Sociology of Climate & Disaster (3 credit hours) Prof. Patricia Widener

SYP 4464 (3 credit hours) – Davie campus Fall 2015

*Prerequisites: Permission of the instructor or three sociology courses at the 1000, 2000*

*or 3000 level. [This course is designed to be accessible to everyone, so you do not need any prior sociology courses.]*

*Major/minor: This course can be counted towards the sociology major or minor.*

Meets: Tuesdays, 4-6:50pm, LA 234

Contact:

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Office hours: Mondays 2:30-4pm & 6:50-7:20pm (Boca CU249);

Tuesdays 1:30-3:45pm (Davie DW408)

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Course description: This course provides a critical examination of world disasters and climate change from a sociological perspective. In class, we will explore the social, political and economic impacts, causes and consequences of disasters and climate change from multiple sociological perspectives, as well as the social, political and economic changes that follow disaster and climate change. During the first half of this course, we will explore world disasters. In particular, we will examine media framing of disasters, political and government responses to disasters, the disaster experience seen through the lens of power, inequality and injustice, and finally community cohesion, solidarity and collaboration during disaster. A list of recent disasters will be provided for you, and we will discuss how sociological concepts are applicable to better understand a range of disasters. During the second half of this course, we explore climate change. Beyond discussing what climate change is, we will examine its global causes and local and global impacts (including social and ecological). We will also explore the consensus and disputes between scientists, corporate interests, political leaders and the public with regards to climate change, as well as discuss the breadth of public opinion and public confusion in the U.S. Finally, we will discuss global mitigation efforts and local adaptations.

Course objectives

* To think critically about macro-level processes that influence social, ecological as well as individual experiences.
* To apply key sociological concepts to better understanding national and global disasters and climate change.
* To understand how sociological concepts, perspectives and/or paradigms can be used as analytical tools to explain a range of specific cases, events or direct experiences.

Skills developed or practiced

* Critical reading, thinking and writing skills
* Ability to apply sociological concepts and/or perspectives to contemporary local, national and global events and/or experiences
* Awareness of and ability to discuss pressing issues related to disaster and climate change from a sociological perspective

Assignments

Exam I: This is an in-class essay exam. To prepare, sample questions will be available on Blackboard one week prior to the exam. This exam is worth 25% of your grade. [A makeup exam is possible only under special circumstances and requires the professor’s permission before the exam.]

Exam II: This is an in-class essay exam. To prepare, sample questions will be available on Blackboard one week prior to the exam. This exam is worth 30% of your grade. [A makeup exam is only possible under special circumstances and requires the professor’s permission before the exam.]

One paper: This is a 5-page paper assignment (excluding title page, excluding selected passages from the assigned reading and excluding a reference page if you include one). It is to be double-spaced, 12pt font, Times New Roman with one-inch margins, page numbers included. This assignment is designed to enable you to demonstrate your critical reading and critical thinking skills. It is based on the assigned readings, not lecture notes, though lecture will facilitate your understanding of the readings. You must cite the readings and include page numbers. There are three components to this paper: (1) Select two significant passages from the assigned readings; (2) interpret their meaning in your own words; and (3) apply your understanding of the author’s key concepts and/or arguments as identified in the selected passages to better understanding a newspaper’s account of climate change or disaster (excluding H. Katrina of 2005) that was published between 2005 and 2014 (attach clip or online printout). You cannot use the articles that I provide in class or that I list on this syllabus. Detailed guidelines will be available on Blackboard. This paper is worth 20% of your grade. [Each day that it is late, points will be deducted from your grade.] A printed copy must be turned in and it must be sent through SafeAssign by the beginning of class.

DUE DATE: For this paper assignment, you have two options. You could either write a paper on the disaster readings (using the primary sources *Sociology of Katrina* or *Paradise Built in Hell*), which would be due on September 23 – OR – you could write a paper based on climate change (using the primary source *Rapid Climate Change*) which would be due on November 4.

One mini-project: This project is a creative reflection and/or research-driven inquiry based on a selected passage from the assigned readings and how it inspired you to think about and/or to pursue a richer understanding of disaster or climate change from a sociological perspective. The link between the passage and the project must be clear. This project is worth 10% of your grade. It must be turned in and the word document portion must be sent through SafeAssign by the beginning of class. Each day that it is late, 5% will be deducted from your grade. \*A more detailed guideline with suggestions is available on Blackboard.

* If you chose to write the 5-page paper on disaster, then your creative or research project would be based on a passage from the climate change readings, *Rapid Climate Change,* and it would be due Nov 4.
* If you chose to write the 5-page paper on climate change, then your creative project would be based on a passage from the disaster readings, *Sociology of Katrina* or *Paradise Built in Hell*, and it would be due Sept 23.

In-class presentation: On November 25, you will be required to present either your paper or project on either disaster or climate change. In your presentation, you will read your selected passage, and then explain to the class what it meant to you as expressed in either your paper or project on either disaster or climate change. This exercise is worth 5% of your overall grade.

Final grade assessment Percent worth Due date

* Disaster Paper or Project\* 20% or 10% Sept 23
* Exam I 25% Sept 30
* Climate Paper or Project\* 20% or 10% Nov 4
* In-class presentation of paper or project 5% Nov 25
* Exam II 30% Dec 9
* Attendance 10%

100%

\*If you choose the disaster paper, then you must do the climate project. If you chose the disaster project, then you must do the climate paper.

Grading Scale

93-100 A 80-82 B- 67-69 D+

90-92 A- 77-79 C+ 63-66 D

87-89 B+ 73-76 C 60-62 D-

83-86 B 70-72 C- 0-59 F

Policy on attendance, late assignments and make-up exams

* Excused absences will be granted for religious observation, documented and required participation in university activities (such as athletics), certain documented civic responsibilities (such as jury duty), and military duty. Students are expected to notify me in advance of these absences. Since these are planned absences, assignments due during the absence should be submitted before the absence.
* Due to an emergencies or unforeseen circumstances, make-up exams may be possible, but must be approved by the professor. Make-up exams may not be an exact duplicate of the in-class exam. If approved, make-up exams will be taken at the Testing & Evaluation Center or by appointment with the professor before graded exams are returned to the other students.
* Each day that the paper or project is late, points will be deducted from your grade.

Classroom Etiquette & Participation

* I expect everyone to contribute to course discussion, ask questions (in class, by email, and/or during office hours) and to apply course material to social experiences.
* In-class behavior should be suitable to a group and university setting: turn off your cell phones, be courteous when someone is speaking, be courteous if you arrive to class late, use computers for in-class purposes only, and in-class behavior should not be disruptive to other students or to in-class learning and discussion.
* Time for comments and questions will be designated each class period. During those times, in-class discussions should be in a manner that is inclusive and respectful of the opinions, insights and contributions of others. In the spirit of collaboration, be attentive, courteous, supportive and engaged.

Required texts

* Brunsma, David, David Overfelt and Steve Picou, eds. 2010, 2nd edition. *The Sociology of Katrina: Perspectives on a Modern Catastrophe*. Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
* McKibben, Bill, ed. 2011. *The Global Warming Reader: A Century of Writing About Climate Change*. NY: Penguin Books.
* McNall, Scott G. 2011. *Rapid Climate Change: Causes, Consequences, and Solutions*. NY: Routledge.
* Solnit, Rebecca. 2009. *Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster*. NY: Penguin Books.

Recommended readings & news thoughts

You are not required to read the recommended readings or the news thoughts provided under the weekly assignments. Both if you are interested in that particular section, consider skimming or reading them.

Blackboard

The syllabus, writing guidelines, exam study guides, course outline and additional material will be posted on Blackboard (<http://blackboard.fau.edu>). Additional readings may be posted on Blackboard or found online.

University policies & advice

*Disability policy statement:*In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), students who require special accommodation due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) and follow all OSD procedures. OSD has offices across three of FAU's campuses- Boca Raton, Davie and Jupiter- however disability services are available for students on all campuses.

*Code of Academic Integrity policy statement:* Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the university mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the university community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see University Regulation 4.001.

*Broward Counseling Center:* Psychological counseling services are provided on the FAU campuses. If the Davie campus is your home campus, you can make appointments in person at the Student Union #206, or by calling 954-236-1210. <http://www.fau.edu/student/broward/counselingbroward/>

*Writing Center:* For assistance in writing on the Davie campus, visit the Center for Excellence in Writing: LA 220; 954-236-1111. You may also schedule an online appointment via Skype. For more information, see [www.fau.edu/UCEW](http://www.fau.edu/UCEW)

*Student Resources website*: <http://www.fau.edu/studentresources/>

Semester in Review

DISASTER

Week 1: August 19

* Course overview

The Impacts of Experiencing H. Katrina & H. Andrew

Week 2: August 26

* Brunsma et al.: Foreword, Preface I, Preface II, Introduction, Ch 4
* Smith, Kenneth J. and Linda Liska Belgrave. 1995. “The Reconstruction of Everyday Life: Experiencing Hurricane Andrew.” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 24 (3): 244-269. [Available through FAU’s e-library.]
* Ritchie, Liesel Ashley, Duane A. Gill and J. Steven Picou. 2011. “The BP Disaster as an Exxon Valdez Rerun,” *Contexts*, summer edition. Available online: <http://contexts.org/articles/summer-2011/the-bp-disaster-as-an-exxon-valdez-rerun/>
* Recommended: Bullard, Robert D. and Beverly Wright. 2009. *Race, Place and Environmental Justice After Hurricane Katrina*. Philadelphia PA: Westview Press.

Week 3: September 2

* Brunsma et al: Chs 12 (education), 13 (health) & 14 (immigration)
* Fink, Sheri, “The Deadline Choices at Memorial,” *New York Times Magazine*, 25 August 2009. [Available online.]
* Juhasz, Antonia. 2012. “Investigation: Two Years After the BP Spill, A Hidden Health Crisis Festers.” *The Nation*, 18 April. [Available online.]
* News thought: “Children in Haiti Suffering,” *The Leader-Post* (Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada), 8 January 2011, p. F6, reported by C. Chai.
* Recommended: 1) Erikson, Kai T. 1978. *Everything in Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood*. Simon & Schuster; 2) Sze, Julie. 2006. “Toxic Soup Redux: Why Environmental Racism and Environmental Justice Matter after Hurricane Katrina.” June 11, 2006, found: <http://understandingkatrina.ssrc.org/Sze/> ; and 3) Nachtwey, James. 2012. “Heroes of the Hot Zone.” *Vanity Fair*, (June): 68+.

Framing & militarism

Week 4: September 9

* Brunsma et al.: ChS 1 & 2
* Solnit: Ch 3: 135-180, 231-266

Power & inequality

Week 5: September 16

* Brunsma et al.: Chs 5, 8, & Epilogue
* “Gulf Spillover: Will BP’s Deepwater Disaster Change the Oil Industry?” 2010, *Scientific American*, Interview with sociologist Harvey Molotch by Larry Greenemeier, 7 June 2010. [Available online or through FAU’s e-library.]
* Oliver-Smith, Anthony. 2010. “Haiti and the Historical Construction of Disasters.” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 43.4 (July-August): 32-38.
* Frickel, Scott. 2006. “Our Toxic Gumbo: Recipe for a Politics of Environmental Knowledge.” June 11, 2006. Found online at: <http://understandingkatrina.ssrc.org/Frickel/>
* Recommended: 1) *Mother Jones’* 2010 BP Oil Spill Coverage: <http://motherjones.com/category/primary-tags/bp>; 2) “The Gulf Oil Spill: One Year Later, ‘Nothing Fundamentally Has Changed,” 2011, *Rolling Stone*, written by Jeff Goodell, posted online 19 April 2011.

Altruism, community cohesion & mutual aid

Week 6: September 23

* Solnit: Ch 1: 13-48; Ch 2: 86-132; Chs 3-4: 173-227; Ch 5: 267-304; & Epilogue
* Then re-read Solnit: p. 22, 48, 127, 131, 183-199, 220-227

\*\*Your paper OR project on disaster is due today, Sept 23\*\*

\*\*Exam I study guide available on Blackboard\*\*

* News thoughts: 1) “Severed From the World, Villagers Survive on Tight Bonds and To-Do Lists,” *New York Times*, 24 March 2011, p. A11, reported by M. Fackler; 2) “A Month After the Shock, A Different Japan,” *New York Times*, 13 April 2011, opinion piece by K. Makihara; 3)“Sept 11. Revealed Psychology’s Limits, Review Finds,” *New York Times*, 29 July 2011, p. A14, reported by B. Carey.

Week 7: September 30 - EXAM I

CLIMATE CHANGE

CC Causes

Week 8: October 7

* McNall: Preface, Ch 1
* McKibben: Part I (Hansen, p.47-54; skim IPCC, p.55-68)
* Recommended: 1) Hansen, James C. 2010. *Storms of My Grandchildren: The Truth about the Coming Climate Catastrophe and Our Last Chance to Save Humanity*. Bloomsbury; 2) Lovelock, James. 2010. *The Vanishing Face of Gaia: A Final Warning*. Basic Books; and 3) Saliken, Annette. 2009. *A Cocktail Party Guide to Global Warming*. Surrey, BC: Heritage House.

CC Impacts

Week 9: October 14

* McKibben: Part I (Masters, p.88-93)
* McKibben: Part III (McKibben, p.293-297; Schwartz & Randall, p.316-349; Breashears & Wheeler, p.360-364; and Braasch, p.372-375)
* News thoughts: 1) “On Nauru, a Sinking Feeling,” *New York Times*, 19 July 2011: A19, written by Marcus Stephen, who is the president of Nauru; 2) “Sizzle Factor for a Restless Climate,” *New York Times*, 20 July 2011: A25, written by Heidi Cullen, author of *The Weather of the Future*; 3) “George Monbiot: ‘If We Don’t Deal with Climate Change We Condemn Hundreds of Millions of People to Death,” *Democracy Now*, 18 May 2007; 4) “That Sinking Feeling: Climate Refugees Receive Funds to Leave Islands.,” *New Internationalist*, 1 March 2008, reported by J. Lateu; 5) “Ample evidence Florida’s feeling effects of climate change.” *Miami Herald*, 27 March 2009, writing by G. Tasker; and 6) Gillis, Justin. 2012. “Sea Level Rise Seen as Threat To 3.7 Million,” *New York Times*, 14 March: A1.
* Recommended: 1) Argos, C., J. Jouzel, H. Reeves. 2010. *Climate Refugees*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press; 2) McKibben, Bill. 2011. *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet*. St Martin’s Griffin.

CC Politics, Science & Public Opinion (or Confusion?)

Week 10: October 21

* McNall: Chs 2 & 3
* McKibben: Part I (Oreskes, p.74-78)
* News thought: “Four Sides to Every Story,” *New York Times*, 15 December 2009: A37, written by Stewart Brand, author of *Whole Earth Discipline*.
* Recommended: How to Talk to a Climate Skeptic: Responses to the Most Common Skeptical Arguments on Global Warming (A Grist Special Series by Coby Beck.) <http://www.grist.org/article/series/skeptics> or <http://gristmill.grist.org/skeptics>

Week 11: October 28

* McKibben: Part II (Gelbspan, p.104-125; Bingham, p.298-308; Evangelical p.309-318)
* Ungar, Sheldon. 2000. “Knowledge, ignorance and the popular culture: climate change versus the ozone hole.” *Public Understanding of Science*, 9: 297-312 – ONLY READ: p.297-301. [Available through FAU’s e-library.]
* “Global Warming’s Six Americas, June 2010.” Report by the Yale Project on Climate Change Communication and the George Mason University Center for Communication. [Available online.]
* News thought: 1) “Betraying the Planet,” *New York Times*, 29 June 2009: A19, by Paul Krugman; and 2) Roberts, David. 2012. “U.S. leads the world in cutting CO2 emissions – so why aren’t we talking about it?” 17 July. <http://grist.org/climate-policy/u-s-leads-the-world-in-cutting-co2-emissions-so-why-arent-we-talking-about-it/>
* Recommended: Schneider, Stephen. 2009. *Science as a Contact Sport: Inside the Battle to Save Earth’s Climate*. National Geographic

CC Risk & Perception

Week 12: November 4

* McNall: Ch 4
* McKibben: Part II (Tidwell, p.230-237)
* Dean, Amy. 2010. “Doing Green Jobs Right” *The Nation*, 13 September 2010: 20. [Dean is the author of *A New New Deal*.]

\*\*Your paper OR project on climate change is due today, Nov 4\*\*

* News thought: “A City Prepares for a Warm Long-Term Forecast,” *New York Times*, 22 May 2011, by L. Kaufman.

Week 13: November 11 – VETERANS DAY, NO CLASS

CC Action, Mitigation, Adaptation & Public Deliberation

Week 14: November 18

* McKibben: Part II (Jones, p.210-222; McKibben, p.250-257; Brown, p.258-267; Hansen, p.274-282)

\*\*Exam II study guide available on Blackboard\*\*

* Recommended: 1) McKibben: Part III (Shiva, p.364-370; Vidal, p.400-403); and 2) Brown, Lester, and Earth Policy Institute. 2009. Plan B 4.0. (chapters 9 & 10 only). London: W.W. Norton & Co. Available online.

Week 15: November 25

\*\*In-class presentations of papers or projects.\*\*

Week 16: December 2 – Reading day, no class

Week 17: December 9 – EXAM II

\*Grades are due in the Registrar’s Office by 9am, December 15.