



HIST 264.02E – A NATION DIVIDED: AMERICAN DISASTERS

CALL #: 82095

TIME / DATE: T R 11:00 – 12:15pm

LOCATION: FERGUSON SS 150

COURSE SYLLABUS: FALL 2012

Instructor:	Jonathan C. Bergman, J.D., Ph.D.
Office Location:	Ferguson Social Sciences 106
Office Hours:	T 1:45 – 5:00pm, R 1:45 – 3:00pm, by appt.
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COURSE INFORMATION

Textbooks / Supplementary Materials

Required Textbooks

- 1) Stephen Biel, ed., *American Disasters* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).
- 2) John M. Barry, *The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague in History* (Viking, 2004).

Books are available in the College Bookstore located in the Rayburn Student Center and the East Texas Bookstore just off campus. I strongly recommend buying used ... check out http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/browse/-/283155/ref%3Dtab_gw_b_3/002-0198031-3764822 and <http://www.addall.com/Used/>

Additional articles, readings, podcasts, weblinks, etc. will be posted on eCollege.

Course Description

A Nation Divided: American Disasters (HIS 264) presents a historical survey of disasters in American history. From the earliest days of New England settlers weathering the “Great Colonial Hurricane of 1635” to the passage of Hurricane Katrina on the Gulf Coast, disasters play an omnipresent role in the American experience. But the importance of these events in American society, economy, politics, and culture are not fixed; they are shaped by conditions peculiar to their age. Indeed, disasters are more than implacable forces of nature; they are a

unique construct of man-made and natural worlds. They are tools of historical analysis, agents of social change, means of political control, media curiosities, economic events, *and* environmental phenomena. Through the use of PowerPoint demonstrations, video clips, audio recordings, primary sources, a dialogue with contemporary materials, AND vigorous debate, we will interrogate the complexity and evolution of disasters — and “disaster” — in American society.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate an understanding of the nature of encounters between social groups in the United States and the consequences such encounters had on American culture and politics.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Activities / Grading

Attendance: It counts, so it is in your best interest to attend class. Of course I realize that you have lives outside of the classroom, and therefore I encourage all who have special circumstances/needs to contact me. **7 or more absences = AUTOMATIC F FOR THE CLASS. Each absence will reduce the attendance component of your grade by 1 point. (5% of total grade)**

Feedback Papers: The assignment component of your grade includes 3, 3 page assignments. You will receive 0 - 3 based on your responsiveness to the question and the completeness of your answer (**3% each assignment (10% of total grade)**). **FAILURE TO COMPLETE ALL SHORT PAPERS WILL RESULT IN AN F FOR THE COURSE. 1 POINT OFF PER WEEK LATE. NO OUTSIDE SOURCES. PLAGIARISM = F AND IMMEDIATE EXPULSION FROM THE CLASS.**

Long Paper: Students are required to complete a 5 page paper. SPECIFIC QUESTION TBA. The essay will be based on John Barry's *Great Influenza*. I don't want the essay to be a summarization of the book — I can read it myself! The object of the assignment is to state a firm argument, critically discuss your position, and argue for or against the points contained therein with VOLUMINOUS CITED EVIDENCE from the book and book alone. (**30% of total grade**). **NO LONG PAPER = F for the Course. NO OUTSIDE SOURCES. PLAGIARISM = F AND IMMEDIATE EXPULSION FROM THE CLASS.**

Quizzes: **3 QUIZZES, TOP 2 COUNT.** Quizzes are 10 Multiple Choice questions. The material will cover in-class discussion, ppt. presentations, **and** the readings. If you are absent, for whatever reason, that will be your tossed grade. Only compelling and supported excuses will be accepted if you should happen to miss **2 or more** quizzes. **STUDENTS MUST SUPPLY SCANTRON FORMS. (10% each quiz (20% of total grade))**

Presentations: Choose a disaster in American history NOT covered in class or the readings, prepare a 12-15 minute **ORIGINAL** .ppt presentation and present it in class. Topics **MUST** be cleared by me beforehand. You will be graded based on the quality of your presentation and the completeness of your .ppt (to be handed in). (**15% of total grade**) **NO PRESENTATION = F FOR THE CLASS. USE OF A CANNED .PPT = PLAGIARISM = F FOR THE CLASS.**

Final Exam: The final exam *primarily* covers material after the last quiz, but EVERYTHING you learned during the semester is fair game. The test format is just like the quizzes except longer. There will be no left hooks but whether or not you attend class, pay attention and read the assigned material is critical for a satisfactory grade. **NO FINAL = F for the COURSE. STUDENTS MUST SUPPLY SCANTRON FORMS. (20% of total grade)**

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

The following technology is required

A working email address on file with the university. **Be sure that your listed email is working and you regularly access it for updates.** When I send an email a presumption of delivery arises

Internet connection (If you don't have one at home use the school's high speed connections)

Word Processor program (If you don't have one try Open Office – it's free and works just like MS OFFICE)

<http://download.openoffice.org/>

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

This course is web-enhanced through eCollege, the Learning Management System used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. eCollege will be used to send you announcements and reminders, and to provide access to course materials such as handouts and assignments. Combined with your university email address, eCollege will be a key means for course communication. **THE SET UP AND USE OF eCollege IS A COURSE REQUIREMENT.**

To get started with the course, go to: <https://leo.tamu-commerce.edu/login.aspx>
You will need your CWID and password to log in to the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, please contact Technology Services at 903-468-6000 or helpdesk@tamu-commerce.edu.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you cannot see me during regular posted office hours, please send me an email so that we can make an appointment. I am quite happy to see students at any time as long as I don't have a prior commitment.

Texas A&M University-Commerce provides students technical support in the use of eCollege. The student help desk may be reached by the following means 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you experience any technical issues, feel free to contact the support desk.

- **Chat Support:** Click on '*Live Support*' on the tool bar within your course to chat with an eCollege Representative.
- **Phone:** 1-866-656-5511 (Toll Free) to speak with eCollege Technical Support Representative.
- **Email:** helpdesk@online.tamuc.org to initiate a support request with eCollege

Technical Support Representative.

• **Help:** Click on the 'Help' button on the toolbar for information regarding working with eCollege (i.e. How to submit to dropbox, How to post to discussions etc...).

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES / POLICIES

Course and University Procedures

Attendance: It counts, so it is in your best interest to attend class. Of course I realize that you have lives outside of the classroom, and therefore I encourage all who have special circumstances/needs to contact me. Excessive absences/tardiness will impact your grade up to a full letter grade.

Class Participation: Each week you are responsible for a group of readings. Students are expected to read the materials, and actively participate in class discussion. I know this is a lecture based class and vigorous interaction will not always be possible. Nevertheless when I ask your opinion, I expect ALL of you to have one. If you are shy or awkward in public speaking situations I encourage you to speak up. The ability to formulate an argument and present it in public is critical to your development as a citizen, scholar, and member of the workforce. **Sleeping, talking and/or general disinterest will impact your final class grade up to a full letter grade. Likewise, spirited debate, preparation and participation may raise your final class grade up to a full letter grade.**

Plagiarism and Academic Honesty: Plagiarism, the use of the ideas, words, and theories of another author without proper attribution, is plagiarism and therefore unacceptable. Students are expected to produce their own work on a timely basis. The tenets of academic honesty, and university policy, demand that any such infractions be met with severe penalties. **If you are caught, you will be immediately thrown out of the class and receive a grade of F.** If you contest the matter, I will seek a permanent mark on your record noting a violation of the school's honor code. **DON'T DO IT! SEE** <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html> for details.

Civility, Decorum, and Good Conduct Policy: All students enrolled in the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. Students are required to comport themselves in a way that is courteous and respectful to his/her fellow students and the instructor. Ad hominem attacks, disruptive conduct, and harassment will be met with the sternest possible sanctions including punishment assignments, seizure of cell phones, and/or expulsion from the class. **THIS INCLUDES TURNING OFF/MUTING ANY AND ALL MP3 PLAYERS, CELL PHONES, COMMUNICATION, AND NOISE GENERATING DEVICES, AND STOWING THEM AWAY DURING CLASS.**

Writing Center: Students are encouraged to take advantage of the resources of the Writing Center for assistance with drafting papers. The Writing Center is an open resource available to all. They will not write your paper; they will help you improve your writing skills. If you use the Writing Center, please plan ahead. They can only help you if you see them in advance and have time to incorporate their suggestions into the final paper. More information can be found at <http://web.tamu-commerce.edu/academics/colleges/artsSciences/departments/literatureLanguag>

ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Gee Library 132
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu
[Student Disability Resources & Services](#)

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Weeks One/Two: INTRODUCTIONS. Expectations. Course Nuts and Bolts. What is "History." (8/28, 8/30, 9/4, 9/6)

- 1) Carl Sagan, "The Dragons of Eden." (The Scale of History) (Available on eCollege)
- 2) "The Next 100 Years," *New Statesman*
<http://www.newstatesman.com/print/200908270012> (The possibilities of the past in the present, and divining the future)
- 3) What is "History"? (To be distributed in class)
- 4) "Mass. Museum looks to Cover Up Words." (Available on eCollege)

The class begins with basic introductions, course reqs., contact info. & administrative nuts and bolts. We will examine the nature of time, recounting of the past & the elusiveness & malleability of "History." A brief rundown of "black letter" historiography will be presented covering schools of thought, sources, politics, bias, etc.

Week Three: WHAT IS A DISASTER ANYWAY? (9/11, 9/13)

- 1) Bergman, Jonathan, "Disaster; A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *History Compass*. (Available on eCollege)
- 2) Steinberg, Theodore, "What is a Natural Disaster?", *Literature and Medicine* 15 (1996) 1: 33-47. (Available on eCollege)
- 3) Biel, Stephen, *American Disasters*, Introduction.

We examine the elements, presuppositions, and theories of and on disaster. Hopefully, we will have a working definition of what a disaster — and is NOT — by the end of class. Finally, I briefly sketch the history of "disaster" in the Old World and at the dawn of the New.

Week Four: EARLY AMERICA, EARLY DISASTERS. The Great Colonial Hurricane & Earthquakes. The Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Early Governmental Intervention. Urban America. **FEEDBACK # 1 DUE ON THURSDAY. QUIZ # 1 ON TUESDAY.** (9/18, 9/20)

- 1) Perley, Sidney, *Historic Storms of New England...*, "Introduction," "The Great Storm of 1635" and "The Earthquakes of 1638 & 1663." (Available on eCollege)
- 2) Mulcahy, Matthew, "A Tempestuous Sprit Called Hurri Cano": Hurricanes and Colonial Society in the British greater Caribbean," *American Disasters*, 11-38.
- 3) Smith, Carl, "Faith and Doubt: The Imaginative Dimensions of the Great Chicago

Fire,” *American Disasters*, 129-169.

This segment covers disasters in America in the 18th and 19th centuries. An examination of early disaster schemes will be discussed. The role of the city in the social and economic fabric of American society will be examined. We will look at how events before, during and after the Chicago Fire of 1871 were a model of 19th century American life.

Week Five: DISASTERS & THE STATE I. The Johnstown Flood. The Galveston Hurricane of 1900. The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire. Media Coverage of Disasters. Progressivism. Regulation. **QUIZ # 2 ON THURSDAY.** (9/25, 9/27)

- 1) Wynn Jones, Michael, “Deadline Disaster: A Newspaper History—Johnstown Flood, 1889.” (Available on eCollege)
- 2) Bixel, Patricia Bellis, “‘It Must Be Made Safe’: Galveston, Texas, and the 1900 Storm,” *American Disasters*, 223-246.
- 3) McEvoy, Arthur, “The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of 1911...”, *Law & Social Inquiry* 20 (Spring, 1995) 2: 621-651. (Available on eCollege)

This class covers the postbellum period of American disaster history. The beginnings of disaster relief will be studied. The effect of media, progressive politics, and regulation on American society will also be explored.

Week Six: WEEK OFF. WORK ON SHORT PAPER, LONG PAPER AND PRESENTATIONS. (10/2, 10/4)

Week Seven: DISASTERS & THE MEDIA. San Francisco Earthquake & Fire. The Sinking of the Maine. More on the Media. Disasters as agents of change. Disasters and Capital. (10/9, 10/11)

- 1) Listen to the *Science Friday* Podcast of the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906. (Available on eCollege)
- 2) Steinberg, Theodore, “Smoke and Mirrors: The San Francisco Earthquake and Seismic Denial,” *American Disasters*, 103-126.
- 3) Wynn Jones, Michael, “Deadline Disaster: A Newspaper History—The Press and Disasters.” (Available on eCollege)
- 4) Wynn Jones, Michael, “Deadline Disaster: A Newspaper History—A Cause for War: The Sinking of the Maine 1898.” (Available on eCollege)

This unit examines the first modern American disaster—the Great San Francisco Earthquake of 1906. The effect of disasters on the culture of capitalism is discussed. We will also scrutinize the media presentation of the sinking of the Maine, and how the media can be a source of information, misinformation and disinformation in disaster coverage.

Week Eight: “SMALL” DISASTERS. Spanish Flu. Typhoid Mary. Ebola. Avian Bird Flu. War & Disasters. Disasters & Health Care. Disasters & Transportation. **FEEDBACK # 2 DUE ON TUESDAY.** (10/16, 10/18)

- 1) Wynn Jones, Michael, “Deadline Disaster: A Newspaper History—The Unstoppable Virus: The Flu Epidemic of 1918.” (Available on eCollege)
- 2) Explore “Ebola” and “Typhoid Mary” Links. (Available on eCollege)
- 3) Listen to the *Science Friday* Podcast of the Bird Flu. (Available on eCollege)

This section charts epidemics. The Spanish Influenza pandemic of 1918, Ebola, Avian Bird Flu, and other “small” disasters are discussed. The effect of war, health care, transportation, and disaster transmission are examined.

Week Nine: DISASTERS & THE STATE II, OR, WIND AND DIRT. The Great

Floods of the 1920's & 30's. The Hurricane of '38. The 'Dust Bowl.' The New Deal & Disasters. **QUIZ # 3 ON TUESDAY.** (10/23, 10/25)

- 1) Wynn Jones, Michael, "Deadline Disaster: A Newspaper History—A Freak of Nature: New England Hurricane 1938." (Available on eCollege)
- 2) Bergman, "A New Deal for Disaster," *LHJ*. (Available on eCollege)
- 3) Koppes, Clayton R., "Dusty Volumes: Environmental Disaster and Economic Collapse in the 1930's," *Reviews in American History* 8 (Dec., 1980) 4: 535-540. (Available on eCollege)

This segment covers disasters in the 1920's and 1930's. The environmental impact of farming will be traced. The impact of New Deal programs on disasters in the 1930's will be looked at.

Week Ten: TECHNOLOGICAL DISASTERS. Three Mile Island. Exxon Valdez. Love Canal. (10/30, 11/1)

- 1) Malmshiemer, Lonna M., "Three Mile Island: Fact, Frame, and Fiction," *American Quarterly* 38 (Spring, 1986) 1: 35-52. (Available on eCollege)
- 2) Birkland, Thomas and Regina Lawrence, "The *Exxon Valdez* and Alaska in the American Imagination," *American Disasters*, 382-402.
- 3) Tyson, Rae, "The Intergovernmental Cleanup at Love Canal: A First Crack at 'The Sleeping Giant of the Decade,'" *Publius* 10 (Winter, 1980) 1: 101-109. (Available on eCollege)

This unit covers the increasing problem of technological disasters. Through an examination of Three Mile Island, Exxon Valdez and Love Canal, we will chart the characteristics of technological disasters. Contemporary social, political, economic, and health issues will be explored. Are technological disasters symbolic of our modern lives? With an ever increasing technological reliance and sophistication are we headed for less or more disasters?

Week Eleven: HEAT. Heat Waves. Cool Waves. Climate Change. The Politics of Heat. The Response to Heat. A Heated Debate About Heat. (11/6, 11/8)

- 1) Klinenberg, Eric, "Denaturalizing Disaster: A Social Autopsy of the 1995 Chicago Heat Wave," *Theory and Society* 28 (Apr., 1999) 2: 239-295. (Available on eCollege)
- 2) Crichton Global Warming Skepticism Articles. (Available on eCollege)
- 3) Listen to "Climate Change," *Living on Earth* Podcast, May 28, 2004. (Available on eCollege)

The section covers one of the most heated (no pun intended) areas of contemporary debate—climate change and global warming. We examine an often overlooked type of 'slow' disaster—the heat wave—and its social and political implications. The science and superstition of climate change will be demystified.

Week Twelve: CATCH UP. FINISH UP. REVIEW.FINAL LONG PAPER DUE ON TUESDAY. FINAL EXAM ON THURSDAY. (11/13, 11/15)

Week Thirteen: THANKSGIVING BREAK. NO CLASS. ENJOY! (11/20, 11/22)

Week Fourteen: FEEDBACK PAPER # 3 DUE ON THURSDAY. PRESENTATIONS. (11/27, 11/29)

Week Fifteen: PRESENTATIONS. IT'S A WRAP! (12/4, 12/6)

COURSE CONTRACT

HIST 264 Contract: An Expression of the Rights and Responsibilities Binding Students and the Professor for the FALL of 2012

I, _____ (print name here), a student in HIST 264 taught by Dr. Jonathan C. Bergman, have hereby read, understand and agree to abide by the terms of this syllabus, a binding contract, particularly with respect to the sections pertaining to grading, attendance, and assignments. I agree to treat everyone in class with the respect that they are due, not to plagiarize others work/cheat on exams (which will result in an F for the course), participate fully in class discussion, and complete **ALL** assignments, tests and papers on time. I also fully understand that if I should fail to adhere to these conditions that I will be penalized according to the conditions herein described. Dr. Bergman agrees to promptly respond to your queries and e-mails, return your tests, assignments, etc. in a reasonable amount of time, entertain substantive and administrative questions in class, regularly attend and be available for office hours, and not create a hostile learning environment.

Sign your name here: _____

Date: _____

*** If you do not sign this form and return it to me then you will NOT receive a final grade.**