

Sociology 4380

“Social Perspectives on Catastrophic Events, High-Risk Technologies, & Homeland Security Policies”

Department of Sociology
University of Missouri, St. Louis

Winter 2007 Syllabus*

Time: Monday, 6:55-9:30 p.m.
Place: 205 SSB
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Office hours: By appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Using lecture, text, written assignments, class discussion, video, and interactive multimedia content, this course engages students to examine their assumptions about catastrophes. The course offers an in-depth analysis of the way social and cultural processes shape our experience and understanding of catastrophe, whether natural, accidental, or intentional. The course provides students with an overview and analysis of the ways technological, cultural, organizational, and political forces affect policies dealing with catastrophe preparation and prevention in the United States. In the case of catastrophes resulting from intentional causes, the course explores the sociological significance of the 9/11 Commission's conclusion that *imagination* is critically important to prevention, while outlining the significance of that point to understanding homeland security prevention efforts.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. This course covers the key insights sociological analysis offers into the way societies prepare for, and prevent, catastrophe. In doing so, students learn the basic theoretical approaches to the sociological study of catastrophe.
2. Students learn the basic ways of distinguishing a catastrophe from other harmful events, such as disasters or community emergencies through a case study of the devastation resulting from Hurricane Katrina.
3. The course provides students with the resources needed to think critically about the importance of society, technology, and human imagination in preparing for, and preventing, catastrophe.
4. Through a discovery learning process, students learn how key sociological concepts, specifically social capital and social networks, apply to preparedness and prevention.
5. Students learn to prevent a simulated terrorist attack on the city of San Luis Rey, a simulated city, while acquiring insights into the importance and dynamics of information sharing and collaboration for prevention efforts.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS/CLASS ACTIVITIES

Attendance is required every week. Missed classes lower your class participation score. In addition, students must attend class prepared to actively discuss the assigned readings and report on any group/individual activities for that day. Two books are required for the course. In addition, several articles are also required reading. The Syllabus references each article by author's last name for reading the week it is covered, with the full citation listed under the **Required Readings** section below. All of these articles are available online, either on the Internet or through the Thomas Jefferson library at UM-St. Louis. In addition to attendance, the course requires a range of online activities by students. Students must be able to look up articles online as well as engage in interactive learning exercises, including online discussions when necessary, and play gaming simulations.

The first few weeks of the course focus on conceptual and theoretical issues in the sociological analysis of catastrophe. You must read the assigned material closely before coming to class, and come prepared to discuss the *topical questions* for the week.

Topical questions for the week are posted each Tuesday on the course's MyGateway website as the semester proceeds. Students are required to write a 1 to 2 page answer for six *topical questions* over the course of the semester. **Your best five grades on the topical questions are used to calculate the overall point total for that portion of the course.** The written answers must be typed and double-spaced, with 12-point font and standard margins of 72 pt or .5 inches. Student names are required on a cover sheet with the one-page answer stapled to it. The written answer must draw from all the required readings for that week and reference those materials as appropriate (see Academic Honesty policy below). Students may not submit written answers to more than one *topical question* from any particular week. Each answer for a topical question must be turned in at the class meeting that covers that question. **In other words, you cannot go back to previous weeks to write answers to topical questions already covered.** The answers must be printed and handed in at the start of class, as well as e-mailed to Dr. Irons before class.

Three weeks of the course are dedicated to an extensive case study of the most recent catastrophe to occur in the United States, i.e. the devastation resulting from Hurricane Katrina. We will watch selections from the documentary *When the Levees Broke* and discuss the events documented in the context of assigned readings for those classes. Students are encouraged to rent the DVD and watch the entire documentary. However, for purposes of the course, only selections from the documentary covered in class are required viewing. **Please note that you cannot simply watch the documentary outside class and meet the requirements.** Important discussions, group activities, and lecture materials accompany each class covering the Katrina case.

The last five weeks of the course provide students with an overview of the techniques available to law enforcement professionals in preparing for, and preventing, catastrophic events. Although the techniques covered focus on law enforcement, the general resources covered, including the specific discussions of homeland security policies, are relevant to the application of preparedness and prevention for first responder professions in general. In addition to learning the significance of key sociological concepts, specifically social capital and social networks, to the application of preparedness and prevention, students will play an interactive game simulation provided with the textbook. The interactive exercises reinforce the concepts covered in the Baldwin, Irons, and Palin (2006) book, as well as providing students with the opportunity to engage in a discovery-based learning process. Please note that the interactive learning simulations involve a combination of web-based learning activities, guided by the CD-ROM application accompanying the textbook. These learning activities will occur within and outside the class, online at home or in a computer lab. Students cannot access these simulations before the date assigned since a userid and password are required. Each

student will receive their userid and password to access the interactive game simulation before the class covers the material.

COURSE SCHEDULE

January 22:
Clarke (2006), Preface, Chapter 1
[Fischer \(2003\)](#)

January 29:
Clarke (2006), Chapter 2
[Dynes \(2006\)](#)

February 5:
Clarke (2006), Chapter 3 and 4
[The 9/11 Commission Report - Chapter 11, pp. 339 - 360](#)

February 12:
Clarke (2006), Chapters 5 and 6
[Perrow \(2006\)](#)

February 19: We begin a three-week case study of Hurricane Katrina. We use the Spike Lee documentary to frame a series of issues related to Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, with special attention paid to the New Orleans experience. We view selections from the documentary in class and discuss what we see in the context of assigned readings.

"When the Levees Broke"
[Clarke \(2005\)](#)
[Quarantelli, E.L. \(2005\)](#)

February 26:
"When the Levees Broke"
[Fussell \(2005\)](#)

March 5:
"When the Levees Broke"
[Irons \(2005\)](#)
[Independent Levee Investigation Team Final Report \(2006\)—Chapter 12](#)

March 12:
Mid-term Exam
We will take the remainder of the meeting time for orientation to the interactive learning content covered in the second part of the course. All students need to bring their copy of Baldwin, Irons, and Palin (2006) to class.

March 19:
Baldwin, Irons, and Palin (2006) - Chapter 1
Terrorism Prevention Introductory Exercise

March 26:
Spring Break

April 2
Baldwin, Irons, and Palin (2006) - Chapter 2

Threat Recognition Advanced Exercise

April 9

Baldwin, Irons, and Palin (2006) - Chapter 3
Information Sharing Advanced Exercise

April 16

Baldwin, Irons, and Palin (2006) - Chapter 4
Collaboration Advanced Exercise

April 23

Baldwin, Irons, and Palin (2006) - Chapter 5
Risk Management Advanced Exercise

April 30

Baldwin, Irons, and Palin (2006) - Chapter 6
Intervention Advanced Exercise

May 7

Final Examination Week Begins

EVALUATION AND GRADING

The class grading consists of two exams, five one-page responses to topical questions, class participation, and completion of the interactive simulations. The exams use multiple-choice, fill in the blank, and short essay questions. The breakdown of the scoring is as follows:

Midterm Examination: 25%	(100 points)
Final Examination: 25%	(100 points)
Topical Question Responses: 20%	(80 points)
Class participation: 10%	(40 points)
Interactive Simulations: 20%	(80 points)

Total Possible Points: 400

90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
Below 60%	F

Make-Up Exams: If a student fails to take a scheduled exam for reasons other than illness or death, and does not contact Dr. Irons at least 48 hours in advance (not including weekends), a grade of zero is assigned. If a student misses an exam due to illness or family emergency, the student must provide Dr. Irons written documentation/proof such as a doctor's note, funeral announcement, etc. In case of family emergency, the student must notify Dr. Irons within 24 hours in advance. In either situation, once Dr. Irons receives the documentation, a make-up exam can be scheduled at his discretion.

REQUIRED READINGS

Books

Clarke, Lee Worst Cases Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 2006.

Baldwin, C., Irons, L., and Palin, P. Catastrophe Preparation and Prevention for Law Enforcement Professionals New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education. 2006.

Articles

Clarke, Lee (2005) "Worst Case Katrina" Understanding Katrina: Perspectives from the Social Sciences available online at the Social Science Research Council.

Available online at: <http://understandingkatrina.ssrc.org/Clarke/>

Dynes, Russell R. (2006) "Social Capital: Dealing with Community Emergencies," Homeland Security Affairs Vol. II, Issue 2

Available online at: <http://www.hsaj.org/pages/volume2/issue2/pdfs/2.2.5.pdf>

Fischer, Henry W. (2003) "The Sociology of Disaster" International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 97-107.

Available online at: http://www.ijmed.org/PDF_Files/March_2003.pdf This is the entire issue so you will need to scroll down to page 97 to locate the article.

Fussell, Elizabeth (2005) "Leaving New Orleans: Social Stratification, Networks, and Hurricane Evacuation" Understanding Katrina: Perspectives from the Social Sciences available online at the Social Science Research Council.

Available online at: <http://understandingkatrina.ssrc.org/Fussell/pf/>

Independent Levee Investigation Team Final Report Investigation of the Performance of the New Orleans Flood Protection Systems in Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005

Full report available at: http://www.ce.berkeley.edu/~new_orleans/

Chapter 12

Available online at: http://www.ce.berkeley.edu/~new_orleans/report/CH_12.pdf

Irons, Larry R. (2005) "Hurricane Katrina as a Predictable Surprise" Homeland Security Affairs Vol. I, Issue 2

Available online at: <http://www.hsaj.org/pages/volume1/issue2/pdfs/1.2.7.pdf>

Perrow, Charles (2006) "The Disaster after 9/11: The Department of Homeland Security and the Intelligence Reorganization" Homeland Security Affairs Vol. II, Issue 1

Available online at: <http://www.hsaj.org/pages/volume2/issue1/pdfs/2.1.3.pdf>

Quarantelli, E.L. (2005) "Catastrophes are Different from Disasters: Some Implications for Crisis Planning and Managing Drawn from Katrina" Understanding Katrina: Perspectives from the Social Sciences available online at the Social Science Research Council.

Available online at: <http://understandingkatrina.ssrc.org/Quarantelli/pf/>

The 9/11 Commission Report

Available online at: <http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>

ACADEMIC HONESTY

http://www.umsl.edu/studentlife/dsa/student_planner/policies/conductcode.htm

The Board of Curators recognizes that academic honesty is essential for the intellectual life of the University. Faculty members have a special obligation to expect high standards of academic honesty in all student work. Students have a special obligation to adhere to such standards. In all cases of academic dishonesty, the instructor shall make an academic judgment about the student's grade on

that work and in that course. The instructor shall report the alleged academic dishonesty to the Primary Administrative Officer.

The term **cheating** includes but is not limited to: (i) use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; (ii) dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; (iii) acquisition or possession without permission of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the University faculty or staff; or (iv) knowingly providing any unauthorized assistance to another student on quizzes, tests, or examinations.

The term **plagiarism** includes, but is not limited to: (i) use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without fully and properly crediting the author with footnotes, citations or bibliographical reference; (ii) unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials; or (iii) unacknowledged use of original work/material that has been produced through collaboration with others without release in writing from collaborators.

ANY STUDENT WHO HAS A DISABILITY WHICH WOULD MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO COMPLETE COURSE ASSIGNMENTS OR TESTS AS OUTLINED IN THIS SYLLABUS: PLEASE MAKE AN APPOINTMENT WITH ME IMMEDIATELY SO THAT I CAN EITHER ARRANGE FOR APPROPRIATE ASSISTANCE OR DESIGN AN ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURE TO EVALUATE YOUR WORK. THE OFFICE OF DISABILITY ACCESS SERVICES IS LOCATED IN 144 MSC; PHONE: 516-6554.

- * This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor to accommodate instructional and/or student needs. Changes are communicated to the class on the class website in the MyGateway system. By continued enrollment in this course, the student is indicating recognition and understanding of the syllabus.