



IMAGES OF DISASTER IN FILM AND MEDIA EADP 2020



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Semester: Spring 2024
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Course Location: Chilton 240
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Course Description

This course examines hazards and disasters as they are portrayed in film and various media. Emphasis will be placed on understanding how the portrayal of disaster often departs from scientific knowledge of these events as well as how the depiction of disasters in various media can shape both the public and leaders understanding of disaster management. What do we learn about the phases of emergency management from popular portrayals of disaster? What is accurate in terms of the portrayal of the hazard and what is sensationalized? How do these films generally depict the role of emergency managers and the response of the public? How has recent technology changed the ways information is shared during an event? This course will address these questions and the myths commonly portrayed in film and media.

Course Objectives

1. Understand the portrayal of disaster in film as a sociological and popular culture phenomena;
2. Analyze the portrayal of disaster themes such as hazard behavior, emergency management activities, and collective behavior with respect to current scientific understanding;
3. Examine how various hazards are portrayed in film and understand how they align or deviate from scientific understanding of hazard behavior.
4. Recognize how the persistence of disaster myths (e.g., panic) actually affects people's perceptions and ultimately decisions in times of crisis.
5. Examine the influence of newer social media technologies in the communication of risk and hazards.
6. Develop project management and creative thinking skills that aid in the development of solutions to address the complex problems students may experience while in the emergency management field.

Course Text

There is no required textbook for the course. However, the weekly readings will be available via Canvas. Students are expected to complete all required readings prior to the corresponding topic's class period. In other words, have the readings completed before viewing the week's lecture and film and completing the quiz. Taking notes on the readings will help you contribute to thoughtful and meaningful responses to the film discussion sheets and the Assignment #2 paper.

Course Films

All films required for the course will be shown during class. I understand that sometimes things come up and you may miss a class. If you miss a film, you have several options for viewing it. First, you should check with the UNT Media Library to see if they have the film available for you to view. If they do not have the film, you may request to borrow my copy of the film, however the film must be viewed in the UNT Media Library and returned promptly to my office. Students who do not return the film when promised will be subjected to a 10% deduction from their final course grade. Lastly, many of these films are available on various media streaming platforms.

Grading Scale

A = 90-100

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69

F = 0-59

Grading

30 points: Reading Quizzes (10 quizzes, 3 points each)

5 points: Attendance

5 points: Assignment 1: Project Kickoff Worksheet

20 points: Assignment 2: "Real World vs. Reel World" Paper

15 points: Exam 1

25 points: Final Project

Total: 100 points

Attendance

Attendance will be assessed at least once every class session. Students are expected to arrive at class on time and to stay the entire class. This class meets only once a week and students should be aware that a significant number of absences will make it difficult to pass the course. Students will be allowed 2 absences before their overall grade will be lowered 1 point for each additional absence (e.g., from 5 to 4), up to a total of 5 points. Therefore, there are no excused absences. Students leaving early on more than 1 occasion will lose 0.5 points from their attendance grade per occurrence.

However, this rule may be waived in extreme and documented circumstances, (e.g., serious illness, death in the family, injury, etc.). In these special cases please contact me so I can work with you. If you have to miss class or arrive late/leave early for any reason, please arrange to get notes from a fellow classmate. All material covered in class is important.

Late Work

Late work on assignments (Assignment 1, and 2) will be accepted up to 1 week after the original deadline. There will be a 5% deduction for every day late. However, no late quizzes will be allowed without prior approval from the instructor. If something comes up (e.g., illness) just communicate with me as soon as possible so we can come up with any accommodations.

Assignment Policy

Due dates for the assignments are posted in this syllabus and on the course schedule. All quizzes and Assignments (1, and 2) will be completed using Canvas. Discussion sheets do not need to be handed in. All papers or worksheets need to be submitted as a word file or pdf.

Early Feedback on Assignments

In this course, students have the opportunity to have me or the teaching assistant provide feedback on drafts of each assignment. This includes Assignments 1, 2, and the final project. We are happy to provide suggestions for improving the assignments in order to help you maximize the points you earn. Early feedback can be acquired up to 4 days prior to the assignment's deadline.

Assignment 1

In order to prepare students for their final projects and facilitate group work, students will complete a short assignment aimed to assist in “brainstorming” ideas for the final project. Students will be required to write out some of the ideas they have for the final project, using a worksheet to guide this assignment. This assignment will be due **February 26th** and is worth **5 points** towards your final grade. Copies of the worksheet will be posted on Canvas.

Assignment 2: “Real World vs. Reel World” Paper

A significant portion of your grade (**20 points**) will be completing a short research paper pertaining to one of the key issues covered in class. This paper will provide you the opportunity to link the scholarly literature covered in class with a film / several films viewed during the semester. The essay prompts will be provided in class and will be posted on Canvas.

Each paper should be 3-4 pages in length in 12-point Time New Roman with 1-inch margins. All papers should be double-spaced and the pages should be numbered. References should be included (and do not count as part of the paper length).

Careful consideration of the films in conjunction with scholarly sources is essential. You must cite a minimum 3 articles covered in class and 2 additional outside sources, which can include journal articles, book chapters, books, periodicals, etc. Papers will be graded based on the presentation of well-considered observations and interpretations, and on elements of good composition such as grammar and spelling. You will be graded on the content of the paper (70%), format, length, and grammar (15%), and your ability to bridge ideas, concepts, and terminology presented in lecture and the readings (15%). Papers should be turned in via Canvas. All papers will be checked using TurnItIn. The use of AI is not permitted on this assignment. **This paper will be due 10am April 1st.**

Weekly Quizzes

Throughout the semester, 10 quizzes will be given to ensure you are keeping up with the readings. Each quiz will be worth 3 points and will be due each Monday by 10am. The first of these quizzes will be due January 29th at 10 am. These quizzes will be open notes and will be based on the readings assigned for that week. Each week after class students will be able to log into Canvas and complete the quiz. Deadlines for each quiz will also be viewable on Canvas. Late quizzes cannot be made up.

Final Project – Disaster Movie Proposal

Students will assemble into groups and prepare a proposal for a disaster movie that will be both entertaining AND (somewhat) scientifically valid. Each group will have between 4-5 students. Students will present the proposal to the class and possibly invited faculty. This project is worth **25 points** towards your grade. More detailed instructions about this project are included at the end of your syllabus.

Exam

To encourage you to keep up with the readings and films and synthesize the topics covered in this course, a comprehensive final exam will be given at the end of the semester. This exam will consist of a combination of true/false, multiple-choice, short answer, and short essay questions covering the concepts presented in class, in the readings, and in the films. This exam is worth **15 points** towards your final grade. Exam make-ups will be limited to special circumstances and with prior notification only. Any exceptions will require documentation and proof regarding the reason for the absence. The exam will be held in class **April 15th**.

Class Materials on Canvas:

Materials used in this class are reserved for use only by students in this class for educational purposes. Handouts, lectures, and quizzes should not be shared outside the class in any form. Failing to follow this restriction is a violation of the UNT Code of Student Conduct and will lead to disciplinary action.

Cheating and Plagiarism

As future emergency management officials, it is imperative to maintain the upmost level of integrity and honesty. Your actions are not only a reflection of your character, but the reputation of this program and university. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. The UNT definition and policy on cheating and plagiarism is found at the end of the syllabus.

Plagiarism.Org, expands this definition to include:

- Turning in someone else's work as your own
- Copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- Failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- Giving incorrect information about the source of the quotation
- Changing words by copying the sentence structure
- Copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of the work, whether you give it credit or not (i.e. copying and pasting from a variety of sources and calling it your own, even if you use citations.)

At a minimum, any student caught cheating or plagiarizing on any assignment or exam will receive a zero on the assignment. The instructor also reserves the right to assign the student an automatic F in the course. All instances of cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the Department and University for further disciplinary action. Please, if you have any questions about whether you are citing sources correctly or if you are unsure whether you are plagiarizing or not, reach out to me **before** you hand in the assignment. I am more than happy to help.

E-Mail

Students are welcome – and encouraged – to contact me using e-mail if they have any questions or would like make an appointment to see me outside of scheduled office hours. I generally respond to e-mails within 24 hours of receiving them, however, I may take more time to reply during weekends or holidays.

All students are **REQUIRED** to have a UNT e-mail address. All e-mailed notifications pertaining to this class will be sent through those channels. In other words, if you do not have an account set up at UNT, you may miss out on important information. It is the responsibility of the student to have this account set up.

Student Behavior

All students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times. Students are expected to be respectful to the instructor, fellow classmates, and guest speakers. Any behavior that is disruptive or disrespectful – including but not limited to – talking when the instructor or fellow classmate is speaking, rudeness, listening to your i-pod, surfing the internet, checking Facebook, texting, talking on your cell phone, sleeping, etc. – will not be tolerated and the student will be asked to correct the behavior and/or asked leave the class. Additionally, no tobacco use of any form is permitted in class. We all need to contribute to a safe and open environment where everyone is able to participate in classroom discussion and activities. Repeated offenses will result in a meeting with our program director and/or reporting to the College and University.

UNIVERSITY AND DEPARTMENT POLICIES

End of the Semester Evaluations

Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) is the student evaluation system for UNT and allows students the ability to confidentially provide constructive feedback to their instructor and department to improve the quality of student experiences in the course. The SPOT assessment is made available during the last 2 weeks of the course and the instructor will remind the students to complete this important process.

RELEVANT POLICIES TO THIS COURSE

CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM: Academic integrity emanates from a culture that embraces the core values of trust and honesty necessary for full learning to occur. As a student-centered

public research university, the University of North Texas promotes the integrity of the learning process by establishing and enforcing academic standards. Academic dishonesty breaches the mutual trust necessary in an academic environment and undermines all scholarship. UNT Policy 06.003 defines cheating as “the use of unauthorized assistance in an academic exercise” and plagiarism as the “use of another’s thoughts or words without proper attribution in any academic exercise, regardless of the student’s intent.” Cases of academic dishonesty will be handled in accordance with UNT Policy 06.003 Student Standards of Academic Integrity and in accordance with the process outlined by the Office of Academic Integrity (<http://facultysuccess.unt.edu/academic-integrity>).

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION: The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

ACCEPTABLE STUDENT BEHAVIOR: Student behavior that interferes with an instructor’s ability to conduct a class or other students’ opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student’s conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university’s expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at www.deanofstudents.unt.edu

PORTABLE ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN THE CLASSROOM: When used appropriately, certain technologies, such as laptop computers, tablets, and smartphones, can enhance the university classroom experience. They also increasingly play a role in promoting campus safety by allowing students to receive severe weather alerts and other important risk information. However, when used inappropriately those same technologies can become a distraction to the individual user, other students, and the instructor. Thus, while students may use portable electronic devices for taking class notes, searching the web for class-related content and resources, and receiving risk warnings and alerts, they may not be used for conducting personal communications (e.g., texting and e-mailing), accessing social media, or any other non-academic purposes. In the event that a student’s use of portable electronic devices causes a distraction, he or she will first be asked to refrain from such use, and, if the problem persists, will be asked to leave the classroom.

Student Support Services --Mental Health

UNT provides mental health resources to students to help ensure there are numerous outlets to turn to that wholeheartedly care for and are there for students in need, regardless of the nature of an issue or its severity. Listed below are several resources on campus that can support your academic success and mental well-being:

- Student Health and Wellness Center (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center>)
- Counseling and Testing Services (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>)
- UNT Care Team (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care>)
- UNT Psychiatric Services (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry>)
- Individual Counseling (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/individual-counseling>)

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Retention of Student Records

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about student's records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University's policy. See UNT Policy 10.10, Records Management and Retention for additional information.

Final Project: Pitch Your Own Disaster Movie!

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to allow students to apply the cinematic and scientific material they have learned in this course to accomplish three objectives: (1) gain experience working in a team setting, (2) manage a project, and (3) through creativity, demonstrate understanding of the key concepts covered throughout the course.

Project Overview: Imagine that you are writers/directors and you are trying to sell your new disaster film idea to a studio. You will select an appropriate disaster; outline a plot; emphasize its cinematic and scientific value (providing evidence for why you think this combination works) provide examples of engaging dialogue; and include other elements that you feel will make a persuasive case for making your film. The project culminates with students “pitching” their ideas to an audience and producers.

Project Grade Breakdown

Portfolio Content – 70%

Final Presentation – 20%

Peer Review – 10%

Portfolio Content

Each group will be required to turn in a portfolio containing all project materials. This portfolio can be submitted either electronically or as a paper copy. Your portfolio must contain the following elements in this specific order:

- 1) Film Poster containing the names of all group members and title of the film.
- 2) Synopsis of the Plot - in a paragraph or two, provide a brief synopsis (summary) of the film. Think of this as being a description of a film you would see on the back of a DVD case.
- 3) Marketing taglines – you must include 3 creative marketing taglines that will be used to advertise your film.
- 4) Cast page - who will star in your film? Explain in 2-3 sentences for each actor/actress why these individuals were chosen to appear in your film.
- 5) Theme song/songs - each group will select a theme song for your film. Next, provide a paragraph describing why your group chose this song.
- 6) Outline the Film- this section includes several components: (3-4 pages you may need more)
 - a. Character backgrounds - describe all important characters in your film (minimum of 5). What is their background/backstory? What role do they play in this movie? For each important character, provide 3-4 sentences about their background.

- b. Setting - where does your film take place? Why did your group select this setting? Describe the location of this setting and any other information that you feel is important about the chosen location. This should be a minimum 1 paragraph.
 - c. Disaster - describe the disaster. Why does it happen? What impact does it have on people and places? Describe the scope and magnitude of the event, using scientific terminology. Included in this section, please discuss what is accurate about your portrayal of the disaster and what measures, if any, were taken to alter the “ordinary” behavior of the disaster. This section should be approximately 1-1.5 pages.
 - d. Plot - describe the progression of the film highlighting the various scenes you have created. You may do this in several different ways such as creating an illustrated story board, summarizing the different scenes in paragraph format, using a combination of these two techniques, etc. If you have any other ideas about how you want to approach presenting the plot, feel free to run your ideas by me. This section should be 2-3 pages minimum.
- 7) Provide 1-2 pages of samples of engaging dialogue.
 - 8) Discuss the special effects that you plan to use when filming your movie. (1-2 paragraphs)
 - 9) Discuss the film genre: (1 page)
 - a. What makes your film a disaster film? When answering this question, keep in mind the disaster film characteristics covered in class. In particular, be sure to note any myths you inject into your film. Justify why you did this.
 - b. What is the scientific value of the film? In other words, what is it about the material presented that is scientifically correct? How does it align or deviate from the disaster science literature and practice?
 - c. Why do you think your film is entertaining?
 - 10) A copy of the PowerPoint and/or animated trailer used in class presentation.
 - 11) Notes - each portfolio should include any notes taken in class pertaining to the class project. Be sure to include information about any meetings your group has, drafts of plots, brainstorming sessions, etc. Include any dates that work was done. These can be handwritten or typed. They do not need to be pretty – just there.

Presentation

Each team will pitch their idea to the class on **April 29th**. Presentations should be between 15-20 minutes (this may change). Student will be required to use PowerPoint and/or Windows Media (or alternative) to show the class the final product of their projects. It is recommended that the presentations follow the format required for the portfolio, however changes may be made with consultation with the instructor. Groups will be graded on how well they present their film (is it entertaining, loud clear voices, all group members participate, etc.), quality of slides (are they readable, do animations and sound work), and staying within the time limits.

Peer Review

Student will have the opportunity to evaluate the members of their team. On the day of the first project presentations (**April 29th**), students will receive an evaluation sheet from the instructor. These will be filled out during class time and turned in upon completion. All responses will remain completely anonymous, and evaluations will be shredded after I have figured the evaluations into the final project grades. **10%** of your final project grade will be based on 1) filling out the evaluation and 2) how your peers evaluate you. Students whom group member identify as “free-loading” will be subject to a project grade reduction greater than 10% if it is found that a student did not contribute their fair share of the work. Remember, you will turn in all additional work about your project meetings (i.e. who attended meetings, who did what work, etc.) at the end of the portfolio, so keep organized and make sure you participate.

Note on Project Groups

Students may select their project team members. By the end of class on **February 19th**, each group is required to provide me with a list of group members. Groups need to include 4-5 students. I reserve the right to change/modify the groups as needed. Groups will be finalized by the end of the day **February 26th**.

Working in Class

At different times during the semester, students will be given time to work in class on their projects. This provides students with an opportunity to conveniently meet with their group members and make progress on their assignment. This time does not mean that you may leave early. Remember, sometimes attendance is taken twice. If leaving early becomes an issue, then less time will be provided to work on the projects in-class.

Consultation with the Instructor

Students are highly encouraged to keep me informed about the progress of their projects as well as any questions you may have. If you have any questions or need help, please don't hesitate to ask.

Important Project Dates Summarized:

February 19th – Submit list of project group members.

February 26 – Finalize project teams. Turn in Assignment 1 (to be completed individually). 1st team meeting.

April 22 - Project workday – you will have all class to work on the project

April 29 - Project portfolios due. Final Presentations.

Consultation with the Instructor and Teaching Assistant

Students are highly encouraged to keep me informed about the progress of their projects as well as any questions you all may have. If you have any questions or need help, please don't hesitate to ask.