

Course Outline
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE PROGRAM IN GEOGRAPHY

16:450:612:01
Tuesday 1000-1300 hrs
Lucy Stone B-120

Prof. James K. Mitchell

Natural Hazards Seminar: Disaster Recovery

Fall 2009

This course is a research seminar on the human dimensions of natural hazards. Its focus varies from year to year. Appropriate preparation includes 01:450:311 ("Geography of Natural Hazards") or similar courses. Knowledge of physical geography or related natural science fields is helpful but not essential. Perspectives from geography inform the course, but students with training in other fields are encouraged to participate.

For the Fall 2009 semester, the focal topic is **disaster recovery**. Major disasters like the Asian tsunami (2004) and hurricane Katrina (2005) have put recovery issues in the spotlight of global attention. It is also likely that a widely acknowledged trend towards more disasters - many with novel or unprecedented dimensions - will keep this topic at center stage. Yet, paradoxically, in recent years recovery has been a neglected theme in the hazards *research* community and *public policy* developments are also lagging in the United States and elsewhere. Not only does recovery involve attending to losses inflicted during a previous extreme event, and re-enabling the continuation of everyday life, but it also establishes the preconditions that enable future disasters.

The seminar is organized in two parts. Initially there will be an overview of natural hazards research involving readings, lectures and discussions. These will introduce students who are unfamiliar with the field to its main traditions and paradigms. The instructor will (a) deliver introductory briefings; (b) provide guidance about background information and data sources; (c) lead - or act as interlocutor - in discussions. Students will be responsible for adding to and assessing class study materials as well as leading and participating in class discussions. Subsequently, we will examine the process of recovery in the years to decades after a disaster event and we will identify contemporary managerial issues as well as major turning points in the conceptual evolution of the field. Particular attention will be paid to the potential for expanding recovery theory. Each student will develop and present **a major term paper** on the theme of recovery.

There is no published text for this course. Readings will come from books, professional journals and Internet sources as appropriate. We will begin with an analysis of the main textbooks written by hazards geographers and then proceed to more specialized publications on the research frontier, focusing eventually on publications that address the topic of disaster recovery. We will also draw on the current interdisciplinary

contributions of a range of hazards scholars. A bibliography of some recent geographical literature on hazards (1985-2009) can also be found on the Sakai course site.

Assignments and Term Paper

There will be 2 short written assignments, together with a final term paper. Students are expected to complete assignments in time for formal discussion on the appropriate dates. Early in the semester students should begin choosing a term paper topic. One-page draft proposals are due by September 29. These should include a description of the proposed theme, possible analytic methods that will be employed, and a sample of likely documentary or other data sources. An oral progress report will be solicited in late October and the final paper is due on or before the last day of class December 8.

Readings (September 1-15)

Mitchell, James K. 1989. "Hazards Research", *Geography in America* ed. by Gary Gaile and Cort Willmott. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill Publishing Company: 410-424. (In class handout)

Montz, Burrell E., John A. Cross and Susan L. Cutter. 2006. "Hazards," in *Geography in America at the dawn of the 21st century*, (Gary L. Gaile and Cort J. Willmott, Eds.) . New York: Oxford University Press: 479-491. (Most of the chapter can be read online at the Amazon Books website < <http://www.amazon.com/>>)

Textbooks and monographs that illustrate different theoretical approaches (Each student will read one of the following ; see Assignment #1):

Burton, Ian, Robert W. Kates and Gilbert F. White. 1993. (Second edition). *The Environment as Hazard* (New York: Guilford Books)

Smith, Keith and David N. Petley. 2009. *Environmental Hazards: Assessing risk and reducing disaster* (New York: Routledge, 5th edit.).

Tobin, Graham A. and Burrell E. Montz. Eds. 1997. *Natural hazards: Explanation and integration*. New York: Guilford Press

Wisner, Ben, Piers Blaikie, Terry Cannon and Ian Davis. 2003. *At risk: Natural hazards, people's vulnerability, and disasters*. London: Routledge. (2nd edition)