

ANT 4930 CATASTROPHE

Class Number 25922, Section: 4G29

Lecturer: Dr. Augusto Oyuela-Caycedo

Thursday: R | Period 8 - 10 (3:00 PM - 6:00 PM) online.

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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 peoples 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.

Textbooks:

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

Textbooks optional:

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.

Carey, Mark. 2010. *In the Shadow of Melting Glaciers: Climate Change and Andean Society*. Oxford University Press.

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

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

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>.

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

Exams and Grading

There are two 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 write a term paper during the semester. The topic of the paper is about a case study of a disaster. The student will also present the case study in a powerpoint presentation (10%) for the class.

The paper is expected to be no more than 6 pages, typed and double-spaced. **The paper should follow the format guidelines of the journal *American Anthropologist***. Pick a topic/case study of your choice but approved ahead of time. Detailed directions and a list of suggested topics will be forthcoming in the next few weeks. To facilitate your paper writing, students are expected to submit a brief proposal, outlining the paper topic and key sources. The paper is worth 10 % 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 are 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:

Mid Term exam	20
Second exam	20
Term Paper	10
Paper presentation	10
Participation	20
Attendance	20
Totals	100%

Letter grades are as follows:

A	93 – 100%	C-	70 – 72.9%
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 in 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

September 3: Introductions.

September 10: What is a catastrophe and disaster?

Readings:

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. doi: 10.1146/annurev-anthro-102116-041635.

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.ijdr.2016.10.006.

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>.

September 17: What is risk and why is risk perception relevant?

Readings: Chapters 1-3, of Boholm.

Beck, Ulrich. Chapter 11, Critical Theory of World Risk Society. *World at Risk*, Polity Press, 2008. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/UFL/detail.action?docID=1524292>.

September 24: Risk and culture. Term Paper Proposals Due.

Readings: Chapter 4, of Boholm.

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

II PART: METHODS ON HOW WE STUDY DISASTERS

October 1: Risk as organization practice. Midterm Exam.

Readings: Chapters 5, of Boholm.

Faas, A. J., and Anthony Oliver-Smith. "Disaster Risk Reduction and Applied Anthropology." *Annals of Anthropological Practice*, no. 1 (2016): 73. doi:10.1111/napa.12089.

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

October 8: Political economy of disasters.

Readings: Matthewman, Steve. 2016. *Disasters, risks and revelation: Making sense of our times* DO - 10.1057/9781137294265. Chapter 6, 7 and 8. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/306234521_Disasters_risks_and_revelation_Making_sense_of_our_times

Readings: Alcántara-Ayala, I & Oliver-Smith, A 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>>.

PART III STUDY CASES AND STUDENT PRESENTATIONS.

October 15: Earthquakes, Volcanos and Tsunamis.

Readings to be define with the students.

October 22: Climate change, flooding events, hurricanes, and tornados.

Readings to be define with the students.

October 29: Biological disasters: from pandemics to genetic disasters.

Readings to be define with the students.

November 5: Industrial and technological disasters.

Readings to be define with the students.

November 12: Future apocalypses: fiction or future realities.

Readings to be define with the students.

November 19: Ruins, rubble and ruination. *Final paper due.*

Readings: Dawdy Shannon Lee. 2010. Clockpunk Anthropology and the Ruins of Modernity *Current Anthropology* Volume 51, Number 6, December 2010.

Stolen, Ann Laura. 2013. "The Rot Remains" From Ruins to Ruination. In Stoler, Ann Laura. 2013. *Imperial Debris. [Electronic Resource] : On Ruins and Ruination*. Duke University Press. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,uid&db=cat04364a&AN=ufl.031802426&site=eds-live>.

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>

November 26: *Thanksgiving week.*

December 3: **Jobs in catastrophes. Second exam due.**