

**Instructor Information**

Dr. Brian Richardson

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Office Hours: (by appointment)

Location:  
Panama



**Disability Accommodation:**

The instructor will cooperate with the university's Office of Disability Accommodation to provide reasonable accommodation to students who need it. Students who wish to self-identify and request assistance under this policy should register with the Office (located in the University Union) by the second class day.

**Course Rationale:**

Crises, disasters, and risks pervade our lived experience. We are bombarded daily with media accounts of these phenomena. Communication plays a central role in risk/disaster planning, real-time disaster response, and post-disaster recovery and sensemaking. These issues become more challenging in developing countries with diverse populations and significant socio-economic disparity. This course introduces students to an overview of issues pertinent to international disasters and places emphasis on theoretical and practical understanding of disaster management and crisis/disaster communication in Panama.

**Location:**

Panama is located in the southern-most portion of Central America, north of Columbia and south of Costa Rica; it also borders the Pacific Ocean to the south and the Caribbean Sea to the north. Panama is primarily threatened by floods, but also faces risk of landslides, earthquakes, tsunamis, climate change, and insect-borne illnesses. Panama's economy is considered one of the most developed and fastest growing in all of Latin America. Still, the risks posed by hazards create a significant threat to life, property, infrastructure, and the country's economy. Additionally, the variety of ethnic groups and languages present in Panama creates challenges in communicating these risks to the greater population. Finally, there are issues of literacy: in a literacy survey of 65 countries in 2009 called *Program Assessment of International Students (PISA)*, Panama ranked fourth-to-last (Miller & McKenna, 2016).

### **Purpose and Objectives:**

The purpose of this course is to examine hazards, risks, and disasters at the intersections of communication and culture, in a particular geographical region (Panama). At the conclusion of this course, students should have a basic understanding of the dimensions of international disaster phenomena that are of interest to communication, public administration, and disaster scholars. They should also possess a rudimentary knowledge of the theoretical and empirical approaches taken toward those phenomena.

Specifically, at the conclusion of this course, students should know:

1. Key communication theories/models associated with risks/disasters including the IDEA model, communal coping, and diffusion of innovations.
2. Key intercultural communication theories, e.g. Hofstede's cultural dimensions model, that will help them understand the country of Panama, and in particular, how it deals with disasters.
3. Panamanian citizens and officials' perspectives on emergency management and risk/disaster communication.
4. The geography, cultures, and languages related to Panama in order to understand how these factors interact in disaster-related contexts.

### **Required Textbooks and Readings:**

McNeil, D. G. (2016). *Zika: The Emerging Epidemic*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

We will also read journal articles and copied book chapters. These are not "optional readings." They are relevant to the lecture material, the course assignments, and to the exams. **You are responsible for ensuring that you get copies of all class handouts, most of which will be posted on Blackboard.**

### **Recommended Textbooks and Readings:**

McCarthy, C., & Fallon, S. (2016). *Lonely Planet Panama*.

**A Useful Website:** <http://thinkhazard.org/en/report/191-panama/DG>

## ASSIGNMENTS

### **Daily Journal (hand-written or typed) that includes:**

- a. **Daily Activities:** Your journal entry should include detail about places visited, background information about the place(s) we visited or activities you engaged in.
- b. **Insights gained:** Each day needs to include thoughtful insight about what you have learned/gained from the days' experience, emphasizing disaster, risk, and crisis issues when relevant. What did you find interesting? What did you find fascinating? What were some surprises along the way? The more that you elaborate in your insights the more it will help you to recall the event, the historical background, and the location. This section can also include your thoughts about the group, the weather, personal insights on what you are experiencing from the trip.
- c. **Cultural Information:** This section of your journal includes customs, traditions, language or phrases, animals, politics, environmental uniqueness, activities and events that are unique to the Panamanian people. What did you find in

Panama that is considerably different or “foreign” to your thinking as an American living in the United States? You may want to create bullet points in this section so that it will be easy to collect and write down.

### **Participation**

Being present in class, for excursions, and during travel, and actually participating are minimum requirements for a “B” level participation grade. For any grade higher than that, your participation grade will depend on the quality of your contributions. Quality comments include: adding new insights to the readings/excursions/experiences, offering a different, unique, and relevant perspective on an issue, moving the discussion and analysis forward, asking insightful questions, extending rather than repeating others’ comments, and demonstrating reflective thinking.

### **Reading summaries**

Read each of the assigned readings and write a one-half page to one-page summary of the most important implications as they relate to disaster in Panama. You can include these summaries within your journal.

### **Term papers**

In a 6-7 page paper (**graduate student = 15-18 page paper**), describe the important components of Panama’s culture, particularly addressing how its culture interacts with disaster communication, disaster response, hazard and vulnerability assessment, or risk communication. Your paper should include a definition of national culture (including proper citations), a description of Panama’s culture, and an explanation of why you believe your description adequately describes the country’s culture. Your paper should also address how Panama’s culture influences disaster/risk communication. As with all written assignments, your paper should have a recognizable introduction, body, and conclusion. Be sure to use relevant examples from your observations of the people, guest lectures, and excursions. Your paper must be typed, double spaced, and free of typographical errors. It must also include a list of at least 6-7 scholarly references (**minimum of 12 for graduate students**) and must have a cover page.

### **Total points breakdown**

Journal	100 pts.
Term Paper	100 pts.
Participation	50 pts.
Article summaries	50 pts.
Current Events presentation	50 pts.
Tabonga evacuation report	<u>50 pts.</u>

Total 400 pts.

### **Grade Range:**

A = 360-400    B = 320-359    C = 280-319    D = 2400-279    F = < 2400 points

### **Course policies**

**Attendance/participation - Denton** - In order for this class to be successful, your attendance and participation are imperative. We will conduct this class as a lecture/seminar, performing the roles of teachers and learners simultaneously. This is possible only if everyone prepares in advance for class by giving thoughtful attention to the assigned readings and assumes a constructive role in class discussions, asking questions, thoughtfully attending to the ideas of others, and sharing your own

insights. Students who attend class regularly will benefit by enhanced performance on assignments and an opportunity to complete the reading quizzes.

**Attendance/participation - Panama** - If you are seriously ill, you may be excused from attending an activity, but you must contact your instructor (telephone their rooms) regarding your illness as soon as possible.

**Late work.** Except under the most extreme circumstances (and documentation of those circumstances is required), no late work will be accepted. If you encounter an emergency situation of some kind, it is best to communicate with me about it earlier rather than later. It is not fair to others who met the deadlines if I accept your's late. Also, no longer are printer troubles and computer problems reasonable excuses for late papers. **I suggest knowing the equipment well enough and allowing ample time in case of problems. All written assignments are due at their designated times or they will be considered late.**

**Academic Dishonesty.** All persons shall adhere to the Code of Student Conduct regarding academic honesty, including acts of cheating and plagiarism. Of particular concern in a course with written and oral assignments is the issue of plagiarism. Plagiarism is defined by Webster's (1989) as "the appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work" (p. 1100). In other words, plagiarism is stealing. You must cite your sources accurately and consistently in both your oral and written assignments. Penalties for plagiarism will vary according to severity and will range from a failing grade to prosecution through the University System.

**Writing quality assumptions.** Every paper you turn in must be of quality, both in content and style. I will not accept papers with grammatical and typographical errors. I expect you to use a computer and to take advantage of the programs that guard against such errors; however, there is no substitute for good proofreading. All papers should conform to American Psychological Association (APA) style.

### **Completing the Course**

Students are expected to complete all assignments for this course during the semester. Assigning a grade of "incomplete" is rare, and in order to request an "I," the student must meet these requirements: a) The student must have completed at least 75% of the course assignments; b) The student must be passing the course; c) There must be an unforeseen and compelling reason why the course cannot be completed on time (usually a medical or military reason); and d) The student must present a plan for completing the assignments within the time period specified in the catalog.

### **Course rules**

1. You're expected to attend all organized activities; you're down time is your's but that does not excuse you from missing organized activities.
2. Always travel in pairs or groups.
3. Always have your phone on you.
4. Punctuality is mandatory; your participation grade is partially determined by your timeliness.
5. If a student is detained by law enforcement, the course instructors will NOT alter their plans to address your situation.
6. Regardless of Panama drug laws, you are NOT permitted to partake. See the rule above about arrests.
7. You must be 18 years old to purchase alcohol in Panama. If you choose to drink, be responsible, and remember Rules #1, 4 and 5.
8. Be flexible; our schedule, destinations, and activity plans may change.
9. No complaining.
10. \* Readings on the schedule with an asterisk next to them are for Graduate students only.

### Denton, Texas - Schedule

Date	Location	Activity/reading assignments
6/4  5 p.m. - 8:50 p.m.	Denton	Class Introductions/Introduction to syllabus Team-building activities Discussion about travelling in Panama Packing List Introduction to Hazards/Disasters Introduction to Reading Lists Skype with Anthony Spencer of Explore 505
6/5  6 p.m. - 8:50 p.m.	Denton	Lecture Topic – <b>Hazards, Disasters, and EM in Panama.</b>  <b>Guest speaker: Dr. Laura Siebeneck</b>  <b>Reading:</b> Alcantara-Ayala, I. (2010). Disasters in Mexico and Central America: A little bit more than a century of natural hazards. In E. M. Latrubesse (Ed.) <i>Natural Hazards and Human-Exacerbated Disasters in Latin America</i> (pp. 75-97). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Elsevier.  Zika – Ch. 1 & 2
6/6  6 p.m. - 8:50 p.m.	Denton	Lecture Topic – <b>Risk communication &amp; persuasive appeals: Diffusion of Innovation theory and the IDEA model</b>  <b>Reading:</b> Sellnow et al. (2015). A receiver-based approach to effective instructional crisis communication. <i>Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management</i> , 23, 149-158.  Zika – Ch. 3 & 4
6/7  6 p.m. - 8:50 p.m.	Denton	Activity: Current Event presentations  <b>Reading:</b> * Sellnow-Richmond, D. D., George, A. M., & Sellnow, D. D. (2018). An IDEA model analysis of instructional risk communication in the time of Ebola. <i>Journal of International Crisis and Risk Communication Research</i> , 1, 135-166.  Zika – Ch. 5 & 6