

**Sociology 3560.001 Sociology of Disaster**  
**Syllabus – Fall 2012**

Prof. Nicole Dash

Office Hours: M 3:00 pm-5:00 pm, both online and in my office, or by appointment

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**Course Description:**

This course focuses on an introduction to the study of the sociology of disaster. As such, we will explore a variety of different types of information including disaster myths, social vulnerability and popular culture. Much of the focus, however, will be on how social, political and economic conditions influence how people and communities experience disaster, but to do this, we all must first understand the same language related to disasters. This language includes concepts such as mitigation and preparedness. Our unit of analysis will be both the individual and the organization. Case studies of major disasters are used to explore topics such as the impact of gender, class, ethnicity, and age on vulnerability, as well as, the long term effects of disasters on individuals and communities.

Our perspective will be that disasters are not inevitable and not the consequence of “acts of god.” Disasters are not equalizing events that impact all people the same. Rather, the same systems of stratification that impact our everyday lives, also play a role in our ability to respond to and plan for hazards and disasters.

**Course Goal and Objectives:**

Goal: Students will be able to understand disasters as social events and how social structures and institutions affect disaster impact and recovery.

At the completion of this course students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of how Sociology uniquely views disasters
  - 1.1 Identify how sociology defines disaster
  - 1.2 Assess why sociologists study disaster
2. Compare different aspects of and approaches to disaster
  - 2.1 Define the terms “hazard” and “disaster”
  - 2.2 Differentiate between hazards and disasters
  - 2.3 Discriminate from among the different types of disasters such as man-made, “natural” and conflict based events
  - 2.4 Compare and contrast the different phases of disaster and the activities that occur in each phase
3. Debate the merits of different approaches to the definition of disaster
4. Investigate individual and organizational response to disaster
  - 4.1 Identify how disasters are social events
  - 4.2 Debunk myths about human behavior in disasters.
5. Appraise organizational response to disaster
  - 5.1 Identify the challenges involved in effective organizational response
  - 5.2 Identify the different types of disaster organizations as illustrated by Dyne’s typology
  - 5.3 Suggest ways in which disaster organizations could respond more effectively to

## Disaster

6. Appraise how social structures influence disaster experience
  - 6.1 Recognize what aspects (structures) of society influences social vulnerability and social privilege
  - 6.2 Investigate how social structures (such as race, class, and gender) generates disaster vulnerability and privilege
  - 6.3 Theorize how changes in society could reduce social vulnerability
  - 6.4 Propose policy changes that could lead to vulnerability reduction
  - 6.5 Assess your own social position and resulting vulnerability and privilege
7. Evaluate how media and other forms of popular culture influence our perceptions of disaster
  - 7.1 Recognize how popular culture influences disaster meaning
  - 7.2 Distinguish between different types of popular culture activities
  - 7.3 Identify films considered disaster films
  - 7.4 Identify common myths apparent in disaster films
  - 7.5 Independently evaluate the presence or absence of disaster movie myths
8. Analyze disaster Case Studies for the social effects of disaster in community contexts
  - 8.1 Evaluate the role of communality in the Buffalo Creek Flood
  - 8.2 Identify the physical and social conditions that lead to the Buffalo Creek Flood
  - 8.3 Recognize the central themes that lead to individual and communal trauma in BCF
  - 8.4 Identify the social conditions that impacted Hurricane Andrew
  - 8.5 Recognize the connection between the social conditions pre-Andrew and the short term and longer term impact of the disaster on the impacted population
  - 8.6 Evaluate the impact and effect of the 1992 Chicago Heat Wave
9. Analyze the social conditions pre-disaster, the impacts of the disaster and recovery after disaster in both a domestic and international context
  - 9.1 Critically evaluate a community's social landscape to make connections between social conditions and disaster impact.
  - 9.2 Critically assess the social landscape and disaster impact to evaluate their connections to disaster recovery

### **Required Materials:**

**All reading materials** will be posted online in the learning modules. You have no books to buy. The readings will be a combination of articles and book chapters. You are responsible for all reading assignments, and all materials presented in the learning modules included embedded video, photos and/or links. The format of the class is easy to follow. After the first two weeks, a new module will open on Mondays, and the quiz associated with that Module must be completed by the following Sunday.

You cannot pass this class by waiting until the night before an exam to catch up on the relevant modules. If you miss completing a quiz by the Sunday deadline, there will be no extensions given.

**You must have a reliable computer and internet connection.** While this might seem obvious, experience requires me to remind you that is an internet based course with weekly assignments that will be due. If you do not have a reliable computer and internet connection available, you will fall behind in this class. There are numerous computer labs on campus that you may use for this course. If you need to rely on the campus computer labs, please plan ahead.

**Monopoly Game:** By **October 22**, you must have use of a standard Monopoly Game. You will need to find 5 people to play my version of Monopoly sometime between **10/22 and 11/4**. You will need to play Monopoly for at least two hours, so please plan accordingly. You may play with friends and family or you may arrange to play with fellow students in this class. I will release the rules for playing on **10/22**. This assignment involves playing Monopoly, preparing for a disaster and writing a reaction paper that is due **11/12**. You cannot write the paper without playing the monopoly game, as I have designated. You will have to turn in evidence of playing the game as part of your assignment. If you feel this is going to be a problem to accomplish, please consider dropping this course as this assignment is almost the equivalent of a test grade and no alternative assignments will be offered.

Make up exams will be given only if you have a university approved excuse with documentation. These exams can only be taken on campus and will be 100% short answer and essay.

<b><u>Course Requirements:</u></b>				
<b>Overall assessment plan:</b>				
	<b>Description</b>	<b>number</b>	<b>pts each</b>	<b>total points</b>
EXAMS	Multiple Choice and true/false	3	100	300
Introduction Discussion	Introduce yourself to your group	1	10	10
Online Discussion	1)Online Discussion to debate what is the best approach to studying disasters 2)International Disaster Discussion 3)Current event discussion	3	40	120
Monopoly Assignment	Game and Paper	1	60	60
End of Unit Quizzes	Short quizzes or activities at the end of each unit to help students process information.	12	10	120
Total available Points:				610

**Grade Distribution:**

- 549 Points and Above = A
- 488 – 548 Points = B
- 427 – 487 Points = C
- 366 – 426 Points = D
- 365 or Below Points = F

Final Grades: If you are only a few points away from the next higher grade, do not anticipate me curving you into that grade. I am very consistent in awarding final grades, and unless there is an error in calculation, you will be awarded the grade that you earned based upon the distribution above.

**Description of Requirements:**

1. **EXAMS:** You will be given three exams in this class. Each exam is worth 100 points. Exam questions will be based on assigned readings, learning modules, and class activities. Exams will be multiple choice, and true/false. You will be given about one minute per question on exams for a total of 50 minutes per exam. You may only move forward in the exam. You will not be allowed to skip a question and go back to it at the

end. Moving forward only in an exam frustrates many students. This is why I tell you about this policy from the beginning. **If you anticipate this or the limited time on the exam being an issue for you, please drop this class.** I want every student to do well, but I likewise put some clear integrity measures into the online exam system. The time you are given is the same time students in a M/W/F section would be given for an exam. You should have more than enough time to complete the exam. Please think carefully before remaining in this class if the moving forward only will cause you undo pressure or angst.

You will be given a two day window to take exams. The exam period will start at 12:01am on the first day of the exam period and end at 11:59 on the following day. In this class, exam periods will be Saturday and Sunday of the exam week. So, you must take the exam anytime between 12:01am Saturday morning to 11:59pm Sunday night. All online modules will close when the exam period starts. In other words, you will not be able to access the online modules once the testing period begins. Please plan accordingly.

**Missed Exams:** You will be allowed to make up a missed exam only if you have a documented university excused absence. Make up exams will be 100% short answer and essay, and may only be taken on campus with instructor permission. **The FINAL EXAM MUST BE TAKEN AT THE DESIGNATED TIME. NO MAKE-UPS WILL BE GIVEN.**

- 2. Introduction Post:** After the drop/add period is over, each of you will be randomly assigned to a discussion group. Each group will have about 10 students. Your first assignment in this group is to introduce yourself and explain your interest in disasters and this class.
- 3. Online Discussion:** To help you process and make sense of different approaches to understanding disasters, you will have three online discussion assignments. Details will be posted online, but overall the discussion will be open for a two week period. You are expected to participate in the discussion throughout the two week period, and your grade will be in part based on your participation. Before the first discussion is open, I will post the grading rubric that outlines your expectations. Each of these is worth 40 points, and all will require not only discussion on your part, but some outside research and processing. You will have three of these. Each will be due on the Friday before an exam. So, for example, the first discussion will open two weeks before exam 1 and will be due the Friday before Exam One's testing window.
- 4. Monopoly:** You will need to have access to a Monopoly Game by October 22. Then between October 22 and November 4, you will need to arrange to play with a group of 5 people. These can be friends and family or you can try to arrange games with your fellow students. You will need to play for at least two hours. Plan accordingly. On 10/22, I will post the instructions for the game. You will not be playing with usual Monopoly rules. When you are done with your game, you will fill out a small online form that will give me enough information to know if you played using my rules. If you do not play by 11/4 and submit this form, you will receive a zero as you cannot write the paper without this experience.

Upon completion of the Monopoly game, you will be asked to write a short reaction paper based on your experiences. This assignment will be available to you after you submit your monopoly form showing that you played the game.

- 5. Lessons/Module Mastery Assessments:** At the end of each learning module, you will have an assessment that will consist of multiple choice and fill in the blank questions. These assessments are each worth 10 points with each question worth 1 point each. You may take the quiz up to 4 times. After each attempt, you will be given the score that you have earned, but you will not know which questions you have missed. You will get the highest grade you earn as your final grade as long as that grade is over 70% or 7 out of 10 questions correct. If you get less than 7 out of 10 correct you will receive a zero. These quizzes are to help you learn and master the material. For this method to work, you cannot wait until the last moment to work on modules. Paying attention to the course material and doing well on these quizzes will overall help your

final grade in the class. Starting Week 3, modules open every Monday and the quiz for that module will close at 11:59 the following Sunday.

### **Additional Policies and Procedures**

**Class Participation:** While this is an online class, the expectation is that you are engaged in the material every week. Some weeks you will have just the weekly module and quiz to do. Other weeks you will need to engage in discussions. If you are taking this class because you want an easy online class that does not require you to be engaged in the material, then you are taking the wrong class. This class requires the same time investment as any face to face course. However, you have the flexibility to engage with the material during the week in a time flexible way. But you will need to be in the class every week doing work.

**Class Announcements:** I use the class announcement feature of Blackboard Learn often. Your default email is your UNT eaglemail email address. Please make sure you check that regularly or follow the directions to forward your email to an address you more consistently use.

**Cheating:** Cheating will not be tolerated. You are expected to do your own assignments and take your own tests. I highly recommend that you DO NOT copy another person's work as it is very possible that they know even less than you do. **THESE ARE CLOSED NOTES EXAMS.**

### **Disabilities Accommodation:**

The University of North Texas complies with Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The University of North Texas provides academic adjustments and auxiliary aids to individuals with disabilities, as defined under the law. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation, please see the instructor and/or contact the Office of Disability Accommodation at 940-565-4323 during the first week of class. If you need accommodation in this class, please let me know as soon as possible.

### **SOCI 3560, Sociology of Disasters : Fall 2012 outline**

Week	Date	Topic	Assignments
1-2	8/29-9/9	Start Here Module; Module 1: Introduction to Sociology of disasters	Start Here Quiz with score of 8/10 opens Module 1;
3	9/10-9/16	Module 2: Theories of Disasters	<b>Introduction post due by 9/14</b>
4	9/17-9/23	Module 3: Phases of Disasters	
5	9/24-9/30	Module 4: Individuals and Disaster	
6	10/1-10/7	<b>EXAM 1: Modules 1-4 (10/6-10/7)</b>	<b>Discussion 1 due 10/5</b>
7	10/8-10/14	Module 5: Popular Culture	
8	10/15-10/21	Module 6: Social Vulnerability	
9	10/22-10/28	Module 7: Race, Class and Disability	
10	10/29-11/4	Module 8: Buffalo Creek	
11	11/5-11/11	<b>EXAM 2: Modules 5-8 (11/10-11/11)</b>	<b>Discussion 2 due 11/9</b>
12	11/12-11/18	Module 9: Chicago Heat Wave	<b>Monopoly Paper due 11/12 by 8am</b>
13	11/19-11/25	Module 10: Hurricane Andrew	
14	11/26-12/2	Module 11: Organizations and Future Directions	
15	12/3-12/9	<b>Final Exam: Modules 9-11 (12/8-12/9)</b>	<b>Discussion 3 due 12/7</b>