is vital to this class, both for your own learning and for our growth as a community of scholars. Attending class will help you with your assignments and contribute to your development of a comprehensive understanding of the material. I will pass around a sign-up sheet each day in class. You will receive one point for each day you attend class (40 classes x 1 point = 40 points). In order to receive credit for the day, you must arrive on time and attend the entire class session. You are responsible for the material presented during class whether or not you attend. Please arrange with another student to get missed notes and announcements.

Exam #1 (100 points): The first in-class exam will be administered on Friday, September 26. The exam will consist of short answer essay questions designed to reflect your understanding of the material covered in the first part of the course. The questions will be drawn from the readings, lectures, videos, and class discussions. The exam cannot be taken early or late, and no make-up exams will be given.

Exam #2 (100 points): The second in-class exam will be administered on Wednesday, November 19. The exam will consist of short answer essay questions designed to reflect your understanding of the material covered in the second part of the course. The questions will be drawn from the readings, lectures, videos, and class discussions. The exam cannot be taken early or late, and no make-up exams will be given.

Content Analysis Essay (80 points): This semester, you will research a natural, technological, or intentional human-initiated disaster, as well as a specific population or social issue in the context of that event. Based on your research, you will write a 7-10 page essay in which you will summarize the consequences of the disaster, analyze 20 newspaper articles covering the event, and review some of the academic research literature related to the population or social issue you are exploring. Detailed essay guidelines and grading criteria for this assignment will be distributed and discussed in class. The content analysis essay is due on Friday, December 5. Eight points per day will be deducted for late papers.

Below is a list of disasters you may want to study for this project. This list certainly is not exhaustive, but instead consists of a number of recent disasters that caused substantial loss of life, significant community disruption, and major economic losses. If there is a disaster that you are interested in studying that is not listed, you are welcome and encouraged to do so. However, please make sure that the event received sufficient media coverage to complete the assignment.

1. Sichuan, China Earthquake (2008)
2. Midwest Floods (2008)
3. Southern California Wildfires (2007)
4. Kashmir Earthquake (2005)
5. Hurricane Katrina (2005)
6. Hurricane Rita (2005)
7. Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami (2004)
8. Bam, Iran Earthquake (2003)
9. European Heat Wave (2003)
10. Western Wildfires (2002)
11. Gujarat, India Earthquake (2001)
12. Fort Collins Flood (1997)
13. Chicago Heat Wave (1995)
14. Northridge Earthquake (1994)
15. Midwest Floods (1993)
16. Hurricane Andrew (1992)
17. Oakland Firestorm (1990)
18. Big Thompson Flood (1976)
19. Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (1989)
20. Chernobyl Nuclear Explosion (1986)
21. Bhopal Chemical Release (1984)
22. Three Mile Island Nuclear Accident (1979)
23. London Bombings (2005)
24. Madrid Train Bombings (2004)
25. Bali Bombings (2002)
26. 9/11 Terrorist Attacks (2001)
27. Oklahoma City Bombing (1995)
28. Los Angeles Riots (1992)

Below is a list of groups and issues that we will be discussing in this class, and that you may consider focusing on for your project. You will want to make sure that there are media reports available on the particular issue that you want to examine in the disaster that you have chosen.

1. Women
2. Men
3. Children and Youth
4. The Elderly
5. Low-Income Populations
6. Persons with Mental or Physical Disabilities
7. Immigrants or Non-Native Speaking Populations
8. Racial/Ethnic Minorities
9. Religious Minorities
10. Tourists and other Transient Populations
11. Emergency Relief Workers
12. Volunteers
13. Pets/Companion Animals
14. Warnings and Risk Communication
15. Evacuation Issues
16. Shelter and Housing Issues
17. Displacement
18. Long-Term Recovery
19. Memorials
20. Mental Health Issues
21. Blame
22. Looting
23. Domestic Violence
24. Policy Change

Workday Assignments (40 points): In order to help further your understanding of the social consequences of the disaster situation that you have chosen to study, and to keep you moving forward with the content analysis essay project, you will complete four short “workday assignments” throughout the semester (4 assignments x 10 points = 40 points). Please see below for the due date and a detailed description of each assignment.

A. Workday Assignment #1 (10 points): You must select the disaster you will be researching as well as the particular population or social consequence that you will be examining for your content analysis essay by Friday, September 12. On that day you will hand in a typed paragraph indicating the disaster you have chosen and the social aspect you plan to explore (see the lists above to help you with this decision). You should also briefly explain why you are interested in studying this particular event and topic. Read all of the requirements for this project carefully before making up your mind.

B. Workday Assignment #2 (10 points): For this assignment, you must gather information that describes the scale, scope, and magnitude of the disaster event that you chose to study. On Friday, October 10, you will submit a typed summary of your findings. At minimum, you must include information on: 1) when the disaster happened; 2) where it happened; 3) how many people it affected; 4) how many people died; 5) an estimate of the economic consequences; and 6) a reference list (websites and newspaper accounts are fine, just make sure and verify the information for accuracy). In order to receive credit for this assignment, you must attend the entire class session on the day the assignment is due.

C. Workday Assignment #3 (10 points): As part of your content analysis essay, you will gather and analyze 20 newspaper articles that deal with the specific disaster and social consequence that you are studying. On Friday, October 31, you must bring to class hard copy printouts of the 20 newspaper articles that you have collected. In order to receive credit for this assignment, you must attend the entire class session on the day the assignment is due.

D. Workday Assignment #4 (10 points): As part of your content analysis essay, you will summarize and integrate at least 5 scholarly research articles that deal with the social consequence that you are exploring. On Friday, November 14, you must submit to me a typed bibliography of the 5 scholarly sources that you will be reviewing in your final essay. These must be outside sources (i.e., not from the required class reading list), and they should be peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, books, or government reports – not websites or media articles. In order to receive credit for this assignment, you must attend the entire class session on the day the assignment is due.

Presentation (40 points): I believe it is important that students not only learn to analyze and synthesize knowledge in written form, but that they also should attain the skills necessary to verbally present their thoughts and ideas. Therefore, each student will prepare a brief presentation of the main findings from your research on the disaster event you have been exploring in-depth throughout the semester. Detailed guidelines and grading criteria for this activity will be distributed and discussed in class. The presentations will be held on December 8, 10, 12, and 15. Your attendance is required on each of these days.

Grading:

Assignments	Percentage	Points Possible
Attendance	10%	40
Exam #1	25%	100
Exam #2	25%	100
Content Analysis Essay	20%	80
Workday Assignments	10%	40
Presentation	10%	40
Total Points Possible		400

Grading Scale:

A = 400-373	B+ = 359-346	C+ = 319-306
A- = 372-360	B = 345-333	C = 305-293
	B- = 332-320	C- = 292-280
D+ = 279-266	F = 239-Below	
D = 265-253		
D- = 252-240		

Writing Expectations:

The College of Liberal Arts and the Department of Sociology are committed to helping students develop communication competencies across the undergraduate curriculum. Thus, 70% of your final grade for this course will be determined by both in-class and out-of-class writing assignments. The goals for these writing assignments are to enhance comprehension of course content and to improve proficiency in writing.

Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is essential to the intellectual vitality of the university and the ideals of education. Colorado State University expects students to be honest and to conduct themselves with integrity in all aspects of their relationship with the university. Dishonest conduct—which includes cheating, plagiarizing, or lying for the purpose of influencing a grade or for other academic gain—undermines the educational experience and is simply not acceptable. Any student found responsible for having engaged in academic dishonesty will be subject to academic penalty and/or university disciplinary action. See the General Catalog for statements on academic integrity and student conduct (<http://www.catalog.colostate.edu/front/policies.aspx>).

Disabilities Statement:

If you are a student who will need accommodations in this class, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. Any accommodation must be discussed in a timely manner prior to implementation. You may also want to contact Resources for Disabled Students for additional support (970-491-6385; <http://www.colostate.edu/Depts/RDS/>).

Course Outline:

Week 1 – History of Disaster Research

- August 25 Syllabus
- August 27 Fischer, Henry W. 1998. “What is a Disaster?” Pp. 1-10 in *Response to Disaster: Fact versus Fiction and Its Perpetuation*. New York: University Press of America. *On RamCT
- August 29 Quarantelli, E. L. 1987. “Disaster Studies: An Analysis of the Social Historical Factors Affecting the Development of Research in the Area.” *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters* 5(3): 285-310. *On RamCT

Week 2 – Sociology and the Study of Disasters

- September 1 No Class
- September 3 Mileti, Dennis S. 1987. “Sociological Methods and Disaster Research.” Pp. 57-69 in *Sociology of Disasters: Contribution of Sociology to Disaster Research*, edited by R. R. Dynes, B. De Marchi, and C. Pelanda. Milan: Franco Angeli. *On RamCT
- September 5 Michaels, Sarah. 2003. “Perishable Information, Enduring Insights? Understanding Quick Response Research.” Pp. 15-48 in *Beyond September 11: An Account of Post-Disaster Research*, edited by J. L. Monday. Boulder: Institute of Behavioral Science, University of Colorado. *On RamCT

Week 3 – Myths, Realities, and Cultural Representations of Disasters

- September 8 Tierney, Kathleen, Christine Bevc, and Erica Kuligowski. 2006. “Metaphors Matter: Disaster Myths, Media Frames, and Their Consequences in Hurricane Katrina.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 604(1): 57-81. *On RamCT
- September 10 Fischer, Henry W. 1998. “The Behavioral Response to Disaster.” Pp. 13-35 in *Response to Disaster: Fact versus Fiction and Its Perpetuation*. New York: University Press of America. *On RamCT
- September 12 Mitchell, Jerry T., Deborah S. K. Thomas, Arleen A. Hill, and Susan L. Cutter. 2000. “Catastrophe in Reel Life versus Real Life: Perpetuating Disaster Myth through Hollywood Films.” *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters* 18(3): 383-402. *On RamCT

Workday Assignment #1 – Content Analysis Essay Topic Due

Week 4 – Community Impacts of Disasters

September 15 Fritz, Charles E. 1961. “Disaster.” Pp. 682-694 in *Contemporary Social Problems*, edited by R. K. Merton and R. A. Nisbet. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World. *On RamCT

September 17 Erikson (pp. 11-23; 99-138)

September 19 Erikson (pp. 139-157; 203-225)

Week 5 – Community Impacts of Disasters

September 22 Erikson (pp. 226-242)

September 24 Peek, Lori and Jeannette N. Sutton. 2003. “An Exploratory Comparison of Disasters, Riots, and Terrorist Acts.” *Disasters* 27(4): 319-335. *On RamCT

September 26 **Exam #1**

Week 6 – Theories of Social Vulnerability

September 29 Cutter, Susan L., Bryan J. Boruff, and W. Lynn Shirley. 2003. “Social Vulnerability to Environmental Hazards.” *Social Science Quarterly* 84(2): 242-261. *On RamCT

October 1 Peacock, Walter Gillis with A. Kathleen Ragsdale. 1997. “Social Systems, Ecological Networks, and Disasters.” Pp. 20-35 in *Hurricane Andrew: Ethnicity, Gender, and the Sociology of Disasters*, edited by W. G. Peacock, B. H. Morrow, and H. Gladwin. New York: Routledge. *On RamCT

October 3 No Class

Week 7 – Disasters, Race, and Social Class

October 6 Dyson (pp. 1-33)

October 8 Bolin, Bob. 2006. “Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Disaster Vulnerability.” Pp. 113-129 in *Handbook of Disaster Research*, edited by H. Rodríguez, E. L. Quarantelli, and R. R. Dynes. New York: Springer. *On RamCT

October 10 **Workday Assignment #2 – Disaster Information Due**

Week 8 – Disasters, Race, and Social Class

- October 13 Dyson (pp. 55-86)
- October 15 Dyson (pp. 141-177)
- October 17 Dyson (pp. 203-222)

Week 9 – Gender and Disasters

- October 20 Fothergill (pp. 1-52)
- October 22 Fothergill (pp. 53-104)
- October 24 Fothergill (pp. 105-135; 157-172)

Week 10 – Children and Disasters

- October 27 Babugura, Agnes A. 2008. "Vulnerability of Children and Youth in Drought Disasters: A Case Study of Botswana." *Children, Youth, and Environments* 18(1): 126-157. *On RamCT
- October 29 Mitchell, Tom, Katharine Haynes, Nick Hall, Wei Choong, and Katie Oven. 2008. "The Roles of Children and Youth in Communicating Disaster Risk." *Children, Youth, and Environments* 18(1): 254-279. *On RamCT
- October 31 **Workday Assignment #3 – 20 Newspaper Articles Due**

Week 11 – Elderly and Disasters

- November 3 Klinenberg (pp. 1-36)
- November 5 Klinenberg (pp. 37-78)
- November 7 Klinenberg (79-128; 225-242)

Week 12 – Consequences of Post-Disaster Relocation and Prospects for Recovery

- November 10 Nieburg, Phillip, Ronald J. Waldman, and Donald M. Krumm. 2005. "Hurricane Katrina: Evacuated Populations – Lessons from Foreign Refugee Crises." *New England Journal of Medicine* 353(15): 1547-1549. *On RamCT
- November 12 Myers, Norman. 1997. "Environmental Refugees." *Population and Environment* 19(2): 167-182. *On RamCT
- November 14 **Workday Assignment #4 – 5 Research Articles Due**

Week 13 – Disasters, Language Barriers, and Disabilities

November 17 Aguirre, Benigno E. 1988. “The Lack of Warnings Before the Saragosa Tornado.” *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters* 6(1): 65-74. *On RamCT

November 19 **Exam #2**

November 21 Van Willigen, Marieke, Terri Edwards, Bob Edwards, and Shawn Hesse. 2002. “Riding Out the Storm: Experiences of the Physically Disabled during Hurricanes Bonnie, Dennis, and Floyd.” *Natural Hazards Review* 3(3): 98-106. *On RamCT

Week 14 – Fall Recess

November 24 No Class

November 26 No Class

November 28 No Class

Week 15 – Disasters and Social Change

December 1 Monday, Jacquelyn L. 2005. “Promoting Social and Intergenerational Equity During Disaster Recovery.” Pp. 1-29 in *Holistic Disaster Recovery: Ideas for Building Local Sustainability After a Natural Disaster*. Boulder: Natural Hazards Research and Applications Information Center, University of Colorado. *On RamCT

December 3 No Readings

December 5 **Content Analysis Essay Due**

Week 16 – Class Presentations

December 8 **Presentations**

December 10 **Presentations**

December 12 **Presentations**

Finals Week

December 15 **Presentations (7:00-9:00 a.m.)**