

History of Disasters
Spring 2026
EADP 2700-001
Tuesday/Thursday 12:30-1:50
Wooten Hall 117

Instructor: Dr. Mary Nelan

Office Hours: Wednesday 10:30-12:00, or by appointment

Office: Chilton Hall, Room 308K

Email: mary.nelan@unt.edu

Please give me 24 hours to respond to your emails during the week. I do not respond to emails on the weekends.

Teaching Assistant: Zoey Stormes (ZoeyStormes@my.unt.edu)

Course Readings

All Course Readings will be available on Canvas

Course Overview

As long as there have been humans they have been affected by disasters. Natural hazards have impacted human civilization since before written history existed, and with all the advancements in technology and industry, those hazards have only increased. This course will foster a broader understanding of both international events and those domestic to the United States. We will explore different events that have shaped how our societies have evolved and adapted through time, both in distant and recent history.

Course Objectives

The primary objectives of this course are to improve students' knowledge of disaster through human history. This course will organize these different events by themes that are present across time and space in disaster events that impact human societies. Course Material will facilitate this knowledge through:

1. Familiarizing students with all types of disaster events such as natural hazards, man-made hazards, and conflict hazards.
2. Students will be introduced to events from antiquity on through modern times.
3. Comparing and contrasting different events through time and introducing the patterns that we see across those events.

Course Requirements

Students will earn their grades in this course based on their performance on 3 exams, 1 documentary assignment, and their attendance/participation.

Exams:

There will be **3** exams in this class. Each exam will consist of **25 multiple choice questions** which will be worth 4 points each. These exams will draw from the course readings and lectures. All the exams will be non-cumulative.

For each exam, you have the opportunity to develop a review guide and submit it **before the start time of the exam through canvas** for **up to 5 points** extra credit on your exam grade. The general format is up to you, for maximum points the guide must include all topics covered for that exam. Email Dr. Nelan a picture of your favorite animal by January 30 for 2 points added to your final grade. Remember the goal of a good study guide is to organize your

notes and materials. *Please do not submit your unorganized notes as a study guide, they will receive no points.* I recommend identifying key concepts, prioritize information, define vocab works, and include examples. For ideas and suggestions check out the Creating Study Guide pdf on Black Board. I will not accept review guides that are my slides put in outline form.

If you cannot make the exam, please contact Dr. Nelan prior to the exam date or within 24 hours of missing the exam.

24-hour rule: When you receive your exam grades, please wait 24-hours before you contact me about your grade. If you want to discuss your grade, please send me an email and we can set an appointment to meet over zoom. I do not discuss grades over email.

Documentary Assignment:

Each student will submit a 1-2 page analysis on a documentary of a disaster event. They will be required to include two themes that have been discussed in the class in their analysis of the event/documentary. More information will be released on this assignment, along with suggested documentaries, mid-March.

If students wish to use a documentary that is not on the suggested list, they will need to clear that film with Dr. Nelan or Ms. Stormes (the TA), either through email or a meeting.

Documentary Assignment will be due April 26 by 11:59 PM on Canvas.

Attendance and Participation: In each class meeting, students will break into groups of 3-4 students. They will be presented with discussion questions, and each group will need to submit a sheet of paper with their names and notes on their discussion. Each student will automatically have two absences dropped. Email Dr. Nelan a picture of your favorite animal by January 30 for 2 points added to your final grade.

Grade Calculation:

Exams (20% each x 3)	60%
Documentary Assignment	20%
Participation	20%
Total:	100%

I round up your final grade from .5. However, I do not give free points at the end of the semester and will not reply to emails asking for extra points or extra credit at the end of the semester.

How to Succeed in this Course

I am available outside of class to discuss any questions you have about the course material or your grades (or the field of disaster science if you are interested). Don't hesitate to visit me during office hours or email me to make an appointment to meet with me either in person or virtually.

I am also available on email during the week. *During busy times, my inbox becomes rather full, so if you contact me and do not receive a response within two business days, please send a follow up email. A gentle nudge is always appreciated.*

Accommodations

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 Access (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, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](http://www.unt.edu/oda) website (<http://www.unt.edu/oda>). You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

If you believe you qualify for accommodations, go to the following link to begin the registration process: <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>.

Professionalism

One purpose of college courses is to help professionalize students. Two ways that we can work towards that in our class is through professionalizing your emails as students and using proper titles.

Emails

Please feel free to email me when you need help in the class, this is not meant to intimidate you but rather help you to send appropriate emails not only to me but your other professors. There are 5 key elements to a successful email to professors:

1. Subject Line: Clearly identify which class you are in and what you are emailing about in a few words.
2. Name: Use the proper title and name for your professor. Address the email to either Professor or Dr. Nelan (I have a Ph.D.; you can call me doctor). Also, make sure you know my last name and spell it correctly (this goes for all of your professors).
3. Briefly (and politely) state the reason for your email. If you are frustrated with something, try to take a step back and write a polite email, it will go a long way. If your email is aggressive then I will not receive it well. Remember to write in a professional manner, it is respectful, and I always try to respect my students, so it is nice when they reciprocate.
4. Do not use slang, text language, or emoticons. This is very important, professional emails do not include this type of language, and it is better to get into the habit of writing emails this way.
5. Proofread: Anything that you send to professors should be proofread, whether it is an assignment or an email.

Bonus: Check the syllabus for the answer before you send an email (I will respond by referring you back to the syllabus if the answer to your question can be found here).

Titles

Using the proper title or honorific is respectful and important professional correspondence and interactions (emergency management being one of them). Please address me as either Dr. Nelan or Professor Nelan. Studies have shown that women are less likely than men to be addressed as Dr. and generally are called Ms. or Mrs. Why am I putting such an emphasis on this? It will serve you well in your future, in Emergency Management you will find that many people have titles, and it is respectful to use those titles. This is not just for my ego; this is an important component of professionalization as you progress through the university.

Supporting Your Success and Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment

I value the many perspectives students bring to our campus. Please work with me to create a classroom culture of open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. All discussions should be respectful and civil. Although disagreements and debates are encouraged, personal attacks are unacceptable. Together, we can ensure a safe and welcoming classroom for all. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please stop by my office and let me know. We are all learning together.

LAPTOPS AND CELL PHONES IN THE CLASSROOM

Technology can be an excellent learning tool; however, it can also hinder learning when it is abused in the classroom. In this course, I allow personal laptops for note taking purposes. For your information, studies have shown that taking notes by hand is a more effective method of learning the material presented in your college courses.

If laptops are used for entertainment purposes while in class, you may unknowingly distract your fellow students who are not only interested in learning the topic of the course, but have also paid for the course. (See this article on the “cone of distraction” that is caused by individuals using laptops and cellphones in class for entertainment purposes: <https://derekbruff.org/?p=2915>) Please be aware of how you choose to use your laptops and what affect you may be having on students around you.

Cell phones are prohibited in class. Please turn off your ringer and put your cell phone away for the duration of class. If you need to be reached for any reason during class, please keep your phone on vibrate and leave the room to talk or text on your phone. Like laptops, cell phones can distract the students around you, and the instructor. Texting in class (no matter how stealthy you think you are) is disrespectful to the instructor and your fellow students.

POLICY ON CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM

Definitions

The UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline defines cheating and plagiarism “as the use of unauthorized books, notes, or otherwise securing help in a test; copying other’s tests, assignments, reports, or term papers; representing the work of another as one’s own; collaborating without authority with another student during an examination or in preparing academic work; or otherwise practicing scholastic dishonesty.”

Penalties

Normally, the minimum penalty for cheating or plagiarism is a grade of “F” in the course. In the case of graduate departmental exams, the minimum penalty shall be failure of all fields of the

exam. Determination of cheating or plagiarism shall be made by the instructor in the course, or by the departmental faculty in the case of departmental exams.

Cases of cheating or plagiarism on graduate departmental exams, papers, theses, or dissertations shall automatically be referred to the departmental Curriculum and Degree Programs Committee. Cases of cheating or plagiarism in ordinary course work may, at the discretion of the instructor, be referred to the Curriculum and Degree Programs Committee in the case of either graduate or undergraduate students. This committee, acting as an agent of the Department, shall impose further penalties, or recommend further penalties to the Dean of Students, if they determine that the case warrants it. In all cases, the Dean of Students shall be informed in writing of the case.

Appeals

Students may appeal and decision under this policy by following the procedure laid down in the UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline.

POLICY ON AI

The use of generative AI is strictly prohibited in this course; this includes the exams. The use of generative AI tools is not permitted on writing assignments in this course. By submitting a writing assignment, you attest that you are the only author and the original author.

POLICY ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR IN THE CLASSROOM

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 Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities 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.unt.edu/csrr.

Tentative Course Schedule

Check Canvas for Readings (they will be uploaded weekly)

Week	Class	Topic
Week 1	T 1/13	Introduction to Course
	Th 1/15	Introduction to Disasters
Week 2	T 1/20	Antioch Earthquakes
	Th 1/22	Antioch Earthquakes
Week 3	T 1/27	Pompeii – Mount Vesuvius Eruption
	Th 1/29	Pompeii – Mount Vesuvius Eruption
Week 4	T 2/3	Netherlands Floods
	Th 2/5	German Disasters
Week 5	T 2/10	The Great Colonial Hurricane - 1635
	Th 2/12	Lisbon Earthquake - 1755
Week 6	T 2/17	Exam Review
	Th 2/19	Exam 1
Week 7	T 2/24	1800s Papua New Guinea Volcano
	Th 2/26	Great Chicago Fire - 1871
Week 8	T 3/3	Krakatau Eruption - 1883
	Th 3/5	Johnstown Flood - 1889
Week 9	Spring Break – No Class	
Week 10	T 3/17	Galveston Hurricane - 1900
	Th 3/19	San Francisco Earthquake - 1906
Week 11	T 3/24	Boston Molasses Flood - 1919
	Th 3/26	Long Beach, CA Earthquake - 1933
Week 12	T 3/31	Exam Review
	Th 4/2	Exam 2
Week 13	T 4/7	Eruption of Mount Pinatubo - 1991
	Th 4/9	Chicago Heatwave - 1995
Week 14	T 4/14	Turkey Earthquake - 1999
	Th 4/16	Indian Ocean Tsunami - 2004
Week 15	T 4/21	Sichuan Earthquake - 2008
	Th 4/23	Haitian Earthquake - 2010
Documentary Assignment due by April 26 at 11:59PM		
Week 16	T 4/28	Conclusion of Course
	Th 4/30	Exam Review
Finals Week	Th 5/7	10:00 am-12:00 pm