

**SOCIOLOGY OF DISASTERS
FALL 2024
COURSE SYLLABUS**

Course Number: SOCI 6307 (16533)

Meeting Time: Wednesdays 6:00 to 8:45 p.m.

Meeting Place: Old Main Conference Room 110

Instructor: Angela Frederick

Email: ahfrederick2@utep.edu

Office: Old Main 315

Office Hours: Mondays 3:00 - 4:00 via Zoom; Wednesdays 4:00 - 5:00 in person; Fridays 10:00 – 11:00 via Zoom. Other times by appointment.

COURSE OVERVIEW AND REQUIREMENTS

Course Overview. This graduate seminar will introduce students to the major theories, concepts, and perspectives sociologists and other scholars employ to understand both the causes and consequences of disasters. We will focus primarily on environmental disasters in the United States. The course is a seminar style, meaning students will take the lead in generating respectful and engaging discussions on each week's readings. In addition to our reading-based discussions, time will be devoted at the end of every class period to focus on professional development.

Learning Objectives. Students who complete this course should achieve the following objectives:

- Understand how social scientists have defined “disaster” and disaster-related “social vulnerability,” and be able to articulate a critique of shortcomings in these established definitions.
- Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the major sociological theories and concepts that explain social dynamics in disaster contexts.
- Articulate how disasters both reveal and amplify everyday inequities in social life.

Required Readings. The following books are required for the course. All other readings can be found on the course Blackboard page in folders organized by week.

- Goodell, Jeff. 2023. *The Heat Will Kill You First: Life & Death on a Scorched Planet*. New York: Little, Brown & Company.
- Salman, Sara. 2023. *The Shaming State: How the U.S. Treats Citizens in Need*. New York: NYU Press.
- Tolbert Kimbro, Rachel. 2021. *In Too Deep: Class & Mothering in a Flooded Community*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Assignments. Grades for this course are distributed as follows:

- **Weekly Reflection Papers – 60%.** Throughout the semester, you will submit weekly reflection papers on the assigned readings for the week. Reflection papers are due on Wednesdays via email at ahfrederick2@utep.edu by 1:00 p.m. Your lowest reflection paper grade will be dropped, and the remainder of your grades will be averaged to comprise 60% of your final grade.
- **Final Paper -- 25%.** You will submit a 20-page final paper for the course on a topic of your choosing that is related to course material.
- **Final Presentation – 5%.** You will present your paper as part of a conference-style panel.
- **Class Participation – 10%.** This portion of your grade will be determined by the frequency and quality of your participation in class discussions. To earn high marks for this portion of your grade, you should prepare to be a prominent voice in every class discussion and demonstrate that you are engaging thoroughly with course readings and concepts. Quality participation involves a high level of engagement with course material, not just how many personal stories you share during class. Quality participation also requires active listening to others and efforts to illuminate what others are saying.

Grading Scale. The grading scale in this course is as follows:

- A = 90%-100%
- B = 80%-89%
- C = 70%-79%
- D = 60%-69%
- F = 0%-59%

Late Assignment Policies. Instructions for submission must be followed. Exceptions will only be made for circumstances that rise to the level of a documented excused absence and in which I was informed in a timely manner. The late penalties for assignments are as follows:

- **Weekly Reflection Papers.** Students can submit reflection papers after the 1:00 p.m. Wednesday deadline, up until the start of that day's class at 6:00 p.m., for a penalty of -5. Weekly reflection papers will not be accepted after class has begun each week.
- **Final Paper.** Five points will be deducted from your paper grade if you submit the paper later than the deadline on the day the assignment is due, and ten points will be deducted from your paper grade for each additional day your assignment is late.
- **Final Presentations.** Presentations must be made on the assigned day in the course schedule. If an emergency arises, you must speak to me as soon as possible to make other arrangements. I will deduct points in these circumstances on a case-by-case basis.

Academic Integrity. Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory

reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another as ones' own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please visit [HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

AI Prohibited. Use of AI technologies or automated tools, particularly generative AI such as [ChatGPT](#) or [DALL-E](#), is *not allowed* for assignments in this class. Each student is expected to use critical and creative thinking skills to complete tasks and not rely on computer-generated ideas. Any direct use of AI-generated materials submitted as your own work will be treated as plagiarism and reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR).

Accommodations. The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students who become pregnant may also request reasonable accommodations, in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations and University policy. Accommodations that constitute undue hardship are not reasonable. To make a request, please register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Contact CASS at 915-747-5148, email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (August 28): Class Overview & Introductions

- Klinenberg, "Sociology and the Climate Crisis."

Week 2 (September 4): Survey of the Field

- Peek et al., "Sociology of Disasters."
- Arcaya et al., "The Social Consequences of Disasters."
- Peek et al., "What Methods Do Social Scientists Use to Study Disasters?"
- Elliott, "Climate Change as a Sociology of Loss."

Week 3 (September 11): Social Vulnerability & Resilience

- Note: We will meet on Zoom to accommodate our guest speaker.
- Priest & Elliott, "The Multiplicity of Impact." (The author will be joining us).

- Marino & Haas, "Is Vulnerability an Outdated Concept?"
- Benach et al., "What the Puerto Rico Hurricanes Make Visible."

Week 4 (September 18): Hurricane Katrina

- Horowitz. 2020. *Katrina: A History, 1915-2015* (Skip Chapters 1 & 2).

Week 5 (September 25): Disaster & Infrastructure

- Frederic, Intro & Chaps 1, 2, & 5 from *Disabled Power*.
- Carrera et al., "Community Science as Resistance."

Week 6 (October 2): Social Capital

- Klinenberg, "Denaturalizing Disaster."
- Elliott et al., "Limits to Social Capital."
- Lo & Fan, "Brightening the Dark Side of Linking Social Capital?"
- Igra et al., "Crowdfunding as a Response to COVID-19."

Week 7 (October 9): Inequities in Disaster Recovery

- Duffy & Shaefer, "In the Aftermath of the Storm."
- Raker, "Stratifying Disasters."
- Frederic, Chap 7 from *Disabled Power*.
- Elliott, "Damage is Done."

Week 8 (October 16): Hurricane Sandy

- Salman, *The Shaming State*.

Week 9 (October 23): The Corrosive Community

- Gill et al., "Exxon Valdez Oil Spill."
- Picou et al., "Disaster Litigation and the Corrosive Community."
- Slack et al., "Natech or Natural."
- Switzer et al., Chap 1 from *The Profits of Distrust*.

Week 10 (October 30): Hurricane Harvey

- Kimbro, *In Too Deep*.

Week 11 (November 6): Slow Violence

- Note that we will be meeting via Zoom to accommodate guest speaker.
- Nixon, Chap 1 in *Slow Violence & the Environmentalism of the Poor*.
- Hernandez, "Building a Home." (Author will be joining us).
- Chahim, "Governing Beyond Capacity."

Week 12 (November 13): Extreme Heat

- Goodell, *The Heat Will Kill You First*.

Week 13 (November 20): Student Lead Day

- Reading TBD.
- We will discuss your final papers & presentations.

Week 14 (November 27): Thanksgiving

- No Class.

Week 15 (December 4): Presentations

- Paper Presentations.

Week 16 (Final Exam Week)

- **Final Papers Due Wednesday, December 11 by 9:00 a.m.**