

# Sociology 4037: Hazards, Disasters, and Society (Spring 2017)



**Instructor:** Elizabeth Bittel

**Class Location/Time:** T/R; 3:30-4:45pm; HLMS 211

**Instructors Office:** IBS Cubicle # C255H (2<sup>nd</sup> floor)

**Office Hours:** Thursdays 1:00-3:00pm, and by appointment

**Email:** [Elizabeth.Bittel@colorado.edu](mailto:Elizabeth.Bittel@colorado.edu)



## ***COURSE DESCRIPTION:***

The field of sociology describes the scientific study of society, social relationships, and social institutions. This course is an introduction to the sociological analysis of contemporary disasters. In understanding, living with, and tackling local and global disasters (technological, natural and/or human-made), it is necessary to look beyond hard-scientific understanding and technological management. This is not to underscore their importance and contribution. But instead, this course explores the *societal* dimensions of hazards and disasters, and questions how our lifestyle, traditions, and institutions create the ways in which we interact with the natural and built environment.

Throughout the course, you will use your “sociological imagination” to better understand the social forces which shape disasters and pattern the way in which we prepare, respond, and recover from disasters. The end goal of this examination is creating an improved ability to think critically, to be a better informed citizen, consumer and member of society, and to understand how social context (history, inequality, class, etc.) influences these tragedies and their solutions.

This is a course for advanced undergraduate sociology majors, but I encourage students from other fields to enroll. The course has four main objectives: (1) to familiarize students with theories, concepts, and methods related to the sociological study of hazards, disasters, and risk; (2) to illustrate how broader concepts in the field of sociology, such as social inequality, manifest themselves in disasters in the US and around the world; (3) to understand and critique original research on the social dimensions of disasters; and (4) to provide students with the intellectual resources needed to critically assess research, media accounts, popular culture, and political rhetoric related to disasters. This is not an

introductory course on disasters. The course does not deal with every aspect of social science research on disasters, but rather is organized around a series of special topics that should engage and challenge advanced undergraduates.

This class is classified as a “seminar,” and everyone is expected to participate in class discussions. Simply coming to class and taking notes does not meet course requirements. Advanced sociology courses are not lecture courses. Your thoughtful participation is essential for the success of the course!

### ***A WORD OF CAUTION:***

The sociological study of disasters presented in this class largely concerns social oppression and inequality. We will discuss how inequality manifests in ourselves, social interactions, and social institutions. We will be critically examining oppression in our society and the role we play in its reproduction. If you are not prepared to critically examine society and yourself, this class may not be for you.

*Triggers:* A necessary part of our conversation is death and destruction, since these themes are often associated with disaster events. Please let me know if there are any emotional triggers for you (e.g. certain events, particular images, etc.) that may come up within the course. Secondly, environmental courses tend to be full of bad news with overwhelming fears for our future. But we'll work to counteract this through discussion of human strength, innovative preparedness activities, resilience efforts, and our guest discussion facilitators.

***MANY THANKS:*** A special many thanks to my mentors and those who have taught this class before me, for contributing materials to this syllabus. Especially – Dr. Kathleen Tierney, Dr. Lori Peek, and Dr. Adelle Monteblanco.

### ***REQUIRED MATERIALS:***

- Fothergill, A., & Peek, L. (2015). *Children of Katrina*. University of Texas Press.
- Peek, L. (2011). *Behind the backlash: Muslim Americans after 9/11*. Temple University Press.
- Tierney, K. (2014). *The social roots of risk: Producing disasters, promoting resilience*. Stanford University Press.
- Most readings and films for this course can be found on our D2L course page

### ***IMPORTANT INFORMATION SOURCES FOR THE COURSE:***

***Unique Resources Available at CU Boulder:*** This campus is the best place in the country to study disasters. Boulder is home to the Natural Hazards Center, which since 1976 has collected and disseminated information on research on hazards and disasters, strategies for disaster loss reduction, and emergency management policy and practice. The Natural Hazards Center is located in the beautiful new Institute of Behavioral Science building at 15<sup>th</sup> and Grandview. The first floor of the building houses the Hazards Center library, one of the two largest resource collections in the world devoted to the social aspects of disasters. The library provides access to over 32,000 items, including books, journals, government reports, Natural Hazards Center documents and records, DVDs, and other media. The Center employs a full-time library manager, Wanda Headley, who can

help you with your class work. The library phone number is 303-492-5787. Wanda's e-mail address is [wanda.headley@colorado.edu](mailto:wanda.headley@colorado.edu)

The Center's web site <http://www.colorado.edu/hazards> is one of the world's most comprehensive web sites in the field of social science disaster research, policy, and practice. The web site contains a large amount of relevant information, such as annotated bibliographies and research reports, along with numerous links to other information sources. For examples, see the "Natural Hazards Observer," the "Disaster Research" newsletter, and "Quick Response Reports"—all available on the web.

#### ***Other Relevant Centers and Information Sources:***

- Disaster Research Center, University of Delaware
- Hazard Reduction and Recovery Center, Texas A&M University
- Center for Public Health and Disasters, UCLA
- Center for Risk and Economic Analysis of Terrorist Events (CREATE), University of Southern California
- National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland
- Wharton Risk Management and Decision Processes Center, University of Pennsylvania
- Hazards and Vulnerability Research Institute, University of South Carolina
- Center for Biosecurity, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center
- National Center for Disaster Preparedness, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health
- Center for the Study of Natural Hazards and Disasters, University of North Carolina
- The Earth Institute, Columbia University
- National Center for Atmospheric Research, Boulder
- National Integrated Drought Information Service, NOAA, Boulder
- "America's Climate Choices" Study web site, National Research Council & National Academy of Sciences
- Social Science Research Council Hurricane Katrina archive and research projects
- Community and Regional Resilience Institute, Oak Ridge National Laboratory

#### ***Specialty Journals:***

*International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters; Disasters: Journal of Disaster Studies, Policy, and Management; Natural Hazards Review; Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management; Disaster Prevention and Management; Population and Environment; Global Environmental Change; Prehospital and Disaster Medicine; Environmental Hazards; Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management; Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences; Global Environmental Change, Part B: Environmental Hazards; Organization and Environment*

#### ***Sociology Journals:***

*Articles on disasters and their impacts also appear in key sociology journals such as Social Problems, Social Forces, Sociological Inquiry, Sociological Spectrum, Sociological Forum, and occasionally in the American Sociological Review, Annual Review of Sociology, and American Journal of Sociology*

### **TEACHING PERSPECTIVE:**

My goal as your instructor is to produce an environment where we can learn the most, become better informed, question assumptions, and creatively develop ideas and strategies. I want the classroom to be an environment where dialogue can take place in an open and respectful manner. If you have something to ask or add, please do so in a manner for the whole class to hear. My office hours and email are the best ways to reach me outside of class time. If you are having an issue, have a lingering question, or really – need anything, please get in touch with me as soon as your issue arises. I will do everything in my power to help you, but the first step is for you to ask for help!

### **COURSE POLICIES:**

- **Attendance, Participation, and Reading Assignments:** Students are expected to attend every class, participate in group and class discussions, and actively engage in the course lectures. Completion of the assigned readings is absolutely critical to your success in this class and your final grade will greatly depend upon you having read, thought about, and written about the readings. The assigned readings should be completed prior to coming to class. Some classes will be spent going over readings, sometimes in detail, while others will focus on other material. Students are expected to have done the reading before each class.
- **Missing an Assignment Due Date or Class:** If you know you are missing a class or need a due date-extension due to an athletic engagement, religious observance, court appearance, or family problem, please let me know at least two weeks in advance. We will discuss alternate methods of turning in your assignments and due dates. If you missed a class due to a medical emergency make sure to provide a medical certificate when you come back and I will do all I can to help you catch up with the class.

### **CLASSROOM POLICIES:**

- **This is a 4000-level course, so you should expect to be challenged in this class both in the reading assignments and the level of engagement expected from you.** Class will consist of varying combinations of lectures, discussions, and films. Some classes will be spent going over readings, sometimes in detail, while others will focus on other material. Again, you are expected to complete the assigned readings and films before coming to class.
- **Never request that another student in the class speak on behalf of a group** (e.g., African Americans, Jewish People, Latino/as, Asian Americans, men, women, lesbians/gays, rape survivors, etc.).
- **Do not use your phones, iPods, tablets, or other electronic gadgets during class** (including for text messaging or checking the web for something). If you do so, I will ask you to stop once. Then I will ask you to leave the classroom. The only time these will be allowed is when it is announced prior to the class for the purpose of a creative assignment.
- **I do not allow laptop use during class.** If a student has a reason that s/he believes s/he must use a laptop during class, please talk to me privately about this. To use a laptop every day, I must receive a letter from campus letting me know that you need to use a laptop every day. However, if such a letter is provided and I approve it, using your laptop for anything other than taking notes may result in you not being able to use it anymore. The only time these will be allowed is when it is announced prior to the class for the purpose of a creative assignment.

- **Expect to be challenged** in this class both in the reading assignments as well as the level of engagement expected from you.
- **You are expected to come on time and to stay until the end of the allotted period unless you have excused yourself ahead of time.** Students coming and going during class time is distracting for the whole class. You do not need to raise your hand to use the restroom.
- **You are expected to attend every class.** However, strict attendance will not be taken, but your final grade would be greatly affected if you miss too many classes. When attendance is taken, it will be in the form of checking for in-class assignments being handed in.

### ***COMMUNICATION POLICIES: Email and D2L***

Students are responsible for regularly checking their CU Boulder e-mails and D2L announcements. I am more than willing to answer questions via email as long as the answers to your questions cannot be found in the syllabus. To protect my own time and to be able to use it to thoughtfully respond to other questions, I will not respond to emails with these kinds of questions. **By university policy grades cannot be discussed over e-mail.** I will not respond to grade inquiries over e-mail. Also, please be aware that email is official communication and should be composed as such (use your full name, be clear in your question or concern and no texting abbreviations please). Please give me 24 hours to respond to your email, and until Monday if you email me over the weekend. If for some reason I do not respond within this allotted time, please do not be shy about re-sending your email, as I've probably missed it somehow. PLEASE PUT "SOCY 4037" IN THE SUBJECT LINE OF YOUR EMAILS TO ME! Further, Become familiar with the Desire2Learn (D2L) website immediately. If there are technical problems, please call ITS at 303-735-4357. (To access D2L, go to <https://learn.colorado.edu> ; Login with you identikey; Your courses can be accessed from the "My Courses" section on "My Home.")

### ***COURSE REQUIREMENTS and ASSESSMENTS:***

There are no exams for this course. The majority of your grade will be dependent on your participation in class discussions, thus – though I do not take attendance, your participation grades will reflect your presence or absence in class.

This course is organized around a diversity of readings, lectures, films, and guest presentations. Keep in mind that there is a good chance that one or more disasters will occur during the semester that can provide "material" for the course. We should all be ready to analyze and learn from these possible events. Thus, the course syllabus and schedule and syllabus are living documents and subject to change.

**GRADED ASSIGNMENTS:** *There are three main parts to your grade for this course:*

- **Weekly Participation (40%)** – You will receive a grade each week, and your final participation grade will be an average of the weekly assessments.
  - Submitting discussion questions: two discussion questions for the daily assigned course materials are to be submitted to a D2L dropbox by 11:00am each day before class. The appropriate format for a discussion question will be discussed during the first week of class.
  - Guest speaker feedback: there will likely be multiple guest speakers during the course of the semester. When guest speakers visit, you will have a special worksheet to fill out that provides feedback on the guest's presentation.
- **Assignments: (40%)** – Due dates for these projects are listed in the course syllabus and schedule. Each assignment is due at 12:00 (noon) on the due date to a D2L dropbox. Rubrics will be posted to the course D2L course content page. We will also discuss them in class. Your grade for this section of the course will be an average of the grades you receive on the four following assignments.
  - Assignment 1: “The Impossible” Film Analysis (Due: 2 February)
  - Assignment 2: Media Analytical Comparison (In class group work: 7 February)
  - Assignment 3: UN Game Analysis (Due: 7 March)
  - Assignment 4: Case Study Teach Back
    - “Children of Katrina” OR “Behind the Backlash” (Due: 6 or 13 April)
- **Final Paper (due in 5 parts) (20%)** – A rubric for the final paper, and directions for completing each of these sections (along with due dates), will be posted to D2L and listed in the course schedule.
  - Part 1: Paper proposal & preliminary bibliography (Due: 9 February)
  - Part 2: Updated proposal, annotated bibliography, brief outline (Due: 23 February)
  - Part 3: Rough Draft (Due: 4 April)
  - Part 4: Final Paper (Due: 4 May)
  - Part 5: Short In-class Presentations (Due: TBD)

**COMMENTS ON GRADING:**

I do not grade on a curve. Your final grade will reflect your success in demonstrating your knowledge of the material. To do well in this class, most of you will need to work hard and apply sustained effort over the course of the semester. That said, working hard does not guarantee an “A”. Your final grade is based on the points you have earned throughout the semester. If you find that you are not doing as well as you would like in the course, please come talk to me as soon as possible. There will be no additional extra-credit at the end of the semester to boost low grades.

If you feel that you have been given an unfair grade on an assignment, you need to write a one page response as to why you would like to appeal the grade and hand it to me no more than one week after you received the grade. When appealing the grade, you need to be aware that the grade can be raised or lowered. Therefore, I only advise you to appeal grades if you feel there is a very clear miscalculation. You are responsible for keeping all materials that have been graded and returned to you. If you cannot provide these materials, your grade cannot be appealed. University policy prohibits discussions of grades over email to protect your privacy. If you want to discuss your grade, please come to office hours or make an appointment with me.

**COURSE SCHEDULE TO BE POSTED ON D2L – it is a living document, and as such is subject to change. However, an outline is as follows:**

***PART 1: Foundations***

<b>Week 1</b>	17 & 19 Jan	Introduction; What is a “Disaster”; Types of Disasters
<b>Week 2</b>	24 & 26 Jan	History and Evolution of Research on Hazards and Disasters; Research Methodologies
<b>Week 3</b>	31 Jan & 2 Feb	The Concept of “Risk,” the “Risk Society,” and Communicating Warnings
<b>Week 4</b>	7 & 9 Feb	Communications continued; Introduction to Social Vulnerability
<b>Week 5</b>	14 & 16 Feb	Social Vulnerability pt. 2 – Focus on Race/Ethnicity, Social Class, Gender
<b>Week 6</b>	21 & 23 Feb	Social Vulnerability pt. 3 – International Disparities; Disaster Resilience
<b>Week 7</b>	28 Feb & 2 March	Post-Disaster Experiences -- Relief and Recovery

***PART 2: Intuitions; Climate Change***

<b>Week 8</b>	7 & 9 March	Institutions, Organizations, and Disasters
<b>Weeks 9, 10</b>	14, 16, 21, 23 March	Climate Change and the Construction of Denial

***PART 3: Disaster Case Studies:*** *Part of this section is up to you! During the first few weeks of class, we'll decide which disasters we're most interested in studying more in-depth, though we will focus on two specific case studies at first.*

<b>Week 12</b>	4 & 6 April	Hurricane Katrina
<b>Week 13</b>	11 & 13 April	9/11
<b>Weeks 14, 15, 16</b>	18, 20, 25, 27 April & 2, 4 May	TBD

**This is the basic criterion that will be used in assigning your grade for each assignment:**

Letter Grade	Percentage of Grade	Description
A	90-100	Exceeds all required elements of an assignment, and the quality of the work is considerably greater than what was required. The quality of the work is considerably above the class average and impressive to the evaluator.
B	80-89	Meets all required elements of an assignment, and the quality of the work is better than what is required and demonstrated by the class average.
C	70-79	Meets all required elements of an assignment, no more, no less. Quality of assignment is satisfactory for college level work. Fails to meet all required elements of an assignment, and/or the quality of the assignment is less than satisfactory.
D	60-69	Fails to meet all required elements of an assignment, and/or the quality of the assignment is less than satisfactory.
F	Less than 59	Only meets some of the required elements of an assignment, and/or the quality of the assignment is considerably lower than satisfactory. 50% of points are not guaranteed. At this level points are only given if some elements of the assignment are met. If not, very low percentages are likely.
Zero	0	Fails to meet any of the required elements of an assignment, and/or the quality of the assignment is well below basic standards of writing, comprehension, and/or ability to follow instructions; assignment is late or incomplete; assignment is not turned in at all; assignment shows signs of plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty. If the later is the case, I will file a formal accusation through the honor code council.

## **UNIVERSITY POLICIES:**

### ***Students with Disabilities***

Please inform Elizabeth in person by the **end of the second week of class** if you qualify for accommodations because of a disability. Please bring along a letter from Disability Services by then so that I can work with you to enable you to do your best in this course. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities (Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or by e-mail at [dsinfo@colorado.edu](mailto:dsinfo@colorado.edu)). If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Injuries](#) guidelines under the Quick Links at the [Disability Services website](#) and discuss your needs with your Elizabeth.

### ***Anti Discrimination Policy***

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU-Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. The University of Colorado does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status in admission and access to, and treatment and employment in, its educational programs and activities. (Regent Law, Article 10, amended 11/8/2001). CU-Boulder will not tolerate acts of discrimination or harassment based upon Protected Classes, or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. For purposes of this CU-Boulder policy, "Protected Classes" refers to race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual, orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or veteran status.

<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/discrimination-and-harassment-policy-and-procedures>

### ***Classroom Learning Environment Policy***

Students and faculty each have a responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals on topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/student-classroom-and-course-related-behavior>

### ***Religious Observances***

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, *(insert your procedures here)*. See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

### ***CU Honor Code***

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the [academic integrity policy](#) of the institution. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access, clicker fraud, resubmission, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code Council ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu); 303-735-2273). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code Council as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the academic integrity policy can be found at [honorcode.colorado.edu](http://honorcode.colorado.edu).

Cheating and plagiarizing will result in a failing grade for either or both the assignment and the course. The student(s) will also be reported to the Honor Code Council (even for a first offense). To be clear, plagiarism refers to using the work, ideas, or knowledge of other people as your own. It includes all forms of exam or quiz cheating, using other people's work, copying all or sections of papers from the web, and "borrowing" (without citing) from published sources. Please do not give me **ANY** reason to suspect this type of behavior. If you are unclear about the rules regarding plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, or collaboration, please consult Elizabeth immediately. **There is no need to cheat.** Whether through office hours, e-mail, or a scheduled appointment, I am available if you need an assignment explained, writing suggestions, etc. Frequent violations include "overlooking" necessary citations, cheating on an exam, and completing a quiz for someone else.

### ***Sexual harassment is not tolerated***

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. CU's Sexual Misconduct Policy prohibits sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, intimate partner abuse (dating or domestic violence), stalking or related retaliation. CU Boulder's Discrimination and Harassment Policy prohibits discrimination, harassment or related retaliation based on race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct under either policy should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127. Information about the OIEC, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation can be found at the [OIEC website](#).

### ***The Writing Center***

Meet one-to-one with a writing consultant for sound advice at ANY stage of your writing process. They teach you strategies to formulate and organize strong thesis statements, use and cite evidence appropriately, master style and grammar, and overcome writing anxiety. Services are free to all CU students. Please visit <http://www.colorado.edu/pwr/writingcenter.html> The Writing Center is located in Norlin Library, Room E-156. For more information on the Writing Center please email [wrtghelp@colorado.edu](mailto:wrtghelp@colorado.edu) or call (303)735-6906. *It is an awesome FREE service - I use it too!*

### ***Learning Environment and Salutations***

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at [http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student\\_code](http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code)

### ***Student-Athletes***

It is the student's responsibility to notify each instructor—in the first week of the semester and in writing--about any known conflicts between academic requirements and intercollegiate varsity athletic events. For conflicts that arise during the regular term, instructors have full authority to decide whether and/or how to accommodate those conflicts. While an instructor has the right to refuse to allow make-ups or other accommodations, he or she is permitted to provide such accommodations. Intercollegiate varsity athletics events during final exams, which are normally forbidden by university policy, must be approved in writing by the BFA Intercollegiate Athletics Committee well in advance of the event. Students involved in these events must then work with their instructors in regard to any missed work, as required above.

### ***Conceal and Carry at CU***

Concealed carry of firearms is permitted under Colorado law if you have a concealed carry permit. I would appreciate it if you would let me know this privately during the first week of class. You have my assurance that your concealed carry status will be kept confidential, and it will in no way affect your grade or evaluation as a student. I recognize you are under no obligation to supply me with this information. More information on conceal and carry guidelines @ <http://www.colorado.edu/hr/hr-operations/concealed-carry-faq>.