

ANTHROPOLOGY OF DISASTERS

ANT4930 Class 26000, Section: A110

ANG6930 Class 26001, Section: A100

Lecturer: Dr. Augusto Oyuela-Caycedo

Tuesday: T | Period 8 - 9 (3:00 PM - 4:55 PM)

Thursday: R | Period 9 (4:05 PM - 4:55 PM)

Classroom: [TUR 1101](#)

Office Hours: By appointment.

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Office: B-131 Turlington Hall

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Introduction

How do humans understand catastrophic and disaster events? How do natural catastrophes influence culture and society? Do human societies manage risk concerning catastrophic events? Anthropologists and archaeologists have long been interested in these questions, and the theoretical perspectives for understanding human actions when they have to confront disasters and major catastrophic events. In this course, we will examine the diversity of these events and human responses through time. This class will present current theories for understanding human behavior and how humans perceive and interact with rapid changes at different spatial and time scales at the local, regional, national, and global levels. The main objective is to understand how these events shape the world in the lives of people and how culture produces different responses in terms of behaviors, beliefs, and values. We will take into consideration why political and economic systems shape different actions; some of them are resilient when others can end in the collapse of civilizations.

Course Objectives:

Assess current theoretical approaches to understanding catastrophe and human actions about rapid environmental disasters, diseases, and human-created events (wars, pollution, radiation, and contamination).

Examine critical concepts and current challenges for catastrophic human responses and changes in these in space and time.

Explore how western and nonwestern cultures through time vary in their understandings of disasters and cataclysmic local and global transformations.

Analyze consumer behavior and globalization in relation to devastating events such as pandemics in the historical past.

Evaluate different approaches from anthropology to manage risk and disasters.

Chapters of books and optional texts:

Boholm, Åsa. 2015. *Anthropology and Risk*, Routledge. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ufl/detail.action?docID=2034028>

Concha-Holmes, Amanda D., and Anthony Oliver-Smith. 2019. *Disasters in Paradise: Natural Hazards, Social Vulnerability, and Development Decisions*. Lexington Books. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,uid&db=cat04364a&AN=ufl.037018803&site=eds-live>.

Dixon Thymoth. 2017. *Curbing Catastrophe, natural hazards, and risk reduction in the modern world*. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ufl/detail.action?docID=4783957>

Douglas, Mary. 1966. *Purity and Danger*. Routledge.

Douglas, Mary, and Aaron Wildavsky. 1982. *Risk and culture: an essay on the selection of technological and environmental dangers*. The University of California.

Gordillo, Gaston. 2014. *Rubble: The afterlife of destruction*. Duke University Press.

Hoffman, Susanna M. and Roberto E. Barrios (Editors). 2019. *Disaster Upon Disaster: Exploring the Gap Between Knowledge, Policy, and Practice (Catastrophes in Context)*. Berghahn Books.

Hoffman, Susanna M, and Anthony Oliver-Smith. 2001. *Catastrophe and Culture: The Anthropology of Disaster*. School of American Research Press.

Luhmann, Niklas. 1993. *Risk: A Sociological Theory*. de Gruyter.

Matthewmann, Steve. 2015. *Disasters, Risks and revelations*. Palgrave.

Exams and Grading

There are two take-home exams for this course – a mid-term and a final (each one 20% of the total final grade). Both exams will be in essay format and will be comprised of short answers and longer essay questions.

Students are also required to make a PowerPoint presentation of 15 minutes, and recommend reading for the discussion in class. The topic of the presentation is a case study of a disaster.

Pick a topic/case study of your choice but approved ahead of time. To facilitate your presentation, students are expected to submit a brief proposal, outlining the topic and key sources. The presentation is worth 20 % of the final grade.

Because of the discussion-oriented nature of the class, students will be graded on the quality of class participation. Participation is a constructive activity, which means that you must not only have interesting and useful things to contribute to the discussion but also remain sensitive to others in the classroom. Being disrespectful of other's opinions or hogging the spotlight is just as bad as not saying anything. Your participation grade is worth 20 %; this is not a trivial component of the course. Attendance to the class is also worth 20 %.

In summary, the grade breakdown for the course looks like the following:

Take-home mid Term exam	20
Take-home second exam	20
Powerpoint presentation of a case.	20
Participation	20
Attendance	20
Totals	100%

Letter grades are as follows:

A	93 – 100%	C-	70 – 72.9%
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A-	90 – 92.9%	D+	68 – 69.9%
B+	88 – 89.9%	D	63 – 67.9%
B	83 – 87.9%	D-	60 – 62.9%
B-	80 – 82.9%	E	0 – 59.9%
C+	78 – 79.9%		
C	73 – 77.9%		

A complete listing of university policy pertaining to grades may be found at <http://graduateschool.ufl.edu/files/handbook.pdf>

There is a large amount of literature to be covered in this class and each student must be able to discuss each of the articles. You are responsible for all of the readings. It always helps to write a review on each article or chapter that you read and have notes on the topics that are relevant for the discussion, as well as questions on the aspects that you do not understand.

Disclaimer: Some adjustments may be made in the schedule and course requirements during the semester. All changes will be announced.

ATTENDANCE is required.

There is no extra credit offered for this course.

Course Policies

Electronics. Cellphones must be turned off during class. Social media sites must be off. There is a significant body of research demonstrating that students who use social media during class do significantly worse than students who do not.

Academic Honesty. Unless it is specifically connected to assigned collaborative work, all work should be individual. Evidence of collusion (working with someone not connected to the class or assignment), plagiarism (use of someone else's published or unpublished words or design without acknowledgment), or multiple submissions (submitting the same work for different courses) will lead to the Department's and the University's procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty. All students are expected to honor their commitment to the [University's Honor Code \(Links to an external site.\)](#).

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the [Disability Resource Center \(Links to an external site.\)](#). The DRC will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. **Requests must be made to the instructor.**

UF Counseling Services. Resources are available on-campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career and academic goals that interfere with their academic performance. These resources include:

1. [University Counseling and Wellness Center\(Links to an external site.\)](#), 3190 Radio Road, 392-1575. Personal, career, and emergency counseling.
2. [Career Resource Center\(Links to an external site.\)](#), Reitz Union, 392-1601, Career development assistance and counseling
3. [Writing Studio\(Links to an external site.\)](#), 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Writing assistance, study skills, test preparation

Course Evaluations. Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing [online evaluations \(Links to an external site.\)](#). Evaluations are typically open during the last 2-3 weeks of the semester, but students will be notified of specific times when they are open. [Summary results \(Links to an external site.\)](#) of these assessments are also available to students.

Course Outline

The following course outline is approximate. We may spend more or less time on specific topics as class interest dictates. Exams will occur as scheduled and are not subject to change.

I PART: THEORY

August 24 and 26: Introduction: What is a disaster?

Readings: Oliver-Smith (1999) Oliver-Smith (2001) Ch.2 Oliver-Smith, A. et al. (2017) ‘The social construction of disaster risk: Seeking root causes’, *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 22, pp. 469–474. doi: 10.1016/j.ijdrr.2016.10.006.

August 31 and September 2: What is a disaster?

Readings:

Matthewman Ch.2 (2015), Barrios, R. E. (2017) ‘What does catastrophe reveal for whom? The anthropology of crises and disasters at the onset of the Anthropocene, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 46, pp. 151–166. Dixon (2017) Ch. 2
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September 7 and 9: What is risk and why is risk perception relevant?

Readings: Douglas and Wildavsky (1982) Introduction, Ch. 1 and 2 . Luhman (1993), Chapter 1.

September 14 and 16: Situated Risk. Term Paper Proposals Due.

Readings: Boholm (2015:) ch 4.

Beck, Ulrich. Chapter 2, Relations of Definition as Relations of Domination: Who Decides What is and is Not a Risk? *World at Risk*, Polity Press, 2008. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/UFL/detail.action?docID=1524292> (Links to an external site.).

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Tierney, Kathleen (2014) Ch. 3.

September 21 and 23: Mobile Disasters

Readings: Virilio 2012. The great accelerator, third section.

Matthewman, Steve. "Mobile Disasters: Catastrophes in the Age of Manufactured Uncertainty." *Transfers: Interdisciplinary Journal of Mobility Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2017, p. 6+. <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A536397835/STOM?u=gaia40375&sid=STOM&xid=fba95be6>. Accessed 14 Aug. 2020.

Matthewman, S. (2013). Accidentology: A critical assessment of Paul Virilio's political economy of speed. *Cultural Politics*, 9(3), 280-295. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1215/17432197-2346982> https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265720651_Accidentology_A_Critical_Assessment_of_Paul_Virilio%27s_Political_Economy_of_Speed

September 28 and 30:

II PART: METHODS ON HOW WE STUDY DISASTERS

October 5 and 7: Political economy of disasters.

Readings: Matthewman, Steve. 2016. *Disasters, risks, and revelation: Making sense of our times*

DOI - 10.1057/9781137294265. Chapter 6, 7, and 8.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/306234521_Disasters_risks_and_revelation_Making_sense_of_our_times (Links to an external site.)

October 8 - 9: Homecoming

PART III STUDY CASES AND STUDENT PRESENTATIONS.

October 12 and 14:

Readings: Alcántara-Ayala, I & Oliver-Smith, 2019, 'Early Warning Systems: Lost in Translation or Late by Definition? A FORIN Approach', *International Journal of Disaster Risk*

Science, vol. 10, no. 3, p. 317, viewed 15 August 2020,
<<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,uid&db=edssjs&AN=edssjs.6377369D&site=eds-live>>.

Eisenberg, Daniel, Thomas Seager, and David L. Alderson. 2019. Rethinking Resilience Analytics. *Risk Analysis*, Vol. 39, No. 9. DOI: 10.1111/risa.13328

October 19 and 21: Earthquakes, Volcanos, Tsunamis, flooding events, hurricanes, and tornados.

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November 9: Industrial and technological disasters.

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Readings Beck, Ulrich (2016) ch.1 and 4.

November 24 - 27: Thanksgiving break

November 30 and December 2: Ruins, rubble, and ruination.

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Faas, A. J., and Susanna M. Hoffman. 2016. "The Question of Culture Continuity and Change after Disaster: Further Thoughts." *Annals of Anthropological Practice*, no. 1: 39. doi:10.1111/napa.12086. <http://lp.hscl.ufl.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,uid&db=edsgao&AN=edsgcl.467816652&site=eds-live> (Links to an external site.)

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