

**STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY
CANTON, NEW YORK**



MASTER SYLLABUS

SOCI 325 – SOCIOLOGY OF DISASTER

CIP Code:
45.1101

Created by: D. MCLANE, Ph.D.

**School of Business and Liberal Arts
Social Sciences Department
Spring 2026**

A. TITLE: Sociology of Disaster

B. COURSE NUMBER: SOCI 325

C. CREDIT HOURS (Hours of Lecture, Laboratory, Recitation, Tutorial, Activity):

# Credit Hours per Week	3
# Lecture Hours per Week	3

D. WRITING INTENSIVE COURSE:

No	x
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E. GER CATEGORY: None

F. SEMESTER(S) OFFERED:

Fall and Spring	x
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G. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The foundational premise of this course is that disasters are social in nature; revealing, or exacerbating, existing social inequalities. Analyzing a series of case studies using methodology from classical and contemporary sociology this course prepares students to better understand, plan for, and respond to disasters. The course uses a problem-based learning model in which students work in small groups to help a particular community prepare for a particular hazard.

H. PRE-REQUISITES: None

CO-REQUISITES: None

I. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Course Student Learning Outcome [SLO]	ISLO & Subsets
a. Identify particular data as essential for policy formation in multiple case studies of disaster.	2 –Critical Thinking [IA]
e. Apply theoretical frames from classical and contemporary sociology to understand disaster from multiple perspectives.	2 – Critical Thinking [CA]
c. Compare responses to disaster case studies occurring within US vs. those requiring international response; specifically.	4 – Critical Thinking [GL]
d. Evaluate differential preparation for, and response to, disaster along lines of stratification.	2 – Critical Thinking [CA]

KEY	<u>Institutional Student Learning Outcomes</u> <u>[ISLO 1 – 5]</u>
ISLO #	ISLO & Subsets
1	Communication Skills Oral [O], Written [W]
2	Critical Thinking <i>Critical Analysis [CA], Inquiry & Analysis [IA], Problem Solving [PS]</i>
3	Foundational Skills <i>Information Management [IM], Quantitative Lit./Reasoning [QTR]</i>
4	Social Responsibility <i>Ethical Reasoning [ER], Global Learning [GL], Intercultural Knowledge [IK], Teamwork [T]</i>
5	Industry, Professional, Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

J. **APPLIED LEARNING COMPONENT:**

No	X
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K. **TEXTS:** To be determined by the instructor

L. **REFERENCES:**

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- M. EQUIPMENT: University Supplied and Online Learning Management System
- N. GRADING METHOD: A-F
- O. SUGGESTED MEASUREMENT CRITERIA/METHODS:
Quizzes of essential data, exams of synthetic and summative knowledge, and group discussion and collaboration in a problem-based learning model.
- P. DETAILED COURSE OUTLINE:

- I. Essentials of Sociology

- A. Classical Theories
 - a. Marx – Conflict perspective
 - b. Durkheim- Structural functionalism
 - c. Weber- Bureaucratization
 - B. Contemporary Theories
 - a. Mead- symbolic interaction
 - b. Feminist and intersectional theory

- II. Heat Wave

- A. Chicago Case Study
 - a. Defining the disaster- methodological difficulties
 - B. Methodological Innovations
 - a. Establishing a “baseline”
 - b. Determining cause of death
 - C. Implications of climate change for heat waves
 - a. Increasing incidents of heat waves, compare with France 2003 and 2019
 - D. Age, Gender, Isolation and Disasters
 - a. Explore data of disproportionate older male deaths
 - b. Theory of social cohesion and disproportionate Black versus Hispanic

- III. Disaster Studies

- A. History of Disaster Research United States
 - a. Cold war context
 - b. Role of government research
 - c. Department of Defense and climate change
 - B. Social Construction of Disaster
 - a. Media and spectacle theory
 - b. Conflict perspective of definitions
 - C. Natural vs Non-Natural Disasters
 - a. Role of media
 - b. Role of government
 - D. Disaster Response Cycle US Model
 - a. FEMA Training
 - b. Superstorm Sandy Critique of Response

VI. Hurricane

A. Puerto Rico 2018

- a. History of Puerto Rico
- b. History of dependency
- c. Role of corruption and failed infrastructure
- d. National government response
- e. Mental Health and Disasters
- f. Political change following Maria response

B. New Orleans 2005

- a. History of New Orleans
- b. Basics of race as social construct
- c. Role of media
- d. Role of city government
- e. Role of national government
- f. Data on poverty and networks
- g. Disaster as opportunity – the rebuilding of a new city

C. Race and Disaster

- a. Lessons learned from US disasters
- b. Lessons learned from international disasters

IV. Earthquake

A. Haiti 2010 Case Study

- a. Basics of international development
- b. Basics of Haitian history
- c. Role of dependency in disaster preparation
- d. Role of national government
- e. Role of international aid
- f. Problem of competing bureaucracy

B. Competing Bureaucracies and Disaster

- a. Basics of NGOs and fundraising
- b. Links to Weberian analysis
- c. Implications for US context

V. Unnatural Disasters

A. Nuclear Disaster –

- a. Chernobyl vs Three Mile Island – Communication and Governance
- b. Fukushima and Black Swan Concept
- c. Risk Society

VI. Pandemic

A. Disease and demography

- a. Life expectancy and medicine
- b. Measuring risk

B. International response to outbreaks

- a. Strengths and weaknesses of international system.
- b. 1918 Pandemic and war

D. COVID 19

VI. A More Dangerous World

A. Climate Change

- a. Basics of climate change
- b. Threat multiplier concept US national security
- c. Migration and climate change
- d. Drought, famine and disasters
- e. International response

B. Responding to the Threat

- a. International governance
- b. National governance and preparation
- c. Local governance and preparation

Q. LABORATORY OUTLINE: n/a