

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
York University
DEMS 5020 / ENVS 6401: Disasters - Concepts and Causes
COURSE SYLLABUS

Term: Winter 2017

Calendar Description

This course examines disasters from an interdisciplinary point of view, particularly considering how and why decisions made by people create vulnerable communities.

Prerequisite

None

Course Director

David Etkin

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Course Consultation Hours: By Appointment

Time and Location

Lectures: Location:

Purpose and Objectives of the Course

This course will focus on the risk to society from hazards and disasters, and how society adapts to those risks. Course content will not tend to focus on the hazards themselves, but rather on disaster theory and the processes within society and the environment that creates vulnerability. An interdisciplinary and mainly social science approach with a global perspective will be taken, but with some emphasis on Canadian content. General topics will include (1) disaster data and theory, (2) patterns of risk, (3) processes that create vulnerability & resilience, (4) human response and coping mechanisms, (5) impacts of disasters, and (6) case studies of disasters.

The course will consist of lectures, round table discussion, exercises, critiques by students on papers selected in consultation with the course instructor, and the examination of case studies. By its nature this is a very interdisciplinary subject and where appropriate guest lecturers will be brought in to discuss their areas.

Organization of the Course

This is a lecture and discussion based course that is supplemented by required readings and video documentaries. It is crucial that students attend all classes, and marks may be deducted for missed classes.

Evaluation

Two to three short answer assignments	25%
Critique	15%
Reflective Journal lectures 1-5 OR Oral Exam	25%
Reflective Journal lectures 6-12 OR Oral Exam	35%
Total	100%

Grading System

A+	Exceptional	90 – 100%
A	Excellent	85 – 89%
A-	High	80 – 84%
B+	Highly Satisfactory	75 – 79%
B	Satisfactory	70 – 74%
C	Conditional	60 – 69%
F	Failure	0 – 59%
I	Incomplete	N/A

Required Readings

- Etkin, D. (2015). *Disaster Theory: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Concepts and Causes*. Butterworth- Heineman. 387 pp.
- Other readings will be distributed by the instructor as required.

Topics

Proposed Lecture Topics (subject to change at the instructor's discretion):

- Course introduction and overview
- What is a disaster?
- Disaster data
- Risk Theory
- Hazard, Vulnerability & Resilience Theory
- Disasters & Complexity
- Disaster models and disaster management models
- Myths and Fallacies
- Disasters and ethics
- Principles of Disaster Management Workshop

FINAL EXAM TO BE SCHEDULED BY THE REGISTRAR

Grading Scheme, Assignment Submissions, and Lateness Penalties

Assignments and tests will bear either a letter grade designation (e.g., A, B, C, etc.) or an equivalent percentage grade. The final grade for the course will be calculated using the weighting formula established for this course.

Proper academic performance depends on students doing their work not only well, but on time.

Accordingly, assignments must be received by the due date specified, unless otherwise agreed upon with the course director.

Lateness Penalty: Unless written permission has been granted, late assignments will not be graded. Please use the form on Moodle to request assignment extensions. A late penalty may be assigned - up to 5% per day.

Missed Classes: Missed classes will be subject to a penalty of 4% per class, or a short submission of 3-5 pages summarizing the missed material. This does not apply for classes missed as a result of medical issues or emergencies.

Make-Up Tests

In order to write a make-up test for a missed test or exam, a medical note or other appropriate documentation must be presented to the Course Director. The course director **MUST** be informed within 24 hours by either e-mail or phone that of the missed test and of the presence of documentation to justify the writing of a make-up test.

Religious Observance Days

York University is committed to respecting the religious beliefs and practices of all members of the community, and making accommodations for observances of special significance to adherents. Should any of the dates specified in this syllabus for in-class test or examination pose such a conflict for you, contact the Course Director within the first three weeks of class. Similarly, should lab, practica, workshop, etc., assignments scheduled later in the term pose such a conflict, contact the Course director immediately. Please note that to arrange an alternative date or time for an examination scheduled in the formal examination periods (December and April/May), students must complete and Examination Accommodation Form, which can be obtained from the Registrar's Office.

Academic Honesty

York students are subject to policies regarding academic honesty as set out by the Senate of York University and by the Faculty of Environmental Studies. Please read the *Senate Policy on Academic Honesty* (which can be found as Appendix One of the *Academic Regulations of the Faculty of Environmental Studies* or in the University Policies and Regulations section of the *York University Undergraduate Programmes Calendar*). During the 2001-2002 academic year, the Faculty of Environmental Studies established policies and procedures to implement the Senate Policy. It is likely that they will be a close parallel to the policy of the Faculty of Arts; therefore, you are encouraged to read the Faculty of Arts Policy on Academic Dishonesty in the Faculty of Arts section of the *Calendar*.

Ethics Review Process

**FES GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR ETHICAL REVIEW
OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN UNDERGRADUATE
COURSES**

York students are subject to policies regarding ethics in research practices. All research activity with human participants and minimal risk as part of this course has to undergo ethical review. Please consider the following definitions:

- “**Human participants**” in research will be defined as persons who provide data or information to the researcher which are typically not part of their professional capacity.
- The draft **definition of funded research** from the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee [HPRC] is: “‘Funded’ will refer to all research that is receiving money that is in response to a specific proposal and administered by the university. Research using monies not administered by the University, and/or not in response to a specific proposal, will be considered ‘unfunded’.”
- The **definition of minimal risk** being used is the one given in the SSHRC/NSERC/MRC *Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (August, 1998): “If potential subjects can reasonably be expected to regard the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research to be no greater than those encountered by the subject in those aspects of his or her everyday life that relate to the research, then the research can be regarded as within the range of minimal risk.” (p. 1.5)

Student Conduct

Students and instructors are expected to maintain a professional relationship characterised by courtesy and mutual respect and to refrain from actions disruptive to such a relationship. Moreover, it is the responsibility of the instructor to maintain an appropriate academic atmosphere in the classroom, and the responsibility of the student to cooperate in that endeavour. Further, the instructor is the best person to decide, in the fairest instance, whether such an atmosphere is present in the class. [York University Policy and Procedures to Deal with Disruptive and/or Harassing Behaviour by Students in Academic Situations.]

Access/Disability

Students who feel that there are extenuating circumstances that may interfere with the successful completion of course requirements are encouraged to discuss the matter with the Course Director as soon as possible.

Students with physical, learning or psychiatric disabilities who require reasonable accommodations in teaching style or evaluation methods should discuss this with the Course Director early in the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made.