“As individuals we cannot afford the multiple costs of illness or disaster, we cannot get so far out of phase with the concert scored for the lives we all lead together. Because we lean so heavily on one another, whether we deliberately choose to or not, we lust after an answer to the accidents of life. And if this insurance is not forthcoming, we insist at the least that our fellows rally and be concerned if catastrophe occurs.”

- R.N. Wilson (1962), Man and Society in Disaster

Instructor: Karla Vermeulen, Ph.D.
Office: Wooster 316
Office hours: Wednesdays and Thursdays, 1:00-3:00, or by appointment
Email: vermeulk@newpaltz.edu
Phone: 845-257-2333

Student Learning Objectives
By the end of the semester, students will be able to:
1. Define disasters and disaster mental health, and describe the development of the field.
2. Describe the psychological impact of disasters and trauma, including typical reactions and extreme reactions such as Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Acute Stress Disorder.
3. Describe the disaster-related needs of specific populations including children, older adults, people with physical and mental disabilities, and members of the military.
4. Describe short- and long-term interventions to assist disaster survivors.
5. Discuss vicarious traumatization, self-care, and other issues affecting disaster mental health helpers.
6. Receive introductory training from the American Red Cross, which may lead to qualifications to respond to disasters as volunteers under the auspices of the Red Cross.

(Three credit hours)

Please be aware that some content that will be included in the course may be disturbing to you. If you feel troubled by the material, please contact the instructor and/or the Psychological Counseling Center:

Albany: 518-442-5800
New Paltz: 845-257-2920
**Course Expectations:**
Grades will be based on one group presentation (15%), one paper (25%), and three non-cumulative exams, each worth 20%. The final exam will be cumulative, and either can serve as a make-up or can replace the lowest of the first three exam grades. Because of this, **no make-up exams will be given during the semester.** Exams will include multiple choice and essay questions. They will include material covered in class but not in the readings, as well as material covered in readings but not discussed in class – in other words, to do well you need to attend class AND complete all reading assignments.

For the presentation, each group of 4-5 students will be assigned a specific historic disaster. The group will research the details of that disaster, and do a 20 to 30 minute long presentation in class on the relevant characteristics that would be expected to influence survivors’ reactions.

For the paper, each student will work individually to develop a plan for the kind of mental health interventions you would offer if you were involved in responding to that same event. Papers should be 5-7 pages double-spaced. We’ll discuss the presentation and paper in more detail closer to the due dates.

**Class participation is strongly encouraged and may earn extra credit at the instructor’s discretion!**

**Attendance Policy:**
Attendance at all classes is expected. Slides will be posted on Blackboard after each class, but far more detail will be discussed in class than is included on the slides, so regular attendance and note-taking is strongly recommended. In the case of any absence, you are responsible for obtaining the missed information from another student.

**Class Cancellations:**
If it’s necessary to cancel class due to weather or other unavoidable circumstances, you’ll be emailed at your college address as early as possible and an announcement will be posted on Blackboard.

Please turn off phones and other devices unless you’ve cleared it with me in advance. Respect your fellow students and don’t text in class – it’s highly distracting to everyone around you!

**Campus-wide Policy Statements**

1. **Academic integrity policy statement:** Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty in their college work. Cheating, forgery, and plagiarism are serious offenses, and students found guilty of any form of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action. New Paltz’s policy on academic integrity is found at [http://www.newpaltz.edu/ugc/policies/policies_integrity.html](http://www.newpaltz.edu/ugc/policies/policies_integrity.html), and several excellent resources to help with avoiding plagiarism are available on the Sojourner Truth Library’s website: [http://lib.newpaltz.edu/assistance/plag.html](http://lib.newpaltz.edu/assistance/plag.html).

2. **Reasonable accommodation of individuals with disabilities statement:** Students needing classroom and/or testing accommodations related to a disability should contact the Disability Resource Center (Student Union, Room 210, 845-257-3020) as close as possible to the beginning
of the semester. The DRC will then provide students’ instructors with an Accommodation Memo verifying the need for accommodations. Specific questions about services and accommodations may be directed to Deanna Knapp, Assistant Director (knappd@newpaltz.edu).

3. Veteran and Military Services statement: New Paltz’s Office of Veteran and Military Services (OVMS) is committed to serving the needs of veterans, service members and their dependents during their transition from military life to student life. Student veterans, service members or their dependents who need assistance while attending SUNY New Paltz may refer to www.newpaltz.edu/veterans; call 845-257-3120, -3124 or -3074; or stop by the Student Union, Room 100 South.

4. Computer and network policies statement: Users of New Paltz’s computer resources and network facilities are required to comply with the institutional policies outlined in the Acceptable Uses and Privacy Policy (https://sites.newpaltz.edu/csc/policies/acceptable-uses-and-privacy-policy/).

5. Identity verification policy statement for online courses: New Paltz’s Online Identity Verification Policy is designed to verify that students enrolled in our online courses and/or programs are the ones who take the courses, complete the programs, and receive the academic credit. See http://www.newpaltz.edu/ugc/policies/policies_onlineverification.html for the complete policy.

SEIs: 
SEIs (Student Evaluation of Instructor) will be administered online and will be available for you to complete near the end of the semester. I take student feedback very seriously so please be sure to complete the form during the open period – I’ll remind you once that begins.

The last day to withdraw from the course without receiving a penalty grade is March 31.
Readings:

Required Textbook:

Other required readings are in the Course Documents folder on Blackboard unless otherwise noted (more may be added):
Beiser, V. (April 19, 2010). Organizing Armageddon: What we learned from the Haiti earthquake. Wired Magazine. Download from:
http://www.wired.com/magazine/2010/04/ff_haiti/


Flynn, S. (November 22, 2016). Orlando: The day after. GQ. Download from:
http://www.gq.com/story/orlando-day-after

Goodell, J. (October 3, 2011). Climate Change and the End of Australia. Rolling Stone Magazine. Download from:


## Disaster Psychology Spring 2017 Schedule  
(subject to change!)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section I: Background</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, 1/23</td>
<td>Course Overview</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, 1/25</td>
<td>Introduction to disaster psychology</td>
<td>Articles: Goodell, Beiser, Dean</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, 1/30</td>
<td>Overview of disaster characteristics</td>
<td>Chapters 1 &amp; 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, 2/1</td>
<td>Typical reactions to disasters</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, 2/6</td>
<td>Typical reactions continue; History of the field</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, 2/8</td>
<td>Guest presenter: Steven Moskowitz, L.M.S.W.,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Director, Disaster Response and Emergency Preparedness,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>NYS Office of Mental Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, 2/13</td>
<td>Traumatic responses and mental health interventions</td>
<td>Halpern, Senior articles for the military</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, 2/15</td>
<td>Guest presenter: Derek M. Coy, Veterans' Health Officer,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>New York State Health Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, 2/20</td>
<td>No class - Presidents' Day (bonus day off for Albany students!)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, 2/22</td>
<td>EXAM 1</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

## Section II: Mental Health Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday, 2/27</td>
<td>Video: When the Levees Broke, part 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, 3/1</td>
<td>Extreme reactions, resilience factors</td>
<td>Chapter 5, Bonnano article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, 3/6</td>
<td>Grief, loss, and mourning rituals</td>
<td>Lord, Hook &amp; English article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, 3/8</td>
<td>Grief, loss, and mourning cont'd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Monday, 3/13 - Albany spring break!  New Paltz: Group Project Work Day

Wednesday, 3/15 - Albany spring break!  New Paltz: Take online American Red Cross course - Disaster Services: An Overview

Monday, 3/20 - New Paltz spring break!  Albany: Group Project Work Day

Wednesday, 3/22 - New Paltz spring break!  Albany: Take online American Red Cross course - Disaster Services: An Overview

Monday, 3/27  Vulnerable populations  Chapter 6

Wednesday, 3/29  International and cross-cultural issues  Dass-Brailsford article

Monday, 4/3  EXAM 2

**Section III: Mental Health Interventions**

Wednesday, 4/5  Guest presenter: Chief David Dugatkin, University Police Department  Flynn article

Monday, 4/10  *No class - Passover*

Wednesday, 4/12  Psychological First Aid and other early interventions  Chapters 8 & 9

Monday, 4/17  Presentations 1 and 2

Wednesday, 4/19  Presentations 3 and 4

Monday, 4/24  EXAM 3

Wednesday, 4/26  Presentations 5 and 6

Monday, 5/1  Presentation 7; Debriefing; Pharmacotherapy

Wednesday, 5/3  Occupational hazards & self-care

Monday, 5/8  Wrap-up  Chapter 12

Monday, 5/15  **FINAL EXAM - 2:45 - 4:45**

*(Albany students: inform the professor if you have a conflict)*