

ANTHROPOLOGY 2277G-650

Anthropology of Disaster

COURSE OUTLINE

Winter 2020

Instructor: Greg Beckett (he/him)

Email: gbeckett@uwo.ca

Office Hours: via email or Zoom by appointment

Credit value: 0.5 credit

Mode of delivery: For 2020/2021 this course will be conducted online. It is *asynchronous*, meaning that students will be provided with a variety of lesson materials and activities that can be done throughout the week, although there may be tasks that must be completed by specific times.

Calendar Course Description: This course explores anthropological approaches to the study of crisis, disaster, and emergency. We will look at theoretical frameworks for understanding disaster and apply them to case studies of disasters ranging from fires and hurricane to earthquakes and humanitarian emergencies.

Antirequisites: None.

Prerequisites: At least 0.5 essay course in Arts and Humanities or Social Science.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Syllabus:

Most social science begins with the presumption of order and continuity, which makes disruption, disorder, and other kinds of social breakdown appear “abnormal.” How else might we think about crisis, disaster, and emergency? In this course, we will explore cross-cultural and historical perspectives on disaster, broadly conceived, by considering the various meanings that communities and individuals give to crises, disasters, and emergencies. In particular, we will look at the following topics: the human experience of disaster; risk and preparedness; insecurity and trauma; the spread of emergencies across borders and the expanding field of international humanitarian intervention; and the ways that individuals and communities try to live through crises and thrive after emergencies. We will also use this course as an occasion to think collectively about the global and local experiences of living through a disastrous pandemic.

This is an essay course. Alongside weekly quizzes and assignments based on the required readings, students will write an analysis paper and a final research paper. More information on all assignments will be available on the course OWL site. A full course schedule including a week-by-week breakdown of topics and assigned readings will be available on the course’s OWL site before the first day of class.

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Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Analyze disasters from multiple points of view and drawing on multiple lines of evidence;
- Interpret disasters as social and cultural occurrences by drawing on historical, economic, social, and political, factors that give rise to them;
- Explain how the meaning of disaster changes over time and across cultures in relation to changing patterns of social and political organization and in relation to cultural definitions of nature and technology;
- Compare different types of disasters in relation to their causes and effects in a variety of social and cultural contexts;
- Explain the conditions that give rise to disasters and the consequences that follow them through online discussions, group work, and individual writing assignments;
- Explain disasters in relation to other aspects of social, economic, and political life by using key concepts in anthropological theory.

Course Materials:

The following book is required and is available for purchase at the Western Bookstore (note, they may be available at lower prices elsewhere):

- Erikson, Kai. 1994. *A New Species of Trouble: The Human Experience of Modern Disaster*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Registered students will be able to access all additional required course readings through the course site in OWL before the first day of class.

Evaluation:

Grades will be based on weekly quizzes, weekly assignments, a group presentation, a short analysis paper, and a final exam, as follows:

Weekly Quizzes – 10%

There will be eleven quizzes (weeks 2–12) throughout the course. Quizzes are to be completed in OWL before the week's assigned online lecture. Quizzes will focus on the main ideas in the required readings. They are intended to motivate you to complete all of the reading before viewing the lecture and to help you identify key points from the readings. There will be no make-up quizzes but I will drop the lowest quiz grade.

Weekly Online Assignments – 10%

Students will complete 11 weekly assignments on OWL during weeks 3–12. Weekly assignments will involve short readings, videos, and similar material that will supplement the week's lecture. Assignments will typically feature multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions. There will be no make-up assignments but I will drop the lowest quiz grade.

Group Presentation – 20%

Students will work in groups to prepare a short power-point presentation that explores key concepts from the course and uses them to analyze a chosen case study. The chosen case study will also be the topic for the individual short analytic papers.

Short Analytic Paper – 25%

Students will write a short analysis paper (750 words) that explores an aspect of the case study from their group presentation in greater depth and detail. Analytic papers give students an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to apply key terms and concepts used in class to their own case study. The analysis paper is due in class on **TBD**.

Final Essay – 35%

Students will write a 2000-word final paper that explores key themes of the course material. Students will develop their own thesis and argument based on prompts and suggested topics distributed in class. The final essay should be an in-depth analysis of the material explored in the course readings and in group presentations. The final paper will be due on **TBD**.

More information on writing assignments, including due dates, will be made available to students on the course OWL site.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com).

Course Specific Conditions Required to Pass this Course

In order to pass an essay course, the student must exhibit some minimal level of competence in essay writing and the appropriate level of knowledge of the content of the course.

In order to pass this course students must submit all writing assignments and receive at least a passing grade on their final essay.

Statement on Seeking Special Accommodations:

No accommodations will be granted retroactively more than 10 days after an assignment's due date or a missed quiz or test. Please see your academic counsellor immediately if you will be seeking accommodations based on medical or compassionate grounds.

Statement on Plagiarism:

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing. It is also a scholastic offence to submit the same work for credit in more than one course. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence.

Institutional Statements and Policies

All students should familiarize themselves with Western's current academic policies regarding accessibility, plagiarism and scholastic offences, and medical accommodation. These policies are outlined in Western's academic policies by clicking on this link: [Western's academic policies](#).