

**SY 401: Disasters and Society
Spring 2012**

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The objective of this course is to introduce students to the sociological examination of natural, technological and human-initiated disasters. This course will explore how and why disasters are fundamentally social events, focusing on the unequal human consequences of disasters. In particular, we will study conflict models and theories of social vulnerability that emphasize social, economic, geographical, political and how vulnerable social groups, such as racial and ethnic minorities, low-income populations, women and the elderly are affected by and cope with hazardous conditions and events.

Required Textbooks:

Brunsma, D., D. Overfelt and J. Steven Picou (eds.) 2010. *The Sociology of Katrina: Perspectives on a Modern Catastrophe*. Roman-Littlefield Publishers. Second Edition.

Erikson, K., 1994. *A New Species of Trouble*. New York: Norton.

Freudenburg, W.R., R. Gramling, S. Laska and K. Erikson. 2009. *Catastrophe in the Making: The Engineering of Katrina and the Disasters of Tomorrow*. Washington: Island Press.

***Articles: Found on “Selected Publications” link: www.stevenpicou.com/**

Picou, J. Steven, 2009. “Katrina as a Natchez Disaster: Toxic Contamination and Long-Term Risks for Residents of New Orleans”. *Journal of Applied Social Science* (3) Fall: 39-57.

Picou, J. Steven, 2009. “When the Solution Becomes the Problem: The Impacts of Adversarial Litigation on Survivors of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill”, *University of St. Thomas Law Journal* (7) 1 Fall: 68-94.

Picou, J. Steven and Kenneth Hudson, 2010. “Hurricane Katrina and Mental Health: A Research Note on Mississippi Gulf Coast Residents”. *Sociological Inquiry* 80 No. 3, August: 513-524.

Picou, J. Steven, 2009. “Disaster Recovery as Translational Applied Sociology: Transforming Chronic Community Distress”. *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*. 32 (1): 123-157.

*Suggested Readings for undergraduates

Course Requirements and Grading Criteria:

Loss of Points: Your attendance is vital to this class, both for your own learning and for our growth as a community of scholars. Attending class will help you with your assignments and contribute to your development of a comprehensive understanding of the material. You will be penalized for excessive absences. In order to receive credit for the day, you must arrive on time and attend the entire class session. You are responsible for the material presented during class whether or not you attend. Please arrange with another student to get missed notes and announcements.

Exam #1 (100 points): The first in-class exam will be administered on Thursday, March 8th. The exam will consist of concepts, short answers and essay questions designed to reflect your understanding of the material covered in the first part of the course. The questions will be drawn from the readings, lectures, and class discussions. The exam cannot be taken early or late, and no make-up exams will be given unless a medical problem is documented by your physician.

Final Exam (100 Points): The final exam is a take home exam. The exam covers all lectures, readings and assignments required over the semester. Your primary task is to provide a book review of *A New Species of Trouble* and to relate this book to course material covered during the semester. The final exam should be 7-10 pages or more. Turn in on Thursday May 10th at 1:00 p.m. in this classroom.

Disaster Research Paper (100 Points): This semester you will research a natural, technological, or human-initiated disaster, as well as a specific population or social issue in the context of that event. Based upon your research, you will write a 10 page or more report/essay in which you will summarize the consequences of the disaster, analyze articles covering the event, and review some of the research literature related to the population or social issue you are exploring. The report/essay is due on Thursday, May 3rd. Four points per day will be deducted for late papers.

Videos: Occasionally videos on specific disasters will be shown. A video evaluation sheet needs to be completed by the student. Each video evaluation is worth 20 points.

Case-Study Disasters for This Course: Hurricane Katrina, will serve as the primary reference for our overall understanding of disasters this semester. However, other major disasters such as the Exxon Valdez spill, Hurricane Ivan and the BP Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill will be covered. Study Guides are provided for your two primary textbooks.

Below is a list of disasters you may want to study for your research paper. This list certainly is not exhaustive, but instead consists of a number of disasters that caused substantial loss of life, significant community disruption, and major economic losses. If there is a disaster that you are interested in studying that is not listed, you are welcome and encouraged to do so. However, please make sure that the event received sufficient media coverage to complete the assignment and have your selected disaster approved by me before you begin your research paper.

1. Kashmir Earthquake (2005)
2. Hurricane Katrina (2005)
3. Hurricane Rita (2005)
4. Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami (2004)
5. Bam, Iran Earthquake (2003)
6. Southern California Wildfires (2003-2010)
7. Western Wildfires (2002)
8. Southern Drought and Heat Wave (1998)
9. Chicago Heat Wave (1995)
10. Northridge Earthquake (1994)
11. Hurricane Andrew (1992)
12. Hurricane Hugo (1989)
13. Lorna Prieta Earthquake (1989)

14. Mexico City Earthquake (1985)
15. Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (1989)
16. Chernobyl Nuclear Explosion (1986)
17. Bhopal Chemical Release (1984)
18. Three Mile Island Nuclear Accident (1979)
19. Madrid Train Bombings (2004)
20. September 11 Terrorist Attacks (2001)
21. Oklahoma City Bombings (1995)
22. Hurricane Ivan (1994)
23. Hurricane Ike (2007)
24. Haitian Earthquake
25. The BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill

Class Participation:

Students will be encouraged and involved in class discussions. Occasionally, students will be required to construct “talking points” to lead discussions of textbook assignments.

Grading:

Attendance (loss of points from total)

Exam 1	-	100
Research Paper	-	100
Final (Book Review)	-	100
Video Reviews	-	40
Class Participation	-	<u>20</u>
		360 points

University Statements

- 1) The University of South Alabama provides equal educational opportunities to and is open and accessible to all qualified students without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, sex, or disability with respect to all of its programs and activities
- 2) In accordance with the Americans Disabilities Act, student with certified disabilities will be afforded reasonable accommodation. The Office of Special Student Services will certify a disability and advise faculty members of reasonable accommodations. **If you have a specific disability that qualifies you for academic accommodations, please notify the instructor/professor and provide certification from Special Student Services. The Office of Student Services is located in Room 270 of the Student Center (460-7212).**
- 3) Modifications of assignments and syllabi content may be necessary during the semester. Specifically exam dates may vary according to course material covered.

Academic Dishonesty. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students, who fail to document with proper citation any materials from scholarly writings, popular literature, Internet sources, or other students' work, will be subject to disciplinary action under the Student Academic Conduct Policy. Students taking this course are on

the honor system. It is expected that all work submitted will be your own. All papers, critiques, and discussions are subject to random selection for plagiarism check through “turnitin.com” and any paper submitted without appropriate documentation will be checked for plagiarism. “Appropriate documentation” is defined as ASA, APA, or AMA referencing in the body of the paper and a list of references cited. Cheating will result in disciplinary action under the **Student Academic Conduct Policy**.

Assignments

Week	Topic/Activity	Text Reading
1-2	Sociological Concepts/Disasters	Lectures
3	Foreword; Introduction; Part I (Framing Katrina)	Brunsma, et al. (lectures). Topical Video: “Inside Hurricane Katrina”
4	Part II (Experiencing Evacuation)	Brunsma, et al. (lectures).
5	Part III (Ongoing Disaster)	Brunsma, et al. (lectures).
6	Part III continued	Brunsma, et al.
7	Part IV and Postscript	Brunsma, et al.; Picou, “Katrina as Natchez Disaster”; Picou, “Hurricane Katrina and Mental Health”.
8	Review for Exam	Exam: March 1st
9	Prologue, Chapters 1-4	Freudenburg et al. Topical Video: “Still Waiting: Life After Katrina”
10	Chapter 5-8	Freudenburg et al.
11	Chapter 9-10	Freudenburg et al.
12	Exxon Valdez Oil Spill	Picou, “When the Solution Becomes the Problem”. Video Lecture “Black Wave”. Picou, “Disaster Recovery as TA Sociology”.
13	The BP Catastrophe	Lectures and Gill, et al. “The Exxon Valdez and BP Oil Spills”. <i>American Behavioral Science</i> 2012. See Website.
14	“A New Species of Trouble”	Class Discussion

15

Turn in Research Paper

Due May 3rd

***Important Dates:** February 23rd, Mardi Gras Holiday; Spring Break, March 12-18, 2012

****Turn in Final Take-Home Exam,** Thursday, May 10th at 1:00 p.m. in this classroom.

*****Research Paper Due,** Thursday, May 3rd.

Study Guide for Sociology of Katrina

Foreword (Erikson)

- 1.) What three reasons does Professor Erikson provide for the importance of a sociological understanding of Katrina? Why will we have increasing catastrophic events in the future?

Introduction (Picou, Brunson and Overfelt)

- 1.) Define natural, technological, natech and terrorist disasters.
- 2.) Why was Katrina a “massive complex contamination event”?
- 3.) What are corrosive social cycles? What are therapeutic social cycles?
- 4.) How do these social cycles have relevance for disaster recovery in New Orleans and the Mississippi Gulf Coast?
- 5.) How does Katrina compare to terrorist disasters?
- 6.) What is the “paradigm shift” or “enlightenment function” produced by Katrina?

Chapter 1 (Dynes & Rodriguez)

- 1.) What was the unique characteristic of Katrina that dominated the social framing process for this disaster?
- 2.) List the five (5) major framing themes identified for Katrina by the authors.
- 3.) Did the media provide “facts” or “exaggerated claims” in its coverage of Katrina?

Chapter 2 (Tierney and Bevc)

- 1.) Over the last 30 years, following the “cold war,” the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks and Hurricane Katrina, why has the military become more involved in domestic emergency management?
- 2.) The media’s portrayal of New Orleans in the “civil unrest” frame led to what type of response from the Federal Government?
- 3.) What social forces seem to be advancing the position that disasters need a greater military involvement? What are the criticisms of this position?

Chapter 3 (Frailing and Harper)

- 1.) What is the sociological perspective on looting following natural disasters? Why is there a controversy?
- 2.) What major economic and demographic changes occurred in New Orleans over the last 60 years (Tables 3.1 to 3.6; summary on p. 63).
- 3.) What major conclusions do the authors present regarding crime rates following three major hurricanes that hit New Orleans and the future of this city?
- 4.) What two important changes are noted in the epilogue that will result in full recovery for New Orleans?

Chapter 4 (Haney, et al.)

- 1.) What is the relationship between evacuation response and family structure presented by the authors (Figure 4.1)?
- 2.) Discuss the “R-5 Framework” for understanding evacuation behavior and stress.
- 3.) What were the evacuation response and the resultant emotional stress for people in New Orleans and other areas of the Gulf Coast? Which of these two groups were most stressed?
- 4.) How did “roles, responsibilities, financial resources, race and religion” impact returning to New Orleans?

Chapter 5 (Barnshaw and Trainor)

- 1.) Describe the disaster and return to normalcy models presented in Figures 5.1 and 5.2. What are the implications for social stratification?
- 2.) What is “social capital” and how does it relate to disaster impacts and community recovery?
- 3.) How did “personal” and “network” capital function for Hurricane Katrina evacuees?

Chapter 6 (Holcombe)

- 1.) What is “faith-based service provisions” for disaster victims?
- 2.) How did various religious congregations in Houston, Texas respond to Katrina evacuee’s needs? What problems did these congregations have in service delivery?

Chapter 7 (Bevc, Nicholls and Picou)

- 1.) What is the “hazards cycle” of natural disasters?
- 2.) Describe the source of data for this chapter?
- 3.) Describe evacuation patterns, storm damage and source of damages for MS and LA residents. How do the spatial damage patterns differ by state?
- 4.) What were the impacts on families, finances, home displacement and residential return? Were there differences in residential return by race categories?
- 5.) How would you describe the process of filing claims for insurance and grant reimbursements for returning residents?
- 6.) What are the expectations for community recovery for MS and LA residents?

Chapter 8 (Macomber, Rusche and Wright)

- 1.) What four (4) patterns emerged from the classroom (college) survey administered by the authors? Discuss these student responses.
- 2.) How do these student reactions reflect social reality in the United States and your own personal reactions?
- 3.) What personal reactions did the media coverage of Katrina generate among college students?

Chapter 9 (Miller and Rivera)

- 1.) The concepts of “place” and “social landscape” are important for understanding the meaning of community for residents. What types of disaster landscapes (identified by the authors) emerged after Katrina in the impact area (three major landscapes)?
- 2.) What is the ecological–symbolic perspective for studying disasters?
- 3.) What were the major changes, identified by photographs, in the (1) sociocultural landscape; (2) socioeconomic landscape; and (3) political landscape following Katrina?

Chapter 10 (Kleiner, et al.)

- 1.) What is community-based participatory action research?
- 2.) How was “capacity development” implemented along the Mississippi Gulf Coast in terms of social processes and social outcomes?
- 3.) What four recommendations are offered by the authors to improve “capacity development” following future natural disasters?

Chapter 11 (Capowich and Kondkar)

- 1.) What is “cultural creativity”?
- 2.) What are the three types of social networks that characterize communities/neighborhoods?
- 3.) What types of network relations are suggested for fostering cultural creativity in the rebuilding of New Orleans (four axioms and one proposition)?

Chapter 12 (Eargle, Esmail and Das)

- 1.) What are the major impacts that disasters have on students PK-12 and what are the eleven (11) primary categories of education that were significantly affected by Katrina?
- 2.) List and discuss three (3) emerging controversies associated with education that resulted from Katrina’s damage to school and universities in New Orleans.
- 3.) Summarize Katrina’s impacts on students, faculty, staff, programs and other areas of higher education in New Orleans. In short, how was the higher education landscape changed after Hurricane Katrina?

Chapter 13 (Kutner)

- 1.) What were the immediate impacts of Katrina on residents and healthcare services in the geographical area where the storm made landfall?
- 2.) What were the short-term and long-term consequences of Katrina for mental health and health care services in the impact area?
- 3.) Discuss the relationship between government, socioeconomic status and health problems and how social conditions influenced the negative impacts of Katrina.

Chapter 14 (Donato, et al.)

- 1.) What were the immigration patterns to the Gulf Coast prior to Hurricane Katrina? How did immigration trends change from 1990 to 2004 and what country was sending most of these recent immigrants (figures 13.1 and 13.2)?
- 2.) Describe the population changes in New Orleans immediately following Katrina.
- 3.) List and discuss the three phases of recovery in post-Katrina New Orleans (Table 14.1 pp. 276-288). How will the population of New Orleans be different and what group will play a significant role in the city’s revitalization?

Postscript (Clarke)

- 1.) Professor Clarke argued that Katrina caused two disasters, what distinguishes these “two” disasters?
- 2.) What is the relevance of population concentration for understanding disaster vulnerability and community resilience to disaster impacts?

- 3.) What five issues does Professor Clarke list that we need to provide answers for in order to understand Katrina's impacts?
- 4.) Define and discuss the relevance of the concept of "social liquefaction" and why Clarke argues that New Orleans is "gone" and "will not be back"?

Closing Questions

- 1.) What chapter(s) did you find most interesting and discuss your reasons for your choice?
- 2.) What major themes in the book are relevant for reducing the impacts of future disasters?

Study Guide for *Catastrophe in the Making*

- 1.) What are the "three stories" of Hurricane Katrina?
- 2.) What is the "The Growth Machine" and who are the "key agents" of this economic development process?
- 3.) Describe the historical relationship between the unique "natural setting" of the City of New Orleans with the emerging technologies that were used to "improve" the safety of the residents of this growing "port city." (Chapters 1-3).
- 4.) What was the logic for constructing canals throughout New Orleans and the creation of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) (Chapters 4-5). Why were "Growth Machine" activities, eg., canal building, obsolete on completion?
- 5.) How did the New Orleans Dock Board convince the Corps of Engineers to federally finance the "Tidewater Canal" or MRGO? How did "benefit-cost" analysis operate in these negotiations? (Chapter 5).
- 6.) What were the criticisms and concerns expressed by the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission and Edwin Roy of the *St. Bernard Voice* for the construction of MRGO? (Chapter 5).
- 7.) Compare the impacts of Hurricanes Betty, Camille and Katrina for the City of New Orleans. Why were the impacts of Katrina so severe? What was the main source of flooding for New Orleans? (Chapters 6-8).
- 8.) New Orleans was made vulnerable to hurricanes by the loss of "natural defenses". Describe how this occurred (pp 116-134; Chapter 7).
- 9.) Who were the real looters before and after Katrina? (Chapter 8).
- 10.) Why is New Orleans not an isolated exception for the risk of flooding in the United States? (Chapter 9).
- 11.) What are the major lessons that can be drawn from this book for reducing vulnerable populations and minimizing future disaster impacts? (Chapter 10).

