Spring 2025

Climate Change, Disaster and Reconstruction

Anthropology 203 (01:070:203)

Course Meeting: Meets Tuesdays 8:30-10:30am and some Fridays 8:30-10:30am (as marked in bold on the syllabus)

Course Meeting Location: Northern Jersey State Prison

Course Instructor: David M. Hughes, Professor of Anthropology, Rutgers University

Course description

This course considers world-ending processes. In some cosmologies, they are the same events that start the world. In our present, industrial era, the burning of fossil fuels threatens to upend life and livelihood for most people. How do the multiple, interrelated crises emerge? How do they become less or more survivable and for which people? The course will pose these questions in relation to hurricanes, floods, and fires from California to New Jersey to Puerto Rico and beyond. How do rebuild, retreat, or reform the systems we inhabit? Ultimately, the course reckons with utopias and dystopias within the imaginative grasp of this generation. Students will read scholarship, journalism, and novels, and they will write – in this writing intensive course – both fiction and non-fiction.

Objectives of the course

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

1. Understand what a cosmology is;
2. Consider disasters in cross-cultural perspective;
3. Evaluate the differential effects of disasters on various social groups;
4. Compare and contrast strategies for personal and collective survival;
5. Write with verve and clarity;
6. Edit their own prose and that of their peers.

Reading

All of the reading is contained within the prepared coursebook.

Presentations

Two times during the semester, each student will present for roughly 10 minutes on **one** of the readings in a given week of the course. A superior presentation will accomplish the following objectives:

1. Summarize the main points of the reading;
2. relate that reading to previous reading, lectures, and/or discussions in the course;
3. relate that reading to some aspect of our everyday lives and/or to current events;

4. discuss a gap, flaw, or limit to the argument of the author of the reading;
5. pose three questions to the class regarding the reading.

Note: presentations are crucial elements of the Justice Studies degree (see "Learning Outcome" #7 on page 1). They are also central to maintaining trust and reciprocity within each classroom's learning community, as presentations benefit both you (the presenter) and your colleagues (your audience). For this reason, presentations are not optional: any presentations that are assigned in an NJ-STEP course must be given in order for students to pass the course. There is no option to "take a 0" for a presentation assignment, as it is a program learning goal and skill outcome.

Disaster fiction

The "disaster fiction" is a written assignment of roughly 1000 words that imagines a current or future disaster. The text should explain the history, context, geography, and full gamut of causes related to the given disaster. Please write your essay double-spaced and number the pages.

Grading

The grade is determined as follows:

1. class attendance and participation	20%
2. presentations	30%
3. disaster fiction	25%
4. final exam	25%

Schedule of reading and class meetings

Week 1 (Tues 21 Jan): Introduction

No reading

What are disasters?

Week 2 (Tues 28 Jan): Disasters that end the world

Lear, Jonathan. 2006. *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Chapter 1 (52 pages)

Wallace-Wells, David. 2019. *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life after Warming*. New York: Tim Duggan. Chapter 1 (36 pages).

Week 3 (Tues 4 Feb): Disasters that create the world

Kopenawa, Davi and Bruce Albert. 2014. *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman*. Trans. by Nicholas Elliott and Alison Dundy. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 2 (pp. 27-33).

Ghosh, Amitav. 2016. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Part 1 (pp. 3-84).

Week 4 (Tues 11 Feb **and Fri 14 Feb**): Disasters as politics
Solnit, Rebecca. 2009. *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster*. New York: Penguin. Pp. 1-10, 183-227.

Roots and responses to disaster

Week 5 (Tues 18 Feb **and Fri 21 Feb**): Disasters and race
Solnit, Rebecca. 2009. *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster*. New York: Penguin. Pp. 231-81.

Week 6 (Tues 25 Feb): Disasters and class
Davis, Mike. 1999. *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*. New York: Vintage. Chapter 3 (56 pages).

Week 7 (Tues 4 March): Resilience labor
Soni, Saket. 2023. *The Great Escape: the True Story of Forced Labor and Immigrant Dreams in America*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algoquin Books. Pp. 47-59,64-105.

Draft of disaster fiction due in class on 4 March.

Week 8 (Tues 11 March): The problem of capitalism, Part I
Ghosh, Amitav. 2016. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Part 3 (pp. 119-62).

Disaster fiction drafts returned with comments on 11 March.

Spring break

Week 9 (Tues 25 March **and Fri 28 March**): The problem of capitalism, Part II
Klein, Naomi. 2018. *The Battle for Paradise: Puerto Rico Takes on the Disaster Capitalists*. Chicago: Haymarket. Pp. 25-73.

Disaster fiction final essays due on 25 March.

Week 10 (Tues 1 April **and Fri 4 April**): Bouncing back or forward

Baker, Shalanda. 2019. "Anti-resilience: a roadmap for transformational justice within the energy system," Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review 54:1-20.

Klein, Naomi. 2018. *The Battle for Paradise: Puerto Rico Takes on the Disaster Capitalists*. Chicago: Haymarket. Pp. 1-13.

Utopia and dystopia

Week 11 (Tues 8 April **and Friday 11 April**): The interregnum

Sherrell, Daniel. 2021. *Warmth: Coming of Age at the End of our World*. New York: Penguin. pp. 3-30.

Robinson, Kim Stanley. 2020. *The Ministry for the Future*. New York: Orbit. Pp. 1-39.

Week 12 (Tues 15 April): Lifeboats

Klein, Naomi. 2018. *The Battle for Paradise: Puerto Rico Takes on the Disaster Capitalists*. Chicago: Haymarket. Pp. 15-23.

Quirk, Joe. 2017. *Seasteading: How Floating Nations will Restore the Environment, Enrich the Poor, Cure the Sick, and Liberate Humanity from Politicians*. New York: Free Press. Chapter 3 (38 pages).

Week 13 (Tues 22 April): Collapse and chaos

Hughes, David M. 2023. "A climate strategy of last resort." *Boston Review* 18 April (8 pages).

Markley, Stephen. 2022. *The Deluge: a Novel*. New York: Simon and Schuster. Pp. 125-42,854-74.

Week 14: (Tues 29 April **and Fri 2 May**): Beyond borders

Vince, Gaia. 2022. *Nomad Century: How Climate Migration will Reshape our World*. New York: Flatiron Books. Introduction (13 pages) and pp. 115-16.

Hamid, Mohsin. 2017. *Exit West*. New York: Riverhead Books. Pp. 3-10,68-75,84-98,129-41,151-56,166,169-89.

Take-back final will be distributed in class on 29 April and due in class on 1 May.

NJ-STEP Course Policies

Attendance, Lateness, and Contact Hour Policy

Students are permitted to miss up to one (1) class if the course meets once a week and two (2) classes if the course meets twice a week before absences negatively affect the final course grade. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each session, so please arrive by the scheduled time. All students must attend the whole class to get credit for the session. Missing 10 minutes of any portion of class time (late arrival, leaving early, or otherwise) counts as "late" or "partial" attendance. Three "lates" over the course of a semester counts as one full absence. Regardless of any absence, you are responsible for making up all missing work and class notes. Absence is not an excuse for a missing/late assignment. Of course, facility-related issues will never negatively impact students. The same is true for any kind of facility-mandated quarantine. Your academic counselor can assist in verifying and troubleshooting facility issues that impede student attendance. Regardless of a student's academic position in the course, missing more than three (3) classes for courses that meet once a week and six (6) classes for courses that regularly meet twice a week will result in automatic failure of the course.

Time Conflict Policy

Students are required to ensure that their course enrollment does not conflict or overlap in any way with work, programming, or other obligations as this will invoke the attendance policy.

Attendance and Participation Policy

Attendance and Participation is a required and assessable component of every course and will be weighted at a minimum of 10% of the final course calculation. Please note that participation is not a box to be ticked via speaking once or twice in class; rather, it is global engagement in course content, discussion, lecture, note-taking, and all course content.

Withdrawal Policy

Students are accountable for registration requests; choosing to register for a course indicates the intention and ability to complete the course. The Withdrawal period is a standard period of time (typically through mid-term) that Universities use. When a student Withdraws from a class, a grade of W replaces the standard letter grade for the course and no credit is earned. Withdrawal should be a rather rare occurrence in a student's academic journey, as course registration signifies the student's commitment to finish the term. Depending upon each individual student's financial aid status, Withdrawal may negatively impact both financial aid or Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP). Thus, Withdrawals should not occur frequently in any student's academic journey. Please discuss your Withdrawal questions with your Academic Counselors for personalized guidance. Students are responsible for initiating all Withdrawal requests to NJ-STEP staff in writing, whether by utilizing the form or a JPay message by the specified deadline.

Add/Drop Policy

The Add/Drop period is a standard grace period that Universities use for students to add or drop classes within the first few (usually 10) days of the semester. Drops made during this limited period of time remove the course registration from the student record, but only if the Drop request is made within the allotted time period. Adds made during this time allow students to register for classes even though the semester has already begun. Once the Add/Drop period has passed, course registration is final and cannot be modified. Please discuss your Add/Drop questions with your Academic Counselors for personalized guidance. Students are responsible for initiating all Add/Drop requests to NJ-STEP staff in writing, whether by utilizing the form or a JPay message by the specified deadline.

Late Work Policy

There is no university policy that requires work that is submitted past a clear deadline to be accepted or graded. Late submission of work creates additional labor for the professor and can create an impression of inequality in the overall assessments in the classroom. Therefore, it is up to the professor's discretion whether he or she will accept late work and, if accepted, whether the grade will be lowered accordingly. Students must be mindful that drafts and outlines of projects must be submitted in a timely fashion in order to benefit from the process of drafting and revision. Students are required to submit all coursework as indicated on the relevant syllabus. Students must submit coursework directly to the faculty member and must meet deadlines. No community members may arrange for coursework collection via mail, scan, third party, or other special arrangement. Deadlines are real; all members of the NJ-STEP and Rutgers University community must adhere to listed deadlines.

Academic Integrity Policy

As a member of the Rutgers University community, you are not to engage in any academic dishonesty. You are responsible for adhering to basic academic standards of honesty and integrity: your academic work should be the result of your own individual effort, you should not allow other students to use your work, and you are required to recognize and reference any material that is not your own.

Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, all writing assignments should be prepared by the student. Developing strong competencies in this area will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, AI-generated submissions are not permitted and will be treated as an Academic Integrity violation.

Academic Integrity violations also include the modification of a student's work by another person. Remember the simple rule of thumb: never allow your own pen or keyboard to touch another person's paper and vice versa. Examples of violations include Copyediting (allowing others to modify coursework you submit with your own name is not acceptable) and Typing or Computer Processing work for other students (all typed or written submissions must be produced by the author).

Students may not "outsource" manuscripts of their coursework for submission, as this may lead to several Academic Integrity Issues.

Please review the full Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy with any further questions or concerns; it is located in your Guidebook and is also distributed during the orientation all students attend. I am happy to take any further questions you may have.

A Note on Written Assignments

All written assignments are expected to be grammatically correct, syntactically responsible, and stylistically- appropriate. No assignment *needs* to be typed. It would be preferred if the final essay were typed, but a hand-written will also work just fine. *If you are not able to type your final paper and must write it by hand, you should double the page-length requirements.*

Classroom Rules

All members of this class are required to conduct themselves in an appropriate and professional manner. In this class, we may have discussions that challenge our taken for granted assumptions about crime and justice, for example. Students should be prepared to engage honestly and openly about this material and perhaps even examine their own beliefs about the issues. While I am hopeful that the course materials will spark interesting discussion, personal insults or other types of demeaning, disrespectful, or threatening comments toward other class members about their experiences, backgrounds, or statements will not be tolerated.