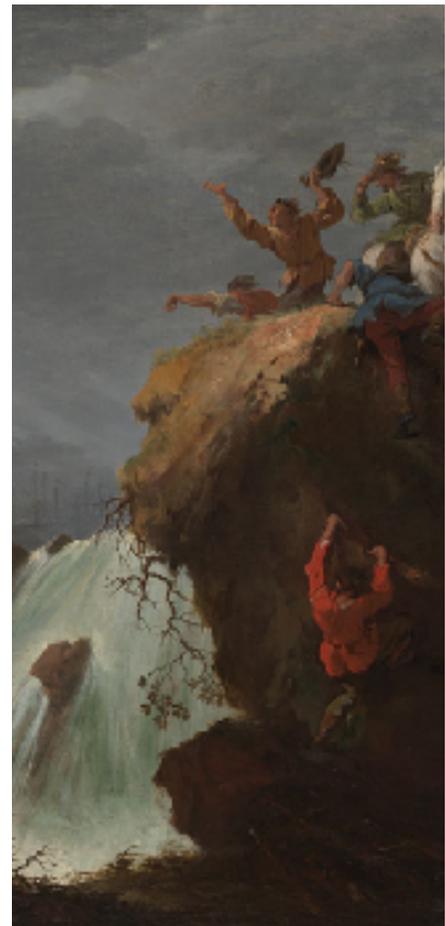


A History of

(UN)NATURAL DISASTERS



Course Description

In "A History of (Un)natural Disasters," we will use natural disasters as a tool to critically evaluate the significance of catastrophic events in global history; to interpret them through the lens of social, environmental, and economic justice; and importantly, use disasters to explore the relationship between "natural" and cultural change.

Are coastal floods simply the result of storm surges? Can we reduce earthquake

Frank Conrad, "Approaching Dust Storm," 1935-36

"Fire of Meireki," 1813

Willem Schellinks, "The Dike breach at the Saint Anthony Dike," 1651

disasters to seismic activity or pandemics to pathogens? Over the course of the semester, we will investigate the ways in which the disaster experience is informed and conditioned by society, culture, and environment.

Disasters are an ideal medium to explore "big" concepts like diversity and social justice. Historical perspectives provide necessary context to frame disasters as processes rather than simply "acts of God." Why (and how) is it that women, the poor, and minority groups have been disproportionately impacted by disasters? How are natural disasters linked to imperialism, capitalism, modern science, and the development of the third world? What level of complicity or responsibility do we all share in ongoing global disasters like climate change? In the context of this course, you will engage these critical issues on global and local terms, drawing perspective from the deep and recent past.

Fit to Core & Mission

There is no such thing as a natural disaster. They do not develop out of unpredictable, chance collision between unlucky people and an unforgiving environment. "Natural" disasters are as much the product of human vulnerabilities as they are environmental hazards. The degree of vulnerability to disaster is highly dependent on a variety of social and cultural conditions.

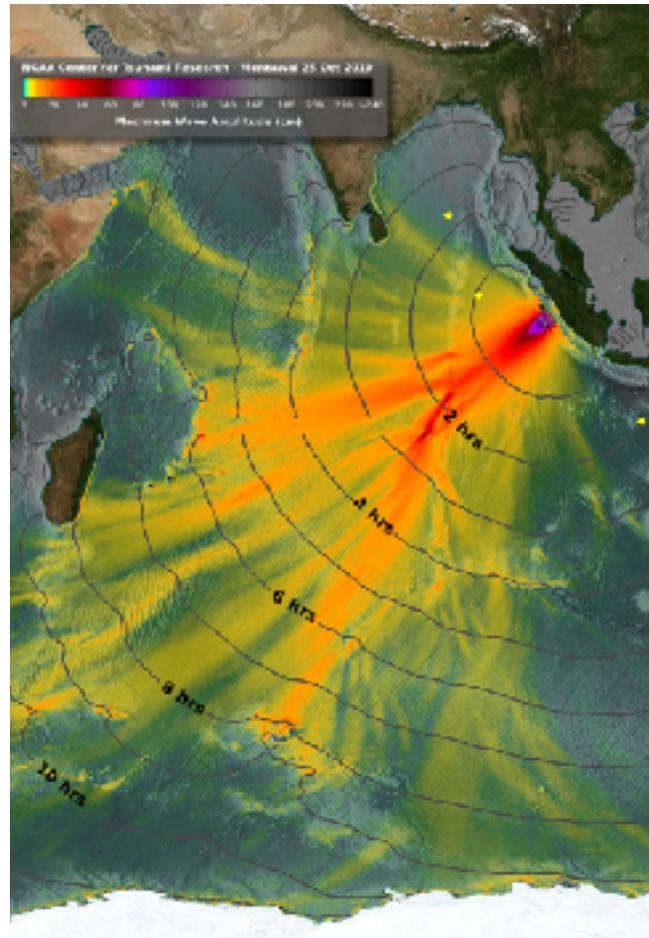
If disasters are not simply "acts of God," what are some of the methods we can use to explore them? How can disasters better

"to see disasters as being natural is about as useful as a doctor signing a death certificate with the explanation of 'natural causes'"

- TERRY CANNON

inform us about the critical issues of diversity and social justice? History offers a useful set of tools to untangle the social, cultural, and environmental forces that promote catastrophe. All vulnerabilities are grounded in long-standing relationships of power, identity, and access to information.

Disasters, as a result, uncover buried social inequalities and force us to contend with issues of equality and responsibility.



Maximum Wave Amplitude - 2010 Indian Ocean Tsunami, NOAA Center for Tsunami Research

FALL 2020

AUG 17- NOV 25

Time/Day

8:00-9:15 AM

Office

DH 220

Office Hours

MW 2-4pm & By Appointment

Email:

adamsundberg@creighton.edu

COVID DESIGNATION:

SD100

WEATHER CANCELLATION:

In the event that inclement weather forces the university to close, the course schedule will be adapted at the discretion of the instructor. All changes to the syllabus (and notice of class cancellations) will come via BlueLine.

ATTENDANCE/TARDINESS:

Students are required to attend all face-to-face classes to which they are assigned if healthy. Students who miss a class because of an emergency (non-health related) are expected to notify their instructor as soon as possible. If you are sick, please do not come to class. In the event of illness (fever/chills, shortness of breath, headache, sore throat, lack of taste/smell, etc.) please register your condition with the COVID-19 Screening App CampusClear and notify the instructor. Even if you can't attend class, you won't fall behind. Students who must miss class for a protracted period of time (or even just a day) due to illness or self-quarantining due to COVID-19 exposure will be able to engage the course material online.

Daily attendance is required and is factored into your participation grade. Student will receive one absence during the semester free of penalty (for any reason). Afterwards, I will deduct 2% from participation for every subsequent day missed.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS:

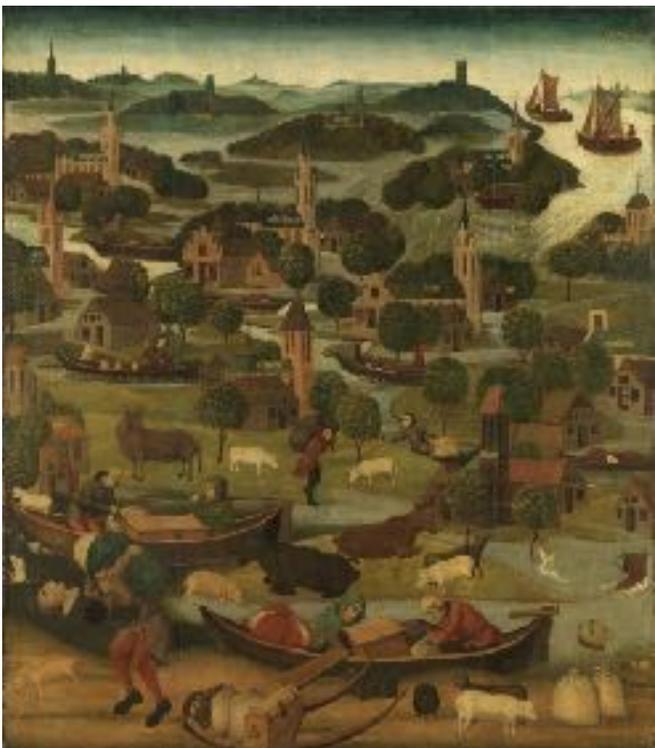
Assignments will be deducted 1/2 of a letter grade for each 24-hour period they are late. Late arrivals in class will be offered no chance to make up the weekly quiz.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- *Identify key social, environmental, and cultural determinants of disaster*
- *Research and evaluate the origins of disaster vulnerability, particularly as they relate to issues of diversity and power, and how perspectives have changed over time.*
- *Engage the concept of “human dignity” and ethical considerations involved in disaster interpretation and response*
- *Contribute original research to an interdisciplinary digital “atlas” of historical disasters (Final Atlas Project)*
- *Relate issues of historical disasters to contemporary catastrophes, personal responsibility, justice, and human dignity.*
- *Present research in a clear, concise, and engaging presentation*

For a complete list of Magis Core objectives, see pg. 9



Master of the St. Elizabeth's Panels, The Saint Elizabeths Day Floods of 1421, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

Your grade will be determined based on your performance during in-class participation, presentations, a midterm essay, and a final research project. A total of 1375 points are possible in this course, distributed as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Final Atlas Project - Total 625 pts | |
| - Project Proposal (50 pts) | Weekly Quizzes - 80 pts |
| - Bibliography (50 pts) | Omeka Assignment - 20 pts |
| - Group Meeting (25 pts) | First Semester Speech - 50 pts |
| - First draft of narrative (100 pts) | Midterm - 300 |
| - Final Draft (200 pts) | Participation – 300 pts |
| - Project Presentation – 200 pts | |

Grading Scale:

- | | |
|-----------|---------------|
| A: 94-100 | C+: 77-79 |
| A-: 90-93 | C: 74-76 |
| B+: 87-89 | C-: 70-73 |
| B: 84-86 | D: 69-60 |
| B-: 80-83 | F: 59 & below |

Final Atlas Project

The final project for this course uses original student research on disasters to build a digital atlas. To be completed in pairs, your project must use primary and secondary sources, incorporate imagery, and use effective written and oral communication. These will be embedded into a Neatline project. You must address the following issues discussed in class:

1. Narrative of the disaster
2. Adaptation, interpretation, and/or resilience
3. Differential vulnerability

Final Presentation

You will be expected to present your Final Atlas Project at the end of the semester in two formats. 1. In the final weeks of class, groups will present their collective work in person. Each individuals contribution must be at least 7 minutes. 2. One week prior, *you* will record your portion of the presentation individually. Both presentations will demonstrate the oral communication skills learned in COM 101.

Participation

Education demands your active involvement; therefore participation is a requirement in this course. A sizable percentage of the final grade will depends on the frequency and quality of your comments. Frequent tardiness will also warrant a reduced participation grade. Quality comments require reading the material and formulating ideas and opinions before you arrive at class. See rubric below.

Style and Formatting

All written work should be clear, convincing, and following the assigned style guidelines. If required, it should have a well-defined thesis, intro, and conclusion backed up with substantive and well-documented citations. Any citations are required to be in the Chicago Style with footnotes.

All written work should follow the following format:

Times New Roman font; 12 point; double spacing; 1” margins; paginated. Print double-sided if possible. The title should clearly and creatively evoke the topic and subject of your work.

Midterm

The midterm will consist of two take home essays that address issues of service, social justice, and human dignity in the context of disaster, viewed through 1. a Jesuit lens 2. personal experience 3. disciplinary perspectives.

Short Speeches

In conjunction with COM 101, you will be expected to complete 1 speech in the first half of the semester. This will be maximum 3 minutes and cover natural disasters in the news.

PLAGIARISM:

Academic misconduct will not be tolerated. This includes plagiarism. Do not attempt to use others works without proper citation. Acknowledge source material for all of your work. For more information on what constitutes academic dishonesty, see:

https://www.creighton.edu/fileadmin/user/CCAS/curriculum/CCAS_Academic_Honesty_Policy_.pdf

In the event of plagiarism, the student will receive zero points for the assignment.

DISABILITIES:

If you have a disability for which you need an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability Accommodations located in the Old Gym, Room 408 (402-280-2166) as early as possible in the semester.

WRITING/PRESENTATION HELP:

Writing and speaking are skills that requires practice and guidance. A significant part of this class will focus on both. Peer-review is encouraged as long as the authors create products that are demonstrably their own work. (see plagiarism and academic misconduct above). Also, feel free to stop by my office hours if you would like help. The Creighton Writing Center is a good option for writing assistance. See: <https://www.creighton.edu/ccas/english/writingcenter/> You can schedule appointments at the Writing Center in Creighton Hall 136. The Communication center helps assist student developing presentations. Make an appointment through Bluepoint: <https://www.creighton.edu/bluepoint/>



Gene Blevins, Los Angeles County fire helicopter makes a night drop while battling the so-called Fish Fire, 2016



Sebastian Pether, The Eruption of Vesuvius, 1825

CALENDAR

All readings must be completed before arriving to class the day they are assigned.

Part I. Disasters & History

What are disasters and what makes a disaster natural? How has the study of disasters changed over time?

Week 1 – Disasters & History

Mon (Aug 17)

Syllabus - Introduction

Wed (Aug 19) - *What is a "Natural" Disaster?*

Spreadsheet to select date/time for short speech goes live (Tues @ 8am)

Week 2 –

Mon (Aug 24) – Discussion

(S) Ted Steinberg, "What is a natural disaster?" *Literature and Medicine* 15: 1. (1996), p. 33-47

Wed (Aug 26) - *Colonialism and Secular Thinking in Lima (1746) and Lisbon (1755)*

(S) Russell Dynes, "The Dialogue between Voltaire and Rousseau on the Lisbon Earthquake: The Emergence of a Social Scientific View," *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters* (2000)

Complete Final Project Partner Survey (FRI AUG 28 @ 8am)

Part II. Vulnerability

Who or what is responsible for disasters? What is "differential vulnerability" and what makes some people more vulnerable than others? How has race, gender, and class affected exposure to natural hazards? How have issues of humanitarian support, human dignity, and ethics affected our understanding of disasters over time?

Week 3 – EARTHQUAKES

Mon (Aug 31) - Lecture

Wed (Sep 2)- Media and Recovery in Tokyo (1923) and Haiti (2010)

(S) Murali Balaji, "Racializing Pity: The Haiti Earthquake and the Plight of "Others," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* (2011)

Week 4 – HURRICANES

Mon (Sep 7) - **NO CLASS - LABOR DAY**

Wed (Sep 9) - Lecture - Differential Vulnerability and the State in Cuba (1967) and the United States (Katrina), 2002.

Week 5 – HURRICANES

Mon (Sep 14) - Discussion



(S) "After the Flood," *This American Life* <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/296/after-the-flood>

(S) August Nimitz, "Natural vs Social Phenomena: Cuba and the Lessons of Katrina," *The Black Scholar* (2006)

Wed (Sep 16) - **Guest Speaker** - John Mitchell (Health Sciences Librarian) - research methods

Stage 1 - Project Proposal due

Week 6 – PANDEMICS & DISASTER COMPLEXITY

Mon (Sep 28) - Lecture - Pandemics, Syndemics, and Disaster Complexity

Wed (Sep 30) -

(S) Mark C. Quigley et al., "A multi-hazards earth science perspective on the COVID-19 pandemic: the potential for concurrent and cascading crises."

Environment Systems & Decisions (2019).

(S) Tiff-Annie Kenny, 'The Coronavirus Doesn't Exist in Isolation - It Feeds on Other Diseases, Crises', *The Conversation* (May 2020). <https://theconversation.com/the-coronavirus-doesnt-exist-in-isolation-it-feeds-on-other-diseases-crises-135664>

MIDTERM DUE

Part III. - Adaptation

How has western science interpreted disaster and how has that changed over time? How has science been a tool for state management, colonialism, and the "control of nature?" What connections can we make between premodern and modern conceptions of disaster?

Week 7 – DISASTER CAPITALISM & EXHIBITIONS

Mon (Sep 21) - Indian Ocean (2004) and Puerto Rico (2017)

(S) Naomi Klein, *The Battle for Paradise*, pgs. 43-65.

Wed (Sep 23) - *Epidemics & Exhibitions*

(S) Donald Worster. "Another Silent Spring." *Environment & Society Portal*, Virtual Exhibitions 2020, no. 1 (22 April 2020). Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/another-silent-spring>

Week 8 – RIVER FLOODING

Mon (Oct 5) - The United States, 1923

Wed (Oct 7) - The Technocratic Paradigm and Normal Accidents in the US (1923) and the Netherlands (1953)

(S) Michael Kimmelman, "The Dutch Have Solutions to Rising Seas. The World is Watching," *New York Times* (2017)

Stage 2 - Annotated Bibliography Due

Week 9 – FIRE

Mon (Oct 12) - Lecture



Wed (Oct 14) - *Scientific Management of Rural and Urban Fires in the US West*
(S) Mike Davis, "The Case for Letting Malibu Burn," *Environmental History Review* (1995)

Stage 3 - Group Meeting Due (Oct 16)

Part IV - Resilience

How have ideas of "risk" and disaster shaped modernity? What aspects of disaster interpretation and response are unique to the modern period? How do natural disasters influence you?

Week 10 – CULTURES OF DISASTER

Mon (Oct 19) - Lecture

Wed (Oct 21) - Disasters in the Philippines

(S) Greg Bankoff, "Cultures of Coping: Adaptation to Hazard and Living with Disaster in the Philippines," *Philippine Sociological Review* (2003)

Sign up sheet for final presentations live **Friday Oct 23 @ 8am.**

Week 11 - SOLIDARITY & HUMAN DIGNITY

Mon (Oct 26) - Lecture - San Francisco (1906)

Wed (Oct 28) - Introduction to Neatline

Neatline Exercise due by the end of the day

(Oct 28) LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW FROM CLASS w/ "W"

Stage 4 - Draft Essay due

Week 12 – CLIMATE RESILIENCE & JUSTICE

Mon (Nov 2) - Sea Level Rise (Maldives)

(S) The Island President -watch via Kanopy before class through Creighton Library website

Submit recorded individual presentations to COM 101 ONE WEEK BEFORE YOUR FINAL PRESENTATION TIME

Wed (Nov 4) - Work day

Week 13 – PRESENTATIONS WEEK

Mon (Nov 9) - Presentations - Groups 1, 2, 3

Wed (Nov 11) - Presentations - Groups 4, 5, 6

Week 14 – PRESENTATIONS WEEK

Mon (Nov 16) - Presentations - Groups 7, 8, 9

Wed (Nov 18) - **NO CLASS - READING DAY**



Week 15 – FINALS WEEK - Class Presentations

Date/Time TBD - see Finals Schedule Online - Groups 10, 11, 12

Stage 5 - Final Atlas Project due

Magis Core Learning Objectives:

- *Students will identify their own social locations and analyze a controversial issue by articulating their own values and perspectives and those of an unfamiliar community.*
- *Students will evaluate and critique ideologies of social differentiation and the way systems of relative power and privilege are (or have been) reinforced.*
- *Students will develop the basic skills of information literacy, including searching for information, critically evaluating information from sources, and appropriately using and citing information.*
- *Students will demonstrate self-knowledge, including knowledge of their own biases and perspectives, and be able to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of varying points of view.*
- *Students will use technology effectively for research, analysis, communication, and collaborative work.*
- *Students will explain the concepts of “service” and “social justice” as they are understood within the Catholic and Jesuit traditions.*
- *Students will explain how one or more disciplines identify social ideals and analyze actual societal conditions in terms of social justice.*
- *Students will describe the range and types of human identities and cultures in contemporary or historical terms and identify what constitutes “difference” (or what has constituted “difference”) within the United States and throughout the global community.*
- *Students will state the meaning of “human dignity” as articulated within the Catholic, Jesuit, and other intellectual traditions and how “human dignity” is influenced by systems of social differentiation and by relative power and privilege.*

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT/AV RECORDING

Learning takes place in the face to face and virtual classrooms through a variety of means, including lectures, discussions, activities, etc. For learning to take place, these environments need to be a safe space. As part of that safe space, we should speak respectfully to and with each other. That is not to suggest that any of us will never misspeak. To learn from these conversations, we need to ensure that what happens in our face to face and virtual classrooms stays in the classroom. For this reason all course materials, including handouts, problem sets (and solutions), and lecture and discussion materials (powerpoint slides, videos, lecture and discussion recordings, etc.) that are posted on the course BlueLine site are considered to be copyrighted and are intended to be used only by students enrolled in that class, for the purposes of fulfilling the course objectives. Only the instructor may record common class sessions. Only the instructor may distribute any and all recorded materials, including individual student discussion posts. Sharing any of these materials with others outside of the course will be considered "misuse of

academic resources," as defined in the Creighton University Student Handbook as an act of academic misconduct, and students can be penalized, up to and including failure of the course.

In the case of recorded live lecture and discussion material, students should be aware that recording may continue during class breaks. Therefore, private conversations should be held elsewhere in order to avoid inadvertent recording.

STUDENT EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

Students will need either zoom enabled devices to participate in potential online or hybrid discussions

FORCE MAJEURE POLICY:

Creighton University may modify, suspend, or postpone any and all activities and services immediately and without notice because of force majeure causes beyond Creighton's control and occurring without its fault or negligence including, but not limited to, acts of god, fire, war, governmental action, terrorism, epidemic, pandemic, weather, national emergencies, or other threats

PARTICIPATION RUBRIC

Participation is graded according to frequency and *quality*. It accounts for a very significant portion of your final grade. The following rubric is a guide that lays out how you will be graded. *CLASS MEDIATION OF ONLINE DISCUSSIONS (in event of changed designation) COUNTS TOWARD PARTICIPATION GRADE*

Engagement in Discussion:

Excellent (300-270 points): Comments and questions during discussion are insightful and further the discussion. They frequently require a mastery of the reading and/or lecture material. These students do not dominate the discussion and show an active interest and respect for others opinions and their contributions to the discussion. They do not repeat previously asked questions.

Above Average (269-240 points): Discussion contributions are generally good, but there are sometimes instances where the student shows a lack of mastery of the material. These students may also tend to dominate the discussions to the exclusion of others opinions and contributions.

Average (239-210 points): Comments are sometimes insightful, though not frequent. The students will generally listen more than they will contribute to classes. Their comments will occasion seem off base because of their lack of preparation.

Below Average (209-180 points): These students rarely attend class and/or rarely offer substantive contributions to class. They are occasionally interested and sometimes come prepared, though this is infrequent.

Poor (179-0 points): Almost never attend class; lack of substantive contribution; lack of preparedness.

to the safety of students or staff. Creighton may, at its option, alter the academic schedule or provide alternate instruction modalities to meet course objectives and competencies and program outcomes, including, but not limited to, distance or remote learning, until such time as Creighton determines normal operations may resume safely

COURSE ADAPTATION IN EVENT OF COVID-19 CLOSURE

If class is forced to meet in part or completely online for at least part of the semester, the following revisions to course expectations and procedures will take place.

1. All readings will continue and quizzes will be conducted via Blueline.
2. All assignments in the class (including quizzes) will be due by midnight of the day they are assigned (CST)
3. I will also host weekly digital "office hours" during our regular meeting time and upon request.
4. Individual presentations will be submitted as panopto videos and all students will be expected to submit questions based on their viewing of the videos.
5. Final projects will continue as planned.
 - a. If we DO NOT return to campus by the end of the semester, instead of a group presentation, you will submit an individual recorded presentation of your project (using panopto). Although all students will produce a video, you can work with your partner to create one powerpoint to share. They will be due on same the day/time assigned.
 - b. All students will be expected to submit response and questions to the assignments by midnight the following day.
6. Participation will roll over from the first half of the semester. It will also be based on quality of presentation questions and comments.