UMBC UGC New Course Request: POLI 468 – Disaster Politics

Date Submitted: 05/06/2015 Proposed Effective Date: Winter 2016

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**COURSE INFORMATION:**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Course Number(s)</th>
<th>468</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal Title</td>
<td>Disaster Politics</td>
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<td>Transcript Title (≤24c)</td>
<td>Disaster Politics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommended Course Preparation</td>
<td>POLI 260, POLI 250</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prerequisite</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Credits</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repeatable?</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Max. Total Credits</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grading Method(s)</td>
<td>X Reg (A-F) Audit Pass-Fail</td>
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**PROPOSED CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**

This course is designed to introduce students to the political and policy dimensions of disaster. The course will explore how disaster affects the social/political landscape, as well as how that social/political landscape affects the state’s ability to deal with disaster. Topics covered include state institutional adaptation and policy learning; special cases of vulnerability; the impact of disaster on local and international conflicts; and humanitarian assistance.

**RATIONALE FOR NEW COURSE**

a) There is no other course taught like this subject, which integrates a range of subfields from comparative politics and international relations to public administration. It is also a highly interdisciplinary course.

b) To be taught every 2-4 semesters

c) This is an upper level POLI elective which dovetails with numerous other courses offered on human rights, US foreign policy, international relations and intra-regional studies (see POLI 370s/470s, POLI 380s/480s and POLI 390s/490s).

d) Upper level POLI students and other upper level students (EHS, HAPP)

e) Heavy reading load combined with emphasis on discussion

f) Basic background in comparative politics, international relations, public administration or pertinent EHS/HAPP-related coursework helpful but not necessary.

g) Students must take for a regular grade

h) This course cannot be repeated (unless failing grade)

**ATTACH COURSE OUTLINE (mandatory):**

**Weeks 1-2. Introduction**

*What is the difference between man-made and natural disasters from the perspective of preparing (in advance) responding (ex post facto)?*

Perry, Ronald. “What is a Disaster?” (Chapter 1 in Handbook of Disaster Research)


Week 3. Disasters and the State Today
How have state structures evolved to deal with disasters? How might future disasters continue to affect the modern state?


Week 4. Major State Institutions to Address Disaster (US)
What are the institutions that have been developed to deal with disaster in the United States? What are some strengths and weaknesses of the current system?


Week 5. Victim Responses
How do victims respond to disasters? How might these reactions have influenced the development of disaster response institutions?


Week 6. Community Responses
How do people in the immediate area react to a disaster? How does their reaction facilitate or hinder official disaster response? How might institutions be adapted to take advantage of these reactions? What are the sorts of political opportunities that emerge at the national level?

Herbst, States and Power in Africa

**Week 7. Vulnerability**

*How might community type influence individual and collective response and levels of national solidarity? To what degree are these identities likely to eclipse or be eclipsed by the local community and national community ones discussed earlier? How do the factors described affect local and national politics with respect to long-term change?*


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**Mid-Term**

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**Week 8. Expertise and Policy Adaptation**

*What might be some easy lessons learned, and what are the challenges to implementing them? How might these challenges be connected to the range of individual and community issues examined earlier?*


**Week 9. Why policymakers don’t get it**

*What are the psychological and structural barriers to disaster preparedness and mitigation on the part of citizens and policymakers?*


**Weeks 10-11. How Disasters Change Political Landscape**

*How does the broader political landscape and the nature of accountability affect the willingness and capability to learn from and adjust to disasters? How do disasters represent political openings for various groups? Under what conditions do they tend to undermine or strengthen the incumbents and their adversaries?*


**Week 12. Disasters, War and Peace**

*What is the relationship between disasters and peace/conflict? Given what we have learned in this course (individual, community and national reactions; political environment and policy learning) what might account for this?*


**Week 13. Foreign Humanitarian Aid**

*What have been some obstacles and problems related to post-disaster humanitarian assistance?*


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**Final Exam**

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