

UMBC UGC New Course Request: POLI 468 – Disaster Politics

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Proposed Effective Date: Winter 2016

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COURSE INFORMATION:

Course Number(s)	468
Formal Title	Disaster Politics
Transcript Title (≤24c)	Disaster Politics
Recommended Course Preparation	POLI 260, POLI 250
Prerequisite	
Credits	3
Repeatable?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Max. Total Credits	3
Grading Method(s)	X Reg (A-F) X Audit X Pass-Fail

PROPOSED CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

The goal of this course is to introduce students to the political and policy dimensions of disaster. The two key questions we ask here are (a) How does disaster affect the social political landscape, and (b) How does the social and political landscape affect the ability to deal with disaster? We work our way up to these questions through a series of sub-themes running through the disaster literature. Each of these has its own effects on our later, more overtly political, analysis. We begin by defining disaster and analyzing disaster from a structural perspective, looking at how disasters have changed the modern state. Next, we examine the personal and psychological reactions to disaster on the part of victims and community (local and national), placing a special emphasis on vulnerability of select populations. Finally, we study various political aspects of disaster, from determinants of policy learning to the political opportunities that emerge from disasters. Our analysis includes both domestic and foreign policy considerations.

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 3-5 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 can take P/F or regular grades
- h) This course cannot be repeated (unless failing grade)

ATTACH COURSE OUTLINE (mandatory):

Disaster Politics

January 2015

Brian Grodsky

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Introduction

The goal of this course is to introduce students to the political and policy dimensions of disaster. The two key questions we ask here are (a) How does disaster affect the social political landscape, and (b) How does the social and political landscape affect the ability to deal with disaster? We work our way up to these questions through a series of sub-themes running through the disaster literature. Each of these has its own effects on our later, more overtly political, analysis. We begin by defining disaster and analyzing disaster from a structural perspective, looking at how disasters have changed the modern state. Next, we examine the personal and psychological reactions to disaster on the part of victims and community (local and national), placing a special emphasis on vulnerability of select populations. Finally, we study various political aspects of disaster, from determinants of policy learning to the political opportunities that emerge from disasters. Our analysis includes both domestic and foreign policy considerations.

The readings for this course are inter-disciplinary in nature. Many of the studies we will examine are based in two disciplines: political science and sociology. But we also rely significantly on studies from history, economics, psychology, (emergency) medicine and other fields. The varied nature of the readings is a result of the complexity of disasters. They also reflect a secondary goal of this course, which is to think outside the box and consider various approaches to the dilemma at hand.

Students who have completed this course should be able to:

- (1) understand key concepts and processes in disaster research.
- (2) integrate questions related to domestic and international disaster preparedness and response into the broader framework of states and regimes.
- (3) relate a theoretical, multi-disciplinary literature to everyday cases.

This class will be taught in an online format. You will be responsible for completing readings (all required readings for this course will be available on Blackboard), watching lectures and participating in online discussion questions. Several of the discussion questions will integrate general theoretical concepts covered in separate presentations (also found online, links provided). There will be two written tests – a mid-term and a final (see below).

Grades

Your grades will be based on two written tests (each worth 33.3% of your final grade) and online participation (the final 33.34% of your grade). The written tests will be given online at a specific time and date (January 14 and January 23 at 8am), when you will be given one and a half hours to answer two questions. This will essentially be an open note blue book test. **Each test is located in the content folder and will be**

available from 8-10 am on those dates. Please see more detailed instructions on separate sheet (located at the top of ‘course documents’).

For participation, you are required to contribute to the discussion threads that will be posted on BB. Each thread will be **accessible for as few as two days**, so be sure you check this discussion board regularly and respond in a timely manner. Your post should incorporate readings (referencing them by author, but not page) and lectures to shed light on the issue, and should be about one page in length (three to four strong paragraphs that refer directly to authors (by name, without dates and page numbers) and lectures).

There will be a total of approximately 11 discussion questions. **You must post at least ten times over the period of this class. Please be sure that your postings are a combination of original posts (5) and responses to others (5).** After you post, **take a screenshot for your records in case you choose to use that post as one of your best ten comments/responses.** These must be sent to me as an email attachment(s) by the last day of class. I will monitor these as the class is underway (though will not mark them as read), but will not grade them until you send me the 10 you would like me to evaluate on January 23.

A Note on Academic Honesty:

Be honest. Since you have all signed up for this course on your own free will, I am assuming you are interested and willing to do the work necessary to learn. If you have a question about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask. I subscribe to a zero-tolerance approach; if any students are caught cheating or plagiarizing, I will immediately fail them and then refer them to the Office of Undergraduate Education for possible additional consequences. There will be no discussion of mitigating circumstances. For the sake of clarity, I quote below from the UMBC Office of Undergraduate Education:

"By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UMBC's scholarly community in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest standards of honesty. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and helping others to commit these acts are all forms of academic dishonesty, and they are wrong. Academic misconduct could result in disciplinary action that may include, but is not limited to, suspension or dismissal. To read the full Student Academic Conduct Policy, consult the UMBC Student Handbook, the Faculty Handbook, or the UMBC Policies section of the UMBC Directory [or for graduate courses, the Graduate School [website](#)]."

Class Schedule and Readings:

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)

Wisner, Ben, Piers Blaikie, Terry Cannon, and Ian Davis. 2004. *At risk: Natural hazards, people's vulnerability and disasters* (Second Edition). New York: Routledge. Chapter 2, "The Disaster Pressure and Release Model".

Perrow, Charles. 2007. *The next catastrophe: Reducing our vulnerabilities to natural, industrial, and terrorist disasters*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapter 2, "'Natural' Disasters".

Michael T. Osterholm, "Preparing for the Next Pandemic," *N Engl J Med* 2005; 352:1839-1842, May 5, 2005 - <http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp058068>

Michele Zanini, 'Power curves': What natural and economic disasters have in common, *The McKinsey Quarterly*, June 2009, http://www.relooney.info/0_New_5145.pdf

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?

Robert Steven Gottfried, *The black death : natural and human disaster in medieval Europe*. London: Collier Macmillan 1983. Chapter 7, "Disease and the Transformation of Medieval Europe."

John A. Garraty, "The New Deal, National Socialism, and the Great Depression," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 78, No. 4 (Oct., 1973), pp. 907-944.

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?

Perrow, Charles. 2007. *The next catastrophe: Reducing our vulnerabilities to natural, industrial, and terrorist disasters*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapter 3, "The Government Response: The First FEMA"; Chapter 4, "The Disaster After 9/11: The Department of Homeland Security and a New FEMA".

Sylves, Rick. 2008. *Disaster Policy and Politics: Emergency Management and Homeland Security*. Washington D.C.: CQ Press, Chapters 1 and 3.

Week 5. Victim Responses

How do victims respond to disasters? How might these reactions have influenced the development of disaster response institutions?

John Drury, Chris Cocking, and Steve Reicher. "Everyone for themselves? A comparative study of crowd solidarity among emergency survivors," *British Journal of Social Psychology* (2009). 48, pp.487-506.

Kathleen J. Tierney, "The Social and Community Contexts of Disaster," (Chapter 1) in Richard Gist and Bernard Lubin (ed.s), *Psychosocial Aspects of Disaster Response*. New York: Wiley and Sons, 1989.

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*

Xu, Bin. 2009. "Durkheim in Sichuan: The Earthquake, National Solidarity, and the Politics of Small Things." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 72:5-8.

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?

Klinenberg, Eric. 2002. Heat wave: a social autopsy of disaster in Chicago. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 2. "Race, place, and Vulnerability."

David Stromberg, "Natural Disasters, Economic Development, and Humanitarian Aid," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 21, 3 (Summer 2007): 199 –222.

Mid-Term – January 14, 8am

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?

Thomas A Birkland, *Lessons of disaster : policy change after catastrophic events*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2006. Chapter 1.

Scott Gabriel Knowles, *The disaster experts : mastering risk in modern America*. Conclusion.

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?

Rodriguez, H., W. Diaz, J.M. Santos and B. E. Aguirre. 2007. Chapter 29, "Communicating Risk and Uncertainty: Science, Technology, and Disasters at the Crossroads," in H. Rodriguez, E.L. Quarantelli and R.R. Dynes (Eds). *Handbook of Disaster Research*. New York, NY: Springer.

Klinenberg, Eric. 2002. Heat wave: a social autopsy of disaster in Chicago. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 4 (Governing by Public Relations)

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?

A Healy, N Malhotra, "Myopic voters and natural disaster policy," *American Political Science Review*, 103, 3, 2009.

Heijmans, Annelies, "The everyday politics of disaster risk reduction in Central Java, Indonesia," (Chapter 13) in Thea Hilhorst (ed.) *Disaster, conflict and society in crises: everyday politics of crisis response*, New York: Routledge 2013.

Clarke, Lee Ben. 2006. *Worst cases: terror and catastrophe in the popular imagination*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 4, "Power, Politics and Panic in the Worst Cases."

Warner, Jeroen, "The Politics of 'Catastrophization'," (Chapter 5) in Thea Hilhorst (ed.) *Disaster, conflict and society in crises: everyday politics of crisis response*, New York: Routledge 2013.

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?

Philip Nel and Marjolein Righarts, "Natural Disasters and the Risk of Violent Civil Conflict," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (Mar., 2008), pp. 159-185.

Dawn Brancati, "Political aftershocks: The impact of earthquakes on intrastate conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 51, 5, 2007: 715-743.

Week 13. Foreign Humanitarian Aid

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

Travis Nelson, "Rejecting the gift horse: international politics of disaster aid refusal," *Conflict, Security & Development*, Volume 10, Issue 3, 2010.

Tin Maung Maung Than. "Myanmar in 2008: Weathering the Storm," *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2009, pp. 195-222.

Final Exam – January 23, 8am
