PHIL 330 Philosophy & Disaster 1600-1750 TR 121 MCK 4.00 cr.
Philosophical and interactive course on disaster preparation, with contemporary, historical, and current event readings. Grading Optional for all students
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Phone: (541) 346-1547, Office Hours: TR 2:30-3:30

OVERVIEW

After 9-11 the world seemed to become more dangerous, including visible threats from hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, chemical spills, fires and pandemics, as well as terrorism. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina brought a new dimension—the inability of government to respond immediately to emergencies, which leaves an ill-prepared public on its own. The aim of this course is to philosophically develop a humanistic approach to disaster preparation and emergency response, from the standpoints of civilian individuals and communities, and vulnerable populations. The purpose of this course is to contribute to the new multi-disciplinary academic field of “Disaster Studies” and to improve the quality of life in emergencies—for students in the class, the UO community, the Eugene community, and beyond. The focus will be on the importance of individual choice, reflection, and practical emergency preparation, as well as the philosophical/theoretical background.

Students in this course will critically consider thought and action concerning disaster—that is, the philosophical contribution. There is also a second focus on developing practical skills and becoming knowledgeable about the realities of contemporary disasters. Philosophy & Disaster meets the criteria for Arts and Letters group in that it introduces students to the philosophical aspect of disaster studies and includes components relevant to applied ethics, moral theory, social and political philosophy, and the history of philosophy. The course will also have a multi-disciplinary component, relating philosophical issues to social science, public policy, and current journalism, and an interactive component that provides students with academic credit for learning a new skill, such as CPR, water safety, first aid, and relating this to course themes. The course fulfills the department’s focus on engaged philosophy.
Course Objectives

• Acquire a familiarity with contemporary key ideas in multi-disciplinary disaster studies.
• Critically engage these ideas and representative scholars by using philosophical methods of analysis, as well as contemporary disaster case studies.
• Consider broader cultural factors that impact disaster response and resilience.
• Develop a perspective on climate change that relates it to natural disasters and cultural commitments.

Learning Outcomes

✓ Knowledge acquired of an emerging philosophical subfield and some of its paradigm examples and subjects.
✓ Exposition, Interpretation, and Criticism of perspectives and analyses from politics, media presentations, and traditional cultural expectations.
✓ Ability to understand some of the complexities of contemporary disaster preparation and response.
✓ Learn what would be required to prepare for disasters where students live and in ever-expanding areas, given interest and commitments.

Syllabus

Please see Appendix to Syllabus for additional information on papers and course policies.

Grade Components

Academic

• Three 2-3-page (600-900 words) Papers –45%
• Term paper 3-4 pages (1200-1500 words -20%
• Class participation and Attendance – 25%

Practical and imaginative –10 % - 2 of 4 for 5% each.

• (1) Development of your own disaster plans, in your situation with 1 page description of immediate evacuation plans, disaster kit contents, arrangements with family members, etc., must be detailed. For useful information, see http://www.ready.gov/ 5% You can describe your plans in a “to do list” that includes what you still need to acquire.
(2) Outside Project, You do not need to complete the outside project by the end of the term, but you do need to have made a sincere and significant investment of time and energy in it to get full credit. (1 paragraph description and documentation required. Possibilities include CERT (Citizens Emergency Response Training), CPR, First Aid, an Emergency Communications Program, a Campus Preparedness Program.) 5%
(2) A report of a contemporary disaster not discussed in class, which analyzes its relevant philosophical aspects using a disaster brief (see below) can be substituted. 5%
(4) Read ONE DAY IN THE LIFE OF IVAN DENISOVICH, Alexander Solzhenitsyn 64 p. novella posted on canvas) and write about 2 pages about how disaster is different from other kinds of human misfortune, such as described in this book. 5%
Grading – Based on 100%, UO letter grading, as usual, e.g. C= 73–76, C+ = 77–79, B-= 80–82, B=83–86, B+=87–89, A-=90–92, A=93–96, A+=97–100 (-it’s possible).

Absences - You are allowed 2 free absences from lecture, which do not require a written excuse or advance notification, unless you are missing a due date for a paper. Absences over this amount requires documentation to be excused. Otherwise, each unexcused absence from lecture will detract 2 points from your final grade.

PAPERS
‘A’ papers need to be polished, with bibliographies, references to sources and clear development of arguments, statements of assumptions and reasons given for opinions. There should be no writing glitches. All papers need to be submitted in hardcopy. All papers are to be emailed to nzack@uoregon.edu as word docs. Paper requirements: Evidence of your reading in the form of endnotes or footnotes to pages in the assigned articles. Put your name on the file title. Each paper is an answer to the question(s) posed on the syllabus. These papers are your main academic work in the course—there is no midterm or final exam. Please see full the paper writing guides in Appendix.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note: Disaster Briefs</th>
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<tr>
<td>Disasters have factual statistics, noteworthy consequences, meanings, and historical importance. In making a record for further study and discussion, for any given disaster, the following should be recorded.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facts: Date and time, place, number of deaths, injuries and property destruction, size and source of aid; Recovery time, changes in public policy, changes in preparation for future disaster.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noteworthy Consequences: changes in attitude, new realizations, influences on future planning. Meanings Why was the disaster culturally important?</td>
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Schedule: readings, paper questions, projects, events, resources. Additional examples and short readings will be added as the course progresses.

All readings are to be done before the date for which they are assigned. All readings are on Canvas. All papers are due on the Tuesdays indicated before 12 PM.

WEEKS

**Introduction**

I Tues. What is a Disaster? Physical definitions, historical consequences, meaning of disaster. Discussion of course contents and requirements and of ‘Disaster Briefs’

Thurs. Historical Perspectives on Disaster

Reading: Dyne, “The Dialogue Between Voltaire and Rousseau on the Lisbon Earthquake.”

**Disaster and Risk**


III T. Reading: E.L. Quarantelli, *What is Disaster?*

R. Discussion of Quarantelli and paper prompt.

**Conflict and Human Security**

IV T. Due: **Paper no. 1.** With reference to your readings in the course thus far, write an essay explaining the difference between the facts and the meaning of disaster.

**Reading:** UN Idea of Human Security


**Poverty and Vulnerable Populations in Disaster**

V T. The capitalist-critique: **Reading:** Marx and Engel’s, *Communist Manifesto* (selections TBA).

**R.** Naomi Klein on Disaster Capitalism; HelpJet ; N. Zack, “Violence, Poverty, and Disaster.”

**Normative Approaches to Disaster- Law and Morality**

VI T. **Paper no. 2 due.** With reference to the Human Security Paradigm and issues of vulnerability, explain how all are not equal in disaster.


**ETHICS**

VII T. **Reading:** Deontology and Utilitarianism; the Precautionary Principle.

**R. Reading:** “CDC Avian Flu Pandemic Guidelines;” Baker and Strousberg, “Triage and Equality.”

VIII T. **Reading:** N. Zack,”Ethics of Disaster Planning”

**R. Reading:** Hoffman, “Climate Science as Culture.”

**Natural Disasters and Disaster in Nature**

IX Paper no. 3 due Tuesday: What are the main ethical issues in disaster and what principles do you think should be followed ? (Give reasons.) Do not discuss climate change in this paper but save the subject for the final paper.
T and R and T of week X
Reading and video with discussion.

N. Zack, Disasters in society and nature, chaps. 6 and 7 from Reviving the Social Compact; “The Human Element,” video (in class and online at youtube, google play, vudu, amazon, etc. for $4-6
NCA4 Report (fourth national climate assessment).

SUMMING UP

X  T – *All written work pertaining to practical projects to be brought to class. Discussion or oral reports on all options. Reading and viewing continued from Week IX.

R – *Term papers due before noon. Self-grading on class participation, in class—attendance required for this. Term Paper: Write an essay about how climate change is different from the immediate events of disasters. Explain the main cultural and physical problems concerning climate change and describe their relationship(s).

Additional Sources


Practical Resources
Guides to surviving in rural areas with very little equipment. US Army Survival Manual; Garth Hattingh, Outdoor Survival.
Emergency Preparation: Ted Wright, Wright’s Complete Disaster Survival Manual; Catherine Stuart, Simply Essential Disaster Preparation Kit; Doug King, Emergency Disaster Survival Guidebook.
Information on personal disaster planning.
http://www.ready.gov/
Emergency and disaster response in Eugene: Use search engine at www.eugene-or.gov;
UO campus emergency information, https://safety.uoregon.edu/emergency-and-safety- see also Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/

Supplies such as first aid kits, duct tape, plastic sheeting can be found inexpensively at Walmart, BI-Mart or other chain stores and on Amazon. More specialized equipment, some less expensive can be found at Saunderson Safety Supply Company, 850 Congers St. Eugene or ordered on-line at www.safetyservicesinc.com)
Training Programs: Eugene CERT, Red Cross, FEMA, Volunteer Programs at local hospitals.

APPENDIX

Disability
Philosophy Department faculty and instructors do their best to comply with Disability Services policy and instructions, as follows. Please see no. 4 in particular.
At a minimum, Instructors have the responsibility to ensure full access for students with disabilities by responding to a student’s need or request for accommodations as outlined below.

1. **If a student presents you with a notification letter from DS:**
   1. You have the responsibility to cooperate with DS in providing authorized accommodations in a reasonable and timely manner. The specific accommodation determines the amount of involvement required. Refer to the section below entitled "Examples of Shared Responsibility" for a description of your involvement in providing the most common accommodations.

2. **If a student does not present you with a notification letter from DS:**
   1. If a student requests an accommodation without having presented you with the notification letter from DS, please refer the student to DS. If the student is already on file with DS, a request form just needs to be filled out. If the student is new to DS, the process to review documentation and meet with the student may take some time. If the disability is obvious and the accommodation appears appropriate, you may need to provide the accommodation while awaiting official notification. If you are unsure, please call DS for assistance.

3. **If a student discloses a disability to you:**
   1. Ask to see the notification letter from DS. This letter describes the accommodations that the institution is legally mandated to provide. During an office hour or at another convenient time, discuss the letter and the accommodations with the student. Students MUST present a notification letter from DS to receive testing accommodations. If the student does not have a letter, please refer the student to DS. Appropriate accommodations will be determined after reviewing documentation of the disability and the student will be issued the notification letter.

4. **If you have a question about the appropriateness of an accommodation:**
   1. Questions about the appropriateness of certain accommodations should be directed to the Director of DS.

5. **If a disability is suspected:**
   1. Share your concerns with the student regarding his or her performance. If the concern seems disability-related, ask if he or she has ever received assistance for a disability. If it seems appropriate, refer the student to DS for further discussion and guidance. It is the student's decision whether or not to self-identify to DS; however, to receive accommodations, disclosure to DS with proper documentation is required.

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**GRADING:** U of O Philosophy Department Policy

What kind of paper deserves an “A,” “B,” etc.? The following reflects the general standards of the Philosophy Department at the University of Oregon.

- **A** = excellent. No mistakes, well-written, and distinctive in some way or other.
- **B** = good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.
- **C** = OK. Some errors, but a basic grasp of the material.
- **D** = poor. Several errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.
- **F** = failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or a complete lack of effort.

Please note: what counts as “excellent” or “OK,” for example, depends in part upon the nature and level of the class in question.

**Discussion** forms an integral part of the course, and your performance will be graded on the basis of the quantity and quality of your participation. You should arrive prepared to discuss the material and course assignments.

**Academic Honesty**

The stiffest punishments possible will be sought for those who plagiarize, fabricate, or cheat. (The usual punishment is an “F” for the course.) The following offers examples of academic dishonesty.

**Plagiarism** Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's product, words, ideas, or data as one's own work. When a student submits work for credit that includes the product, words, ideas, or data of others, the source must be acknowledged by the use of complete, accurate, and specific references, such as footnotes. Expectations may vary
slightly among disciplines. By placing one's name on work submitted for credit, the student certifies the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgements. On written assignments, if verbatim statements are included, the statements must be enclosed by quotation marks or set off from regular text as indented extracts.

A student will avoid being charged with plagiarism if there is an acknowledgement of indebtedness. Indebtedness must be acknowledged whenever:
1. one quotes another person's actual words or replicates all or part of another's product;
2. one uses another person's ideas, opinions, work, data, or theories, even if they are completely paraphrased in one's own words;
3. one borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative materials—unless the information is common knowledge.

Unauthorized collaboration with others on papers or projects can inadvertently lead to a charge of plagiarism. If in doubt, consult the instructor or seek assistance from the staff of Academic Learning Services (68 PLC, 346-3226). In addition, it is plagiarism to submit as your own any academic exercise (for example, written work, printing, computer program, art or design work, musical composition, and choreography) prepared totally or in part by another.

Plagiarism also includes submitting work in which portions were substantially produced by someone acting as a tutor or editor.

**Fabrication**

Fabrication is the intentional use of information that the author has invented when he or she states or implies otherwise, or the falsification of research or other findings with the intent to deceive.

Examples include, but are not limited to:
1. citing information not taken from the source indicated;
2. listing sources in a reference not used in the academic exercise;
3. inventing data or source information for research or other academic exercises.

**Cheating**

Cheating is an act of deception by which a student misrepresents or misleadingly demonstrates that he or she has mastered information on an academic exercise that he or she has not mastered, including the giving or receiving of unauthorized help in an academic exercise.

Examples include, but are not limited to:
1. copying from another student's paper, computer program, project, product, or performance;
2. collaborating without authority or allowing another student to copy one's work in a test situation;
3. resubmitting substantially the same work that was produced for another assignment without the knowledge and permission of the instructor;
4. writing a paper for someone else or permitting someone else to take a test for you.

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**HOW TO WRITE GOOD PHILOSOPHY PAPERS**

Note: When you get your papers back, there will be comments. The letters in parentheses indicate what aspect of your writing might need improvement and you may see them the second or third time this aspect still needs work. **If you are disappointed in your grade, please see your GTF. If after meeting with your GTF, you still do not understand how to improve your grade, please meet with the course professor.**

1. **CLARITY** (CL) Since this is a philosophy paper, make sure that you define your terms and give reasons for claims. All of your ideas should be explicitly stated and not left to the reader to infer. One difference between philosophy and literature is that philosophers spell everything out, while creative writers depend on the imagination of the reader.
2. **PRECISION** (P) Try not to make vague claims or general statements about the ideas in the readings. Be accurate in reporting the views of others and exact in stating your own.
3. **ORGANIZATION** (O) Organize the ideas in the paper into a few coherent paragraphs. Summarize the main claims of your paper in 2 or 3 sentences that you write after you write the paper, but put at the very beginning of the paper. This is an appropriate introductory paragraph for a philosophy paper, not a filler or a fluffy beginning.
4. **WRITING MECHANICS** (WR) The mechanics include spelling, punctuation, syntax and complete sentence structure. Make sure that you already have these down or consult a source if you don’t. Highly recommended is Strunk and White’s *The Elements of Style*. This is available online at [www.bartleby.com/141/](http://www.bartleby.com/141/)
5. **ANALYSIS** (A) Analyze claims. This means breaking your ideas down into their simpler components, and

Politics

The Situation in Puerto Rico Is Untenable

Although the effort to rebuild Puerto Rico has made progress, the island is still confronting questions of status, economics, and emigration that Hurricane Maria helped expose.

Vann R. Newkirk II
Sep 20, 2018
Carlos Barria / Reuters

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico—Puerto Rico se levanta. It’s become something of an official motto among officials on the island, draped across buildings and making its way into press releases and speeches. It captures an optimistic and hopeful feeling, one a world away from mainland America’s posture toward the island, which vacillates between indifference and sensationalism. The best English translation is probably “Puerto Rico is rising,” but a few others might do as well. Puerto Rico rises. Puerto Rico raises itself. Puerto Rico is waking up.

But a full year after the destruction of Hurricane Maria—with blue tarps as ubiquitous on the island as the se levanta slogans and the murals declaring fuerte—just what do “rising” and “waking up” really mean? Thursday marks the tragic anniversary of one of the most deadly disasters in American history, and somber vigils and actos ecuménicos across Puerto Rico will mark it as such. The subtext of each event is the push and pull of grief and hope, a battle between past and future, a struggle between colony and colonizer, a complicated relationship between a diaspora and home, and an unresolved mix of questions about status and citizenship.

A year after Maria, Puerto Rico finally knows how many people died.
• Can Puerto Rico Recover From Maria Before the Next Storm Hits?  
  *Vann R. Newkirk II*

• Puerto Rico's Environmental Catastrophe  
  *Vann R. Newkirk II*

• Puerto Rico's Dire Health-Care Crisis  
  *Vann R. Newkirk II*
What have we learned since Hurricane Maria? Most of the attention in the past few weeks has been focused on how to quantify the damage done by the storm and its aftermath. That discussion took on a heated, partisan character when President Donald Trump disputed the estimate, rendered by academic researchers, that almost 3,000 people died as a result of the storm. His dispute—and that of the praetorian guard of pundits dedicated to preserving his presidency—is not one rooted in facts or even in goodwill toward the Puerto Rican people, but in dismissal and negligence. The number makes the federal government look bad, so it must be a hoax, or the result of poor conditions on the island before the storm, or a poor response from Puerto Rican authorities long after.

It’s a self-contradictory argument, but one that, above all else, denies any kind of federal responsibility. According to Trump, the federal government’s response was monumental and historical, but was somehow also hampered by the fact that Puerto Rico is a five-hour flight away from Washington, D.C. In his telling, that response is what kept the island from enduring a fate similar to Louisiana and other states in the Gulf of Mexico after Hurricane Katrina.

But the truth is that the federal government’s reaction was deeply inadequate, and likely led to hundreds or perhaps thousands of deaths. A report released by Trump’s own Federal Emergency Management Agency even outlines some of the ways in which the response was lacking. The report found that local stores of emergency supplies in federal warehouses in Puerto Rico were all but nonexistent, and that many of the agency’s critical staff were deployed elsewhere during the early stages of Hurricane Maria. Federal communications were a mess, making it difficult to get a handle on the true scope of the damage or marshal resources to the worst-hit areas, and leading to logistics logjams in the provision of emergency goods. Outside reporting from Frontline and NPR has found even more worrying deficiencies in the federal response, including a critical lack of planning, a misunderstanding of the island’s fragile electric grid, and a contracting process during the response phase that was wanting, to say the least. There is no reading of FEMA’s response, official or otherwise, that indicates that it was as swift or efficient as it was after mainland disasters like Hurricane Harvey in Texas.

But the responsibility for Maria’s aftermath doesn’t just rest with the federal government, either.
Puerto Rico’s vulnerable electricity grid and its weak critical infrastructure were almost entirely destroyed by the storm, and the story of how they got so weak is one that involves authorities on the island and federal lawmakers from both parties. Then there’s the financial crisis that wracked the island, and the Puerto Rico Power Authority’s financial troubles, which left the territory with a power grid that was a strong storm away from complete collapse. The fact is that last year, Hurricanes Irma and Maria struck an island that was uniquely fragile, in political and financial turmoil, and probably in the worst shape possible for a major disaster.

The ongoing question of responsibility is still being sorted out in the territory. Multiple levels of government have been involved in Puerto Rico’s restoration, as well as its political struggle for power within the United States. A federal oversight board, implemented by Congress two years ago and signed into law by President Obama, is technically in charge of major fiscal decisions on the island, and as such was the major player in a recent decision to privatize Prepa. But it still exists uneasily alongside the official elected government on the island, led by Governor Ricardo Rosselló, and the two have often clashed on infrastructure and finance, among other matters.

Under the direction of the oversight board, the island has embarked on an austerity program, which includes slashing public assistance and government support to municipalities and institutions like Puerto Rico’s robust university system, as well as major cuts to public education and a massive slate of school closings. In a post-Maria world, the goal of this program is essentially to starve off the informal economy and massive public sector that have developed over time in Puerto Rico, and replace them with a robust formal tourism industry and private developers, all buoyed by an influx of credit from mainland investors. But that program has highlighted another rift within the territory, one in which public-sector employees and students are naturally squeezed and now find themselves often in protest.

Even as those tensions heighten within the increasingly complicated social and political structures within Puerto Rico, rebuilding is still taking place. After eight months in the dark for some citizens, most of the power grid is back in place. It’s still fragile, and still faces outages during storms in some areas, but the deafening hum of generators that characterized the island’s metropolitan areas after Maria is no longer. Most of the critical roads are repaired, and the hospitals are in no worse condition than they were before the storm. Tourism is back—and this week especially, Rosselló has made a show of entertaining visitors—even though some of the signature hotels in San Juan and Old San Juan still haven’t been rebuilt.

**Puerto Rico enters a new age of austerity.** Officials within the tourism industry have decried news coverage of dysfunction and destruction in favor of a narrative that highlights strong recovery. “Six months after Hurricane Maria hit, more than fifty percent of travelers said media coverage negatively impacted their view of Puerto Rico as a destination and we’re hoping to change that as the one year anniversary approaches,” said Brad Dean, the CEO of Discover Puerto Rico, a new nonprofit created to promote tourism, in a press release earlier this month.

Still, it’s hard to visit Puerto Rico and not see that the recovery is incomplete, perhaps even hollow in some places. The blue tarps covering roofs are so common that they are visible on the flight into San Juan. Municipalities far away from the bustle of the capital still lag behind in rebuilding, only compounding the miseries of rural, poorer residents that existed before the
storm. As Kathy Gannett, a resident of Vieques, a small island off the eastern coast, told me, most of the population there still has “great needs for housing, health services, sustainable energy, jobs, ferry service, and mental-health services.”

One of the most difficult problems for the island to deal with is the fact that so many people have left it. According to an analysis released Thursday by the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College in New York, almost 200,000 people have departed for the mainland in the year since the storm. That’s a steep drop of about 6 percent from the total population of roughly 3 million people, and it’s on top of the half million residents who left in the 12 years before Maria. According to Edwin Meléndez, the center’s director, the exodus of Puerto Ricans to the mainland “is an indication of stagnant conditions on the island and the impatience of the population with the governmental responses at all levels.”

Those numbers get to the heart of the problem in Puerto Rico, one that exists beyond Trump’s government, and one that Maria exposed rather than created. It’s that the political and economic situation of the island is untenable, and that the old specter of colonialism is more and more unbearable.

As people continue to leave, the disaster of Hurricane Maria is still exerting its influence, and the political questions of how to truly confront the catastrophe and its root causes are in front of the island and its diaspora—not behind them. A year is not enough time to measure the scale of a disaster as massive as Maria. The effects on local and federal politics alone will reverberate through future elections. The effects on the economy of Puerto Rico have only just begun, and it increasingly looks like the hurricane marks an epochal shift in the nature of the relationship between the island and the broader United States. *Puerto Rico se levanta*, but exactly where it will rise is still a mystery.