

ANTHROPOLOGY 2277A-001

Anthropology of Disaster

COURSE OUTLINE

Fall 2022/23

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Instructor: Greg Beckett (he/him)

Email: gbeckett@uwo.ca

Office Hours: email for appointment or see OWL for scheduled open office hour slots

Credit value: 0.5 credit

Mode of delivery: In person, Tuesdays 1:30–3:30 pm. Lecture and discussion.

Antirequisites: The former Anthropology 2277F/G.

Prerequisites: None.

Course Description:

Most social science begins with the presumption of order and continuity, which makes disruption, disorder, and other kinds of social breakdown appear “abnormal.” How else might we think about crisis, disaster, and emergency? In this course, we will explore cross-cultural and historical perspectives on disaster, broadly conceived, by considering the various meanings that communities and individuals give to crises, disasters, and emergencies. In particular, we will look at the following topics: the human experience of disaster; risk and preparedness; insecurity and trauma; the spread of emergencies across borders and the expanding field of international humanitarian intervention; and the ways that individuals and communities try to live through crises and thrive after emergencies. We will also use this course as an occasion to think collectively about the global and local experiences of living through a disastrous pandemic.

Alongside weekly quizzes and short assignments based on the required readings, students will work collaboratively on a group research project and present their results. Each student will also write an individual analysis paper based on their group research project. Students will also write a cumulative final exam. More information on all assignments will be available on the course OWL site. A full course schedule including a week-by-week breakdown of topics and assigned readings will be available on the course’s OWL site before the first day of class.

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Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Analyze disasters from multiple points of view and drawing on multiple lines of evidence;
- Interpret disasters as social and cultural occurrences by drawing on historical, economic, social, and political, factors that give rise to them;

- Explain how the meaning of disaster changes over time and across cultures in relation to changing patterns of social and political organization and in relation to cultural definitions of nature and technology;
- Compare different types of disasters in relation to their causes and effects in a variety of social and cultural contexts;
- Explain the conditions that give rise to disasters and the consequences that follow them through online discussions, group work, and individual writing assignments;
- Explain disasters in relation to other aspects of social, economic, and political life by using key concepts in anthropological theory.

Course Materials:

The following book is required and is available for purchase at the Western Bookstore or online (note, it may be available at lower prices elsewhere):

- Erikson, Kai. 1994. *A New Species of Trouble: The Human Experience of Modern Disaster*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Registered students will be able to access all additional required course readings through the course site in OWL before the first day of class.

Evaluation:

Grades will be based on weekly quizzes, online assignments, a group presentation, a short analysis paper, and a final exam, as follows:

Weekly Quizzes – 10%

There will be short quizzes each week on the assigned readings. Quizzes are to be completed in OWL before each weekly class meeting. Quizzes will focus on the main ideas in the required readings. They are intended to motivate you to complete all of the reading before coming to class and to help you identify key points from the readings. There will be no make-up quizzes but I will drop the lowest two quiz grades.

Online Assignments – 15%

Most weeks, students will complete short online assignments in OWL. These may involve reading/viewing short readings, videos, and similar material that will supplement the week's lecture and then answering questions based on those materials. Assignments will typically feature multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions. There will be no make-up assignments but I will drop the lowest two grades.

Group Case Study (Research Project) – 20%

Students will work in groups to complete a short research project on an assigned case. The research for case studies will be presented in class (e.g., power-point or similar format) by the group and will provide the basis for individual short analysis papers (see below).

Short Analytic Paper (Research Project) – 25%

Each student will individually write a short analysis paper (750 words) on their assigned group case study. Analytic papers give students an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to apply key terms and concepts used in class to their own case study.

Final Exam – 30%

There will be a cumulative final exam that explores key themes of the course material. More details about the format of the final exam will be discussed in class and posted on OWL. The final exam will be due during the exam period, on a date to be assigned by the Registrar's Office.

More information on writing assignments, including due dates, will be made available to students on the course OWL site.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com).

Course Specific Conditions Required to Pass this Course

In order to pass this course, the student must complete the group research project and individual paper.

Statement on Seeking Special Accommodations:

No accommodations will be granted retroactively more than 10 days after an assignment's due date or a missed quiz or test. Please see your academic counsellor immediately if you will be seeking accommodations based on medical or compassionate grounds.

Statement on Plagiarism:

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing. It is also a scholastic offence to submit the same work for credit in more than one course. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence.

Institutional Statements and Policies

All students should familiarize themselves with Western's current academic policies regarding accessibility, plagiarism and scholastic offences, and medical accommodation. These policies are outlined in Western's academic policies by clicking on this link: [Western's academic policies](#).