Disaster and Crisis Management in the Public, Private and Nonprofit Sectors

Course Description

Natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and industrial accidents are just few of the types of threats and hazards organizations have to contend with. This course will explore how and why public, private and nonprofit organizations prepare for, and respond to, disasters and other crisis situations.

The field of disaster and crisis management has evolved greatly over time and this course will examine that evolution and the key issues and challenges facing emergency managers and other crisis management professionals. In addition to the examination of the similarities and differences across the various sectors, we will analyze contemporary trends and common challenges to include risk management, crisis communication, and crisis leadership.

Through the use of conceptual models and real-world case studies, we will further explore the application of theory and practice within the field of disaster and crisis management. We will examine specific events, how organizations responded to those events, and how those events changed and shaped the various organizations, and the discipline itself.

Required Readings

For Purchase


Available on-line or provided

Numerous other articles, reports and studies (as outlined below)

Course Requirements

Class Attendance and Participation: 30%
Short Response Papers: 30%
Research Project and Presentation: 40%
  Paper: 30%
  Presentation: 10%
Class Attendance and Participation

It is critical that students attend class and actively participate in the class discussions. To effectively do so, students must complete the required reading assignments and be prepared to engage in dialogue regarding the reading. The instructor will prompt discussion and help to frame issues, but the students need to be active participants and will be expected to contribute to the dialogue. Students may also be called upon to briefly summarize the reading. We will also make it a point to discuss current events related to disaster and crisis management as well. Additionally, students will be expected to participate in case-study discussions and a table-top-exercise designed to test the collective understanding of the class based on the concepts and issues discussed throughout the course.

Short Response Papers

Students will be expected to complete 3 short (3-5 pages, double spaced) papers based on questions posed by the instructor and supported by the reading and class discussions. Independent research will not be required, as the emphasis will be placed on the student’s understanding of the concepts, critical thinking and coherent responses to the questions posed. Although independent research is not required, you should also try to relate the concepts from the readings and class discussions to the degree possible. These papers will be due at the beginning of class and must be handed in as a hard copy.

Research Project and Presentation

Students will also be expected to complete a longer (10-12 pages, double spaced) paper supported by independent research conducted by the student. Students will be asked to compare and contrast two like crisis or disaster situations, to include an examination of similarities and differences in terms of the impacts, response, management, and outcomes associated with the events. In addition to the paper, students will be expected to present (to the class) their research in a clear, concise and creative fashion. More details and guidance on the project and presentation will be provided in advance of the assignment.
Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this course students should be able to:

- Comprehend the key theories and concepts associated with disaster and crisis management.
- Understand how disaster and crisis management is applied across the public, private and nonprofit sectors and how the various sectors collaborate during a disaster.
- Appreciate the contemporary issues and challenges within disaster and crisis management and how organizations within the various sectors are addressing these challenges.
- Explain how previous events have shaped the discipline of disaster and crisis management.
- Compare and contrast like crisis or disaster events and report on the similarities and differences from a crisis/disaster management perspective.

Policies

Attendance and Participation Policy: At the college level of education, the expectation is that students will actively participate in class discussions each week. I expect students to have read and thought about the material or tasks assigned for that week. If language or some other barrier inhibits you from participating actively, you should let me know immediately so that we can devise a solution.

Disability Policy: Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of the Disability Resource Center (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability and will recommend appropriate accommodations.

Academic Dishonesty Policy: Students are expected to comply with the University at Albany’s Community Rights and Responsibilities. An incident of unethical conduct (e.g. cheating, plagiarism) or classroom disruption will result in a failing grade and referral to the appropriate Departmental and University Committees. More information on academic integrity is available at the following website: http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html.

Grade Complaints: Students who feel their exams or assignments have been graded incorrectly should follow a three-step procedure. First, the student should carefully read the exam or assignment and identify the precise problem with the grading. Second, the student must send a written appeal explaining why their answer was appropriate to the instructor. Third, the instructor will meet with the student to discuss the appeal and resolve the conflict.
Course Outline

A course outline, to include the topics covered and required reading assignments, is included below. However, the instructor may alter the outline and associated reading based on current events.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Associated Readings</th>
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| 1       | Course Introduction and Overview – Definitions and Key Concepts | 1. Course Syllabus  
2. Text Chapter 1  
| 2       | Disaster and Crisis Management in the Public Sector  
5. Alex Thompson. (2016) Trumps Big FEMA Decision. Vice News |
| 3       | The Politics of Crisis Management  

Short Response Paper 1 Due (2/6)
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<thead>
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<th>Page</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Case Study</th>
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<td><strong>Short Response Paper 2 Due (3/6)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Research Topic Due (3/6)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Putting it all together:</strong> Table Top Exercise @State EOC</td>
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<td><strong>Student Presentations</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>14/5/8</td>
<td><strong>Student Presentations</strong> Conclusion and Moving Forward</td>
<td>TBD, All Research Papers Due (5/8)</td>
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