

## **Development Sociology 6340: RISK AND DISASTER**

Wednesdays, 11:20am-1:50pm

Warren Hall 130

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Risks suffuse contemporary life. Every day individuals, firms, and governments make decisions in conditions of uncertainty. As disastrous events appear to increase in frequency and impact, risk has come to the center of many conversations. In this course, students will gain a grasp of social science perspectives on risk and disaster, with a focus on environmental domains. Questions of risk arise around both acute disruptions (storms, wildfires) and chronic exposures (chemical pollution, physical stress): How likely is a given thing to happen? What will the impact be? How do people's perceptions of risk square with formal evaluations of the probability and intensity of harms? What conditions affect how individuals, groups, and organizations respond to risky situations and disasters? How do aspects of political, social, and economic organization create conditions that intensify risks? How do people manage to know these things, and how does contestation of risk knowledge play out? In this course, we will examine what it means to live in an 'age of risk'. We will work through the ways scholars have worked to understand risk and social responses to it. We will then conceptualize disasters and examine them from a number of perspectives. While centered in the literature in sociology, the course will address interdisciplinary scholarship on risk and disaster, with material from disciplines including geography, psychology, anthropology, political science, and economics.

By the time they have completed this course, students will be able to

- Explain key social science concepts surrounding risk and disaster.
- Articulate the key issues in debates surrounding research on risk and disaster and present their own well-reasoned evaluations of these issues.
- Use empirical evidence and theoretical reasoning to account for how risk and disaster unfold differently in specific cases.

### **Format**

This course takes a seminar format that will give us all an occasion to read, discuss, and write. The bulk of each session will be devoted to open discussion of the day's readings. We will begin by setting the agenda, asking each participant to bring up any concepts or issues they want to clarify or discuss. I may spend some time introducing background or context of the debates at hand. Then we will discuss the readings together. I will use varying formats and questions to stimulate our conversations. Each week a different student will facilitate our conversation. I will meet with the facilitator ahead of time to brainstorm and plan.

### **Evaluation**

Your grade in this course will be based on the following: three reflections (33%), a final paper (33%), and class participation (33%).

## Reflections

You will sign up to submit reflections on three occasions during the semester. They are due 24 hours before we meet the week those readings are assigned, so that all participants have a chance to read them before class.

The point of the reflections is to give you a chance to develop your own views on the readings, to communicate those views to the class, and to demonstrate your command of what we've read thus far. The format is simple: Write a critical appraisal of some particular theme in the readings, 2 to 3 pages single-spaced, and submit on Canvas. Do not submit a sequence of summaries: Focus on discussing your theme or argument, and show how readings contribute as needed. The best reflections a) aptly summarize key points from the readings; and b) develop a coherent argument about their contents. Give your reflection a title and list beneath that the works you covered in the piece, much as is done with a "review essay". Each week, everyone will be expected to read the critiques, which we will use to help orient our discussion.

## Participation

Your grade for class participation will not be a measure of how loud you were, or of how often you spoke. Rather, it will reflect the extent to which you were "there." I will evaluate your "thereness" based equally on 1) your engagement in class discussions; 2) attendance; 3) your participation in setting the agenda at the beginning of class meetings; and 4) your engagement in discussions of class members' critiques. Showing you are really mentally there means demonstrating mindfulness by listening and responding to colleagues and being thoughtful about your own contributions, being sure not to dominate discussions. I will base grading on the initial assumption that everyone will get full credit, with deductions made for negligent or "unthere" performance, if necessary.

One important part of participation is having completed and reflected on assigned readings. The reading load is substantial but consistent with other graduate seminars. Be sure to read and think about all required readings ahead of class. Recommended readings are, of course, not required, but suggested because I expect many will find them helpful.

## The Final Paper

The central written work of the course will be a 4000-8000 word (about 16 to 20 double-spaced pages) essay. I am eager that this paper be of use for you beyond the confines of this course. So I will be interested in something that relates to your own research, or something that helps you along in the process of figuring out what that might be. I encourage you to consider targeting your essay for submission to a scholarly journal; we will talk about options in class.

Please note that a 1-page **topic statement** of your paper is due by class time the eighth week (16 Mar.), and a **revised topic statement and annotated bibliography** are due in the tenth week (30 Mar.). The week after break we will share our work in progress. Your completed **full draft** is due 20 Apr. I will provide feedback at each stage. We will peer review our papers. That means that you must submit a complete, relatively finished draft at the draft due date in order to receive a helpful review. Each student will submit a **peer-review** of a classmate's paper, due 27 Apr. The final draft is due 18 May. Each of these assignments is to be submitted via Canvas by 11:59pm.

## Course Outline

Note: **Further Reading resources are not required reading; I provide them in case you would like to explore further.** All materials will be provided in .pdf form, but several books we read portions of are available at the university bookstore.

### Getting Acquainted

26 January

### The Age of Risk? What is Risk?

2 February

- Bernstein, Peter L. 1996. *Against the Gods: The Remarkable Story of Risk*. New York: John Wiley & Sons. Introduction, Ch. 1, p.69-71.
- Rosa, Eugene A., Ortwin Renn, and Aaron M. McCright. 2013. *The Risk Society Revisited: Social Theory and Governance*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Introduction, Ch. 1, 2.
- Douglas, Mary and Aaron Wildavsky. 1982. *Risk and Culture: An Essay on the Selection of Technical and Environmental Dangers*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Introduction.
- Hilgartner, Steven. 1992. "The Social Construction of Risk Objects: Or How to Pry Open Networks of Risk." In Short James F. and Lee Clarke, eds., *Organizations, Uncertainties, and Risk*.

#### Further Reading:

London School of Economics and Political Science. 2018. *Uncertain Futures: Imaginaries, Narratives, and Calculation in the Economy*. <http://www.lse.ac.uk/lse-player?id=4545> (podcast)

### Living in a Risk Society

9 February

- Beck, Ulrich. 1992. *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage Publications. Introduction, Ch. 1-2.
- Tooze, Adam. 2020. "The Sociologist Who Could Save Us From Coronavirus." *Foreign Policy*, August 1. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/08/01/the-sociologist-who-could-save-us-from-coronavirus/>
- Freudenburg, William R. 1993. "Risk and Recreancy: Weber, the Division of Labor, and the Rationality of Risk Perceptions." *Social Forces* 71(4):909-932.
- Mythen, Gabe. 2021. "The Critical Theory of World Risk Society: A Retrospective Analysis." *Risk Analysis* 41(3):533-43.

### **Further Reading:**

- Reith, Gerda. 2004. "Uncertain Times: The Notion of 'Risk' and the Development of Modernity." *Time & Society* 13(2-3):383-402.
- Wilkinson, Iain. 2001. "Social Theories of Risk Perception: At Once Indispensable and Insufficient." *Current Sociology* 49(1):1-22.

## **Coming to Know Risk: Information, Cognition, Trust, and Evaluation**

16 February

- Meyer, Robert and Howard Kunreuther. 2017. *The Ostrich Paradox: Why We Underprepare for Disasters*. La Vergne: Wharton Digital Press. Pp. 7-76.
- Bubeck, P., W. J. W. Botzen, and J. C. J. H. Aerts. 2012. "A Review of Risk Perceptions and Other Factors That Influence Flood Mitigation Behavior." *Risk Analysis* 32(9):1481-95. doi: 10.1111/j.1539-6924.2011.01783.x.
- Lindell, Michael K., and Ronald W. Perry. 2012. "The Protective Action Decision Model: Theoretical Modifications and Additional Evidence." *Risk Analysis* 32(4):616-32.
- Slovic, Paul, Melissa L. Finucane, Ellen Peters, and Donald G. MacGregor. 2004. "Risk as Analysis and Risk as Feelings: Some Thoughts about Affect, Reason, Risk, and Rationality." *Risk Analysis* 24(2):311-22.
- Kasperson, Roger E. and Jeanne X. Kasperson. 1996. "The Social Amplification and Attenuation of Risk." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 545(1):95-105.

### **Further Reading:**

- Besley, John. 2018. "Core Subjects of Risk Analysis: Risk Communication & Risk Perception." Society for Risk Analysis. <https://www.sra.org/webinar/core-subjects-of-risk-analysis-risk-communication-risk-perception/>
- Birkholz, S., M. Muro, P. Jeffrey, and H. M. Smith. 2014. "Rethinking the Relationship between Flood Risk Perception and Flood Management." *Science of The Total Environment* 478:12-20.
- Kahneman, Daniel, and Amos Tversky. 1979. "Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk." *Econometrica* 47(2):263-91.
- Slovic, Paul. 1987. "Perception of Risk." *Science* 236(4799):280-85.
- Wachinger, Gisela, Ortwin Renn, Chloe Begg, and Christian Kuhlicke. 2013. "The Risk Perception Paradox—Implications for Governance and Communication of Natural Hazards." *Risk Analysis* 33(6):1049-65.

## **Making and Contesting Risk Knowledge**

23 February

Rosa et al. Ch. 8

- Jones, Lucile M. 2018. *The Big Ones: How Natural Disasters Have Shaped Us (and What We Can Do about Them)*. New York: Doubleday. Ch. 1.

- Frickel, Scott et al. 2010. "Undone Science: Charting Social Movement and Civil Society Challenges to Research Agenda Setting." *Science, Technology & Human Values* 35(4):444-73.
- Cordner, Alissa. 2016. *Toxic Safety: Flame Retardants, Chemical Controversies, and Environmental Health*. New York: Columbia University Press. Ch. 1, 3.
- Lane, Stuart N., Catharina Landström, and Sarah J. Whatmore. 2011. "Imagining Flood Futures: Risk Assessment and Management in Practice." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences* 369(1942):1784-1806.

### **Further Reading:**

- Scoones, Ian, and Andy Stirling, eds. 2020. *The Politics of Uncertainty: Challenges of Transformation*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Stirling, Andy. 2010. "Keep It Complex." *Nature* 468(7327):1029-31.

## **Hazards and Disasters**

2 March

- Oliver-Smith, Anthony. 1999. "What Is a Disaster?: Anthropological Perspectives on a Persistent Question." Pp. 18-34 in *The Angry Earth: Disaster in Anthropological Perspective*, edited by A. Oliver-Smith and S. M. Hoffman. New York: Routledge.
- Quarantelli, E. L. 2006. "Catastrophes Are Different from Disasters: Some Implications for Crisis Planning and Managing Drawn from Katrina." *Items*.  
[\(https://items.ssrc.org/understanding-katrina/catastrophes-are-different-from-disasters-some-implications-for-crisis-planning-and-managing-drawn-from-katrina/\)](https://items.ssrc.org/understanding-katrina/catastrophes-are-different-from-disasters-some-implications-for-crisis-planning-and-managing-drawn-from-katrina/)
- Wisner, Ben, Piers Blaikie, Terry Cannon, and Ian Davis. 2004. *At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability and Disasters*. 2nd ed. London and New York: Routledge. Ch. 1, 2.
- Perrow, Charles. 2007. *The Next Catastrophe: Reducing Our Vulnerabilities to Natural, Industrial, and Terrorist Disasters*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Selections.

### **Further Reading:**

- Cutter, Susan L. 2018. "Compound, Cascading, or Complex Disasters: What's in a Name?" *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development* 60(6):16-25.
- Furedi, Frank. 2007. "The Changing Meaning of Disaster." *Area* 39(4):482-89.
- Murphy, Raymond. 2004. "Disaster or Sustainability: The Dance of Human Agents with Nature's Actants." *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue Canadienne de Sociologie* 41(3):249-66.
- Perrow, Charles. 1984. *Normal Accidents: Living with High-Risk Technologies*. New York: Basic Books.

- Pritchard, Sara B. 2012. "An Envirotechnical Disaster: Nature, Technology, and Politics at Fukushima." *Environmental History* 17(2):219–43.
- Vaughan, Diane. 1996. *The Challenger Launch Decision: Risky Technology, Culture, and Deviance at NASA*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

## **Managing Disasters**

9 March

- Rosa et al. Ch. 9
- The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. 2015. *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*. Geneva: UNISDR.  
[https://www.unisdr.org/files/43291\\_sendaiframefordrren.pdf](https://www.unisdr.org/files/43291_sendaiframefordrren.pdf)
- Klein, Naomi. 2007. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt. Selections.
- Jones, Lucile M. 2018. *The Big Ones: How Natural Disasters Have Shaped Us (and What We Can Do about Them)*. New York: Doubleday. Ch. 9, 12.
- Montano, Samantha. 2021. *Disasterology: Dispatches From The Frontlines of The Climate Crisis*. Park Row. Selections.

### **Further Reading:**

- Aven, Terje, and Frederic Boudier. 2018. "Core Subjects of Risk Analysis: Risk Management & Policy." Society for Risk Analysis.  
<https://www.sra.org/webinar/core-subjects-of-risk-analysis-risk-management-policy/>
- Lyons, Michal. 2009. "Building Back Better: The Large-Scale Impact of Small-Scale Approaches to Reconstruction." *World Development* 37(2):385–98.
- Sovacool, Benjamin K., May Tan-Mullins, and Wokje Abrahamse. 2018. "Bloated Bodies and Broken Bricks: Power, Ecology, and Inequality in the Political Economy of Natural Disaster Recovery." *World Development* 110:243–55.
- UNISDR. 2015. *Making Development Sustainable: The Future of Risk Management. Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction*. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR).

## **Traumas and Solidarities**

16 March

- Oliver-Smith, Anthony. 1999. "The Brotherhood of Pain: Theoretical and Applied Perspectives on Post-Disaster Solidarity." Pp. 156–72 in *The Angry Earth: Disaster in Anthropological Perspective*, edited by A. Oliver-Smith and S. M. Hoffman. New York: Routledge.
- Solnit, Rebecca. 2009. *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disasters*. New York: Viking. Part I.

- Erikson, Kai. 1994. *A New Species of Trouble: Explorations in Disaster, Trauma, and Community*. New York: W.W. Norton. Prologue, Ch. 3, Conclusion. (Ch. 1 recommended.)
- Bullard, Robert D., and Beverly Wright. 2009. *Race, Place, and Environmental Justice after Hurricane Katrina: Struggles to Reclaim, Rebuild, and Revitalize New Orleans and the Gulf Coast*. Boulder: Taylor & Francis Group. Selections.

### **Further Reading:**

- Adger, W. Neil, Tara Quinn, Irene Lorenzoni, and Conor Murphy. 2016. "Sharing the Pain: Perceptions of Fairness Affect Private and Public Response to Hazards." *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 106(5):1079–96.
- Peek, Lori and Alice Fothergill. 2009. "Displacement, Gender, and the Challenges of Parenting after Hurricane Katrina." *NWSA Journal* 20(3):69–105.
- Picou, J. Steven, Brent K. Marshall, and Duane A. Gill. 2004. "Disaster, Litigation, and the Corrosive Community." *Social Forces* 82(4):1493–1522.
- Xu, Bin. 2017. *The Politics of Compassion: The Sichuan Earthquake and Civic Engagement in China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

## **Axes of Exposure and Vulnerability**

23 March

- Turner, B. L., Roger E. Kasperson, Pamela A. Matson, James J. McCarthy, Robert W. Corell, Lindsey Christensen, Noelle Eckley, Jeanne X. Kasperson, Amy Luers, Marybeth L. Martello, Colin Polsky, Alexander Pulsipher, and Andrew Schiller. 2003. "A Framework for Vulnerability Analysis in Sustainability Science." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 100(14):8074–79.
- Nixon, Rob. 2011. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Introduction.
- Liévanos, Raoul S. 2020. "Racialised Uneven Development and Multiple Exposure: Sea-Level Rise and High-Risk Neighbourhoods in Stockton, CA." *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 13(2):381–404.
- Goldsmith, Leo, Vanessa Raditz, and Michael Méndez. 2021. "Queer and Present Danger: Understanding the Disparate Impacts of Disasters on LGBTQ+ Communities." *Disasters*.

### **Further Reading:**

- Abbott, David and Sue Porter. 2013. "Environmental Hazard and Disabled People: From Vulnerable to Expert to Interconnected." *Disability & Society* 28(6):839–52.
- Cutter, Susan L. 2017. "The Forgotten Casualties Redux: Women, Children, and Disaster Risk." *Global Environmental Change* 42:117–21.
- Hooks, Gregory and Chad L. Smith. 2004. "The Treadmill of Destruction: National Sacrifice Areas and Native Americans." *American Sociological Review* 69(4):558–75.
- Taylor, Dorceta E. 2014. *Toxic Communities: Environmental Racism, Industrial Pollution, and Residential Mobility*. New York: New York University Press.

- Oulahen, Greg, Gordon McBean, Dan Shrubsole, and Stephanie E. Chang. 2018. "Production of Risk: Multiple Interacting Exposures and Unequal Vulnerability in Coastal Communities." *Regional Environmental Change*.
- Qiang, Yi. 2019. "Disparities of Population Exposed to Flood Hazards in the United States." *Journal of Environmental Management* 232:295–304.

## **Resilience and Adaptation**

30 March

- Walker, Brian, C. S. Holling, Stephen Carpenter, and Ann Kinzig. 2004. "Resilience, Adaptability and Transformability in Social–Ecological Systems." *Ecology and Society* 9(2).
- Nelson, Donald R., W. Neil Adger, and Katrina Brown. 2007. "Adaptation to Environmental Change: Contributions of a Resilience Framework." *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 32(1):395–419.
- Cote, Muriel, and Andrea J. Nightingale. 2012. "Resilience Thinking Meets Social Theory: Situating Social Change in Socio-Ecological Systems (SES) Research." *Progress in Human Geography* 36(4):475–89.
- Aldrich, Daniel P., and Michelle A. Meyer. 2015. "Social Capital and Community Resilience." *American Behavioral Scientist* 59(2):254–69.
- Tierney, Kathleen. 2015. "Resilience and the Neoliberal Project: Discourses, Critiques, Practices—And Katrina." *American Behavioral Scientist* 59(10):1327–42.

## **Further Reading:**

- Alexander, D. E. 2013. "Resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction: An Etymological Journey." *Natural Hazards and Earth System Sciences* 13(11):2707–16. doi: 10.5194/nhess-13-2707-2013.
- Carmin, Tierney, Chu, Hunter, Roberts, and Shi. 2015. Adaptation to Climate Change. Chapter 6 in Dunlap, Riley E. and Robert J. Brulle, eds. *Climate Change and Society: Sociological Perspectives*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Carr, Edward R. 2019. "Properties and Projects: Reconciling Resilience and Transformation for Adaptation and Development." *World Development* 122:70–84.
- Davidson, Debra J. 2010. "The Applicability of the Concept of Resilience to Social Systems: Some Sources of Optimism and Nagging Doubts." *Society & Natural Resources* 23(12):1135–49.
- Gallopín, Gilberto C. 2006. "Linkages between Vulnerability, Resilience, and Adaptive Capacity." *Global Environmental Change* 16(3):293–303.
- Rachunok, Benjamin, and Roshanak Nateghi. 2021. "Overemphasis on Recovery Inhibits Community Transformation and Creates Resilience Traps." *Nature Communications* 12(1):7331.
- Tschakert, Petra, and Kathleen Dietrich. 2010. "Anticipatory Learning for Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience." *Ecology and Society* 15(2).



Walker, Brian, Lance Gunderson, Ann Kinzig, Carl Folke, Steve Carpenter, and Lisen Schultz. 2006. "A Handful of Heuristics and Some Propositions for Understanding Resilience in Social-Ecological Systems." *Ecology and Society* 11(1).

### **Interlude: Sharing Our Work**

13 April

### **Institutionalizing Hazards**

20 April

Collier, Stephen J. 2014. "Neoliberalism and Natural Disaster: Insurance as Political Technology of Catastrophe." *Journal of Cultural Economy* 7(3):273-90.

Elliott, James R. and Matthew Thomas Clement. 2017. "Natural Hazards and Local Development: The Successive Nature of Landscape Transformation in the United States." *Social Forces* 96(2):851-76.

Howell, Junia, and James R. Elliott. 2019. "Damages Done: The Longitudinal Impacts of Natural Hazards on Wealth Inequality in the United States." *Social Problems* 66(3):448-67.

Ericson, Richard V., Aaron Doyle, and Dean Barry. 2003. *Insurance as Governance*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Selections.

Jarzabkowski, Paula. 2015. *Making a Market for Acts of God: The Practice of Risk-Trading in the Global Reinsurance Industry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Selections.

### **Further Reading:**

Gotham, Kevin Fox. 2014. *Crisis Cities: Disaster and Redevelopment in New York and New Orleans*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kunreuther, Howard. 2006. "Disaster Mitigation and Insurance: Learning from Katrina." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 604(1):208-27.

Pralle, Sarah. 2019. "Drawing Lines: FEMA and the Politics of Mapping Flood Zones." *Climatic Change* 152(2):227-37.

### **Contesting Hazardous Institutions**

27 April

Elliott, Rebecca. 2017. "Who Pays for the Next Wave? The American Welfare State and Responsibility for Flood Risk." *Politics & Society* 45(3):415-40.

Koslov, Liz, Alexis Merdjanoff, Elana Sulakshana, and Eric Klinenberg. 2021. "When Rebuilding No Longer Means Recovery: The Stress of Staying Put after Hurricane Sandy." *Climatic Change* 165(3):59.

- Ajibade, Idowu. 2019. "Planned Retreat in Global South Megacities: Disentangling Policy, Practice, and Environmental Justice." *Climatic Change* 157(2):299–317.
- Johnson, Leigh. 2020. "Sharing Risks or Proliferating Uncertainties? Insurance, Disaster and Development." Pp. 44–57 in *The Politics of Uncertainty: Challenges of Transformation*, edited by I. Scoones and A. Stirling. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

## **Risk Futures**

4 May

- Shtob, Daniel A. 2019. "Remembering the Future: Natural Disaster, Place, and Symbolic Survival." *Rural Sociology* 84(1):123–47.
- Cooper, David Heath, and Joane Nagel. 2021. "Lessons from the Pandemic: Climate Change and COVID-19." *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*.
- Buck, Holly Jean. 2019. *After Geoengineering: Climate Tragedy, Repair, and Restoration*. London: Verso. Selections.

## **Further Reading:**

- Liu, Hin-Yan, Kristian Cedervall Lautu, and Matthijs Michiel Maas. 2018. "Governing Boring Apocalypses: A New Typology of Existential Vulnerabilities and Exposures for Existential Risk Research." *Futures* 102:6–19.
- Shwom, Rachael, and Robert E. Kopp. 2019. "Long-Term Risk Governance: When Do Societies Act before Crisis?" *Journal of Risk Research* 22(11):1374–90.