

# ACCIDENTS & DISASTERS IN THE US & THE WORLD

Wed 1:00-2:20 pm ET | Online (mixed asynchronous/synchronous)

## Instructor

Professor Jamie Pietruska  
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 Van Dyck 311  
 848.932.8544

Online office hours (via Zoom):  
 M 12:00-2:00pm ET  
 W 12:00-1:00pm ET  
 or by appointment

## Course info

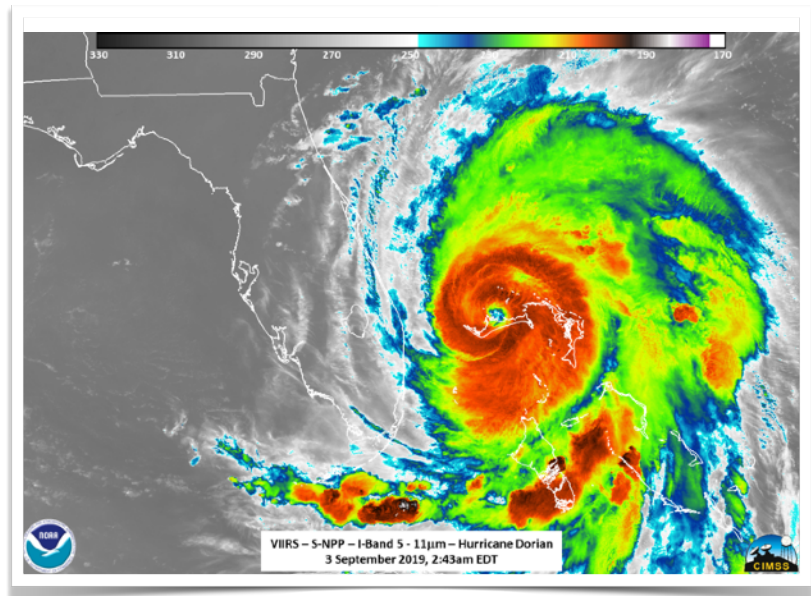
This course meets [SAS Core](#) goal [HST](#) and counts toward the [STEM in Society minor/certificate](#). No prerequisites. No prior experience in History necessary.

## Course tools

**Book:** Arwen P. Mohun, [Risk: Negotiating Safety in American Society](#) (Johns Hopkins UP, 2013). ISBN: 9781421407906. Available through the [Rutgers University Barnes & Noble Bookstore](#) and from online retailers. Freely accessible as an [ebook](#) on online course reserve through [Rutgers Libraries](#).

**LMS:** [Canvas](#)

**Technology:** computer or tablet with Internet connection needed



## Course description

This course examines the histories of accidents and disasters in the United States and the world from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, with particular emphasis on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Although accidents and disasters are often understood as isolated, rare events, they have been continuously important to the history of the United States and the world for the past four centuries. Through efforts to anticipate hazards, develop new tools for risk management, build infrastructures for relief, expand government capacity for disaster response, and remember victims, accidents and disasters have become increasingly central to everyday life in the United States. To study accidents and disasters, we will draw on topics and methods from environmental history, the history of science and technology, and the history of capitalism, as well as political, social, and cultural history. We will explore the material and environmental dimensions of disaster alongside shifting cultural meanings of catastrophe.



## Course format

- Mixed remote (primarily asynchronous, with synchronous meetings approximately every other Wednesday)
- Emphasis on multimedia sources (including video lectures, documents, maps, visual art, film, television clips, and podcasts)
- The success of our course will depend on your active and thoughtful engagement with the course material and each other, so please complete all the reading and activities for each module and share your ideas, comments, and questions with your classmates, the professor, and your TA.



## Big questions

1.) To what extent are “natural” disasters, like hurricanes and floods, in fact unnatural—shaped by human decisions about markets and economic growth, science and technology, and governance? Conversely, to what extent are accidents in human-built technological systems like nuclear reactors and electrical grids beyond human control?

2.) How can historians understand discrete events—like the Great Chicago Fire (1871) and the San Francisco Earthquake (1906), and high-profile accidents like Chernobyl (1986) and the Space Shuttle *Challenger* explosion (1986)—in the broader contexts of political economy, state-building, capitalism, technoscience, society and culture, and media? How do disasters unfold in different timeframes, whether sudden and singular events like the Galveston Hurricane (1900) or long-term, infrastructural, “slow” disasters, like climate change? How do particular narratives of accidents and disasters become a usable past for policymakers, business interests, environmentalists, and other social groups?

3.) How has the social experience of disaster been historically differentiated along lines of race, class, gender, and region? How have disasters been imagined as spectacle in media and popular culture, and how has the lived experience of disaster preparedness become routinized in everyday life?

4.) Accidents and disasters obviously bring death and destruction, but how have they also led to moments of creation and production, including new forms of governance, new opportunities for profit-making, artistic and cultural responses, and community-building? What is the historical relationship between disaster response and state-building within the United States and around the world? How have accidents and disasters produced new forms of knowledge and expertise in prediction, risk management, emergency preparedness, and public policy?



## SAS Core learning goals for Historical Analysis [HST]

- Explain the development of some aspect of a society and culture over time
- Employ historical reasoning to study human endeavors, using appropriate assumptions, methods, evidence, and arguments

## Course learning goals

- Analyze the relationship between what have traditionally been considered “natural disasters” and human-induced accidents and disasters
- Analyze changing ideas and scientific knowledge about accidents and disasters from colonial America to the twenty-first century
- Analyze how experiences of accidents and disasters have historically been shaped by race, class, and gender
- Analyze the expanding role of the state and experts in disaster management from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries
- Analyze (and differentiate between) primary and secondary sources
- Write analytically about multiple primary sources

# How to succeed in this course

## 1. Stay engaged

Our ongoing, collective conversation about the course material and reading is the single most important part of this course, and it depends on your engagement!

Students in this course come from across the disciplines, and everyone brings a valuable perspective to the topics we will study. My hope is that we can take advantage of our online format to engage with the material and with each other in different ways than we would in a classroom setting.

This is a **mixed asynchronous/synchronous remote** course. We will meet together for **online discussion** via Zoom **approximately every other Wednesday from 1:00-2:20pm ET**. Attendance at these online discussions is required except in case of illness, religious observance, participation in university-sponsored events or activities, or other university-approved absences as explained in the [SAS attendance policy](#). Otherwise, you can log on to our Canvas site each week to do your coursework at whatever days and times are best for you.

The course is organized into **14 weeks of online modules**, with typically 2 modules for each week. The new modules will be posted at the same time each week, and you will have **10 days to complete each module’s assignments** on Canvas. Modules will include short video lectures, a variety of multimedia sources, and opportunities for students to interact with each other, the professor, and the TA through Canvas discussion forums and the social annotation platform [Hypothesis](#).

Another way to stay engaged in the course is to communicate by email with the professor and TA and visit online office hours to clarify and deepen your understanding of the course material.

I understand that you may need to miss class occasionally due to the reasons outlined in the [SAS attendance policy](#). All absences should be entered into the [Rutgers University Self-Reporting Absence website](#). I will receive an automatic email from this system, so there is no need to send me a separate email regarding your attendance.



Your online engagement will be the basis of your citizenship/class participation grade, and it is highly unlikely that you will be able to succeed on paper assignments and exams without regular attendance at our synchronous Zoom discussions.

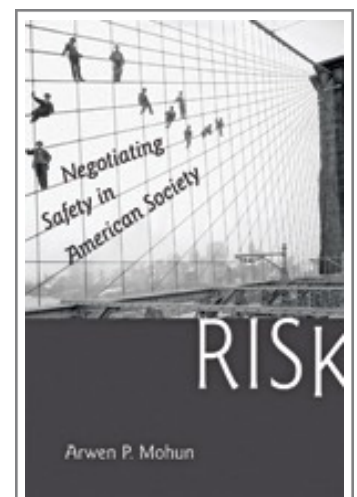
I understand that you may occasionally have to miss an assignment due to illness or other extenuating circumstances. In the event that you do fall behind, please contact me by email as soon as possible so that I can help you catch up. **I understand that everyone is doing their best under the extremely adverse conditions of a global pandemic, and I will do everything I can to make this course as flexible as possible for anyone who needs accommodations.**

## 2. Do the reading

Reading assignments should be completed for each module as we will use the readings as the basis for online Canvas discussion and other interactive activities. **It is important to take notes in some way as you read** (e.g., underlining, highlighting, annotating, writing notes on a text's main arguments and themes, writing down questions, noting any confusing or seemingly contradictory aspects of the reading, etc.)

**Required book:** Arwen P. Mohun, [Risk: Negotiating Safety in American Society](#) (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), hardcover. ISBN: 9781421407906. Available for purchase through the [Rutgers University Barnes & Noble Bookstore](#) and from various online retailers. **Digital copy is freely accessible here** through [Rutgers Libraries](#) or through Canvas Reading List.

**Additional short readings will be posted on Canvas.**





## Assessment

### 20% Paper #1

3-page analysis of primary sources on late 19<sup>th</sup>-century accident insurance

### 20% Midterm exam (take-home)

### 20% Paper #2

5-page comparative analysis of 2 20<sup>th</sup>-century disasters

### 15% Final exam (Week 14 modules)

### 25% Online participation

**Both papers and both exams must be completed to pass the course.**



## 3. Complete assignments on time

You will receive detailed instructions for each paper and exam well in advance of the due date. Read the instructions carefully and plan ahead. Come to online office hours to discuss your ideas with the professor or the TA. (Don't wait until the night before the paper is due to start the assignment!)

### *Writing Tutors & Coaches*

Visit the [History Writing Tutor](#) to get expert help with any stage of your writing process. Check out the [History Writing Tutors webpage](#) for step-by-step writing guides covering everything from brainstorming to comma use. The Rutgers Learning Center also offers appointments with their [Writing Coaches](#).

### *Submissions*

There is a **rolling submission period of one week for both paper assignments and the take-home midterm exam** so that you can balance your workload for this course with your other courses and commitments.

- Paper #1 is due the week of Sept 27. You may submit it on Canvas anytime between Sept 27 and Oct 4.
- The midterm exam is due the week of Oct 11. You may submit it on Canvas anytime between Oct 11 and Oct 18.
- Paper #2 is due the week of Nov 22. You may submit it on Canvas anytime between Nov 22 and Dec 6.



If you need additional time to complete your work, please email the professor to arrange an extension. **There are no late penalties in this course.**

## Grading

Final course grades will be calculated according to the following scale, conforming to University policy that uses "+" but not "-" grades:

- A 90% & above
- B+ 85-89%
- B 80-84%
- C+ 75-79%
- C 70-74%
- D 60-69%
- F 59% & below

- Our Canvas grade book will be updated regularly throughout the semester, so make sure to check your grades so that you know where you stand.
- If you would like to discuss your grades at any point, please come to office hours or make an appointment to speak with the professor or TA. *Please note that we do not discuss grades over email.*
- *There are no extra credit assignments in this course.*

## Online discussion activities

Our weekly modules will offer you regular opportunities to engage with the material and each other through Canvas. Your participation will be assessed based on the quality and quantity of your contributions to your Canvas discussion group and other online platforms that we will use.

### Class participation rubric

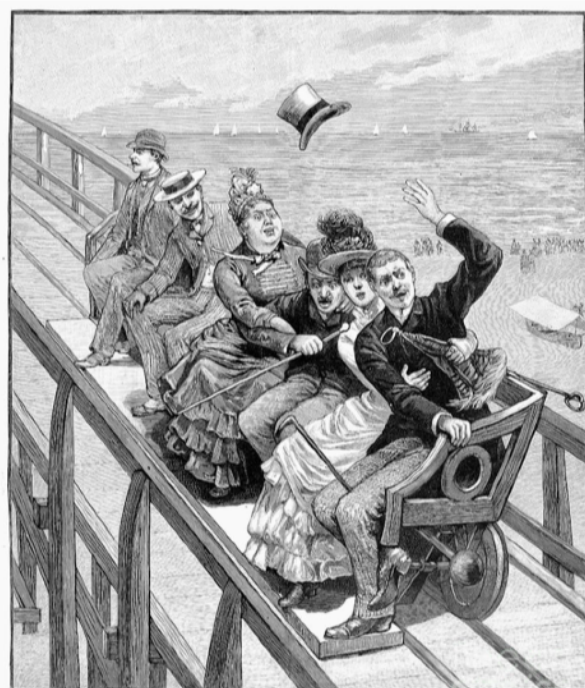
- A** Student participated meaningfully in every, or nearly every, Canvas group activity; offered comments and/or questions that reflected substantive engagement with the assigned material; and responded thoughtfully to the other students' contributions
- B** Student excelled in most of the above ways, but fell short on 1 or 2 of the criteria (e.g., had more than a few instances of no participation, or about 1/3 of the time made comments that reflected only a superficial engagement with the assigned material)
- C** Either the student excelled in some criteria but fell short in others (e.g., made frequent comments in Canvas group activities but comments were not relevant to the topic or did not reflect engagement with the assigned material), or the student performed merely adequately on all the above criteria (e.g., only sometimes participated in Canvas group activities)
- D** Student did not meet most of the criteria overall, but occasionally did meet one of the above criteria
- F** Student did not engage with the video lectures, assigned material, or Canvas group activities throughout the semester

## 4. Contribute to our intellectual community

### *Citizenship*

The [Department of History's "Policy on Mutual Responsibilities and Classroom Etiquette"](#) states, "Our commitments to a strong learning community are expressed in many ways. Respectful professors convey their commitment to the discipline of history and their desire to share its delights and challenges. They are well prepared for class, provide students with clear goals and expectations, listen carefully to student questions and comments, and conscientiously evaluate their students' work. Respectful students bring a strong work ethic to the history courses that they select. They expect to attend the scheduled classes, to be on time, to be prepared for class, and to be attentive during class. A shared respect for the discipline of history and for one another as teachers and students of history is essential to the academic integrity of our program. We must all do our part to maintain an environment of openness and civility that encourages and honors the intellectual achievement represented by the discipline of history."

Each of you is a valuable member of our intellectual community this semester, and I trust that you will conduct yourselves accordingly. My goal is that our online class will be a space for thoughtful, sustained, and respectful engagement with the course material and with each other.



SUMMER EXCURSIONS AT THE BEASIDE.—A CHAUCING PARTY AT CONY ISLAND.—"MORE SCARED THAN HERE."  
FROM A PHOTO OF A GREAT ROLLER.—SEE PAGE 10.

I trust that you will make your best effort to help us achieve this goal by doing the following:

- Keeping up with the weekly modules to the best of your ability
- Participating thoughtfully in online discussions and other class activities
- Working collaboratively and productively in your Canvas discussion group

**25 percent of your course grade will be based on online participation & citizenship**

## 5. Ask for help when you need it

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I would like everyone to succeed in this course and am always happy to help however I can. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns as soon as they arise.

### *Contacting the professor and teaching assistant*

We are available during online office hours each week or by appointment. We check email regularly and will reply as soon as we can. **In compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), please use your Rutgers ScarletMail account (not a personal email account) to communicate with your professors and teaching assistants.** As the [Rutgers University Ethics and Compliance webpage](#) states, "All Rutgers University students, staff, and instructors are assigned a university managed email account to be utilized for purposes of official correspondence."

### *Student wellness & technology resources*

#### **Rutgers Universitywide COVID-19 Information**

<https://coronavirus.rutgers.edu/>

#### **Rutgers Learning Centers Remote Instruction**

Learning remotely presents new challenges. For assistance with learning how to address these challenges, please consult the resources available here: [https://rlc.rutgers.edu/remote\\_instruction](https://rlc.rutgers.edu/remote_instruction)

#### **Rutgers Student Technology Resources**

Please visit the [Rutgers Student Tech Guide](#) page for resources available to all students. If you do not have the appropriate technology for financial reasons, please email the Dean of Students [deanofstudents@echo.rutgers.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@echo.rutgers.edu) or complete the [contact form](#) for assistance. If you are facing other financial hardships, please visit the Office of Financial Aid at <https://financialaid.rutgers.edu/>.

#### **Just In Case Web App**

<http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

#### **Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)**

(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/ <http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/>

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professionals within Rutgers Health Services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.



**Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance** (848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / [www.vpva.rutgers.edu/](http://www.vpva.rutgers.edu/)

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

### **Disability Services**

(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/getting-registered>.

### **Scarlet Listeners**

(732) 247-5555

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.

**Report a Concern:** <http://health.rutgers.edu/do-something-to-help/>

**Basic Needs Security:** Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the [Dean of Students](#) for support. Also, if you are comfortable doing so, please notify the professor so that she can help however she can and connect you with campus resources.

**Office of the Dean of Students** <http://deanofstudents.rutgers.edu/>

88 College Avenue

New Brunswick, NJ 08901

848-932-2300

[deanofstudents@echo.rutgers.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@echo.rutgers.edu)

**Rutgers Student Food Pantry** <http://ruoffcampus.rutgers.edu/food/>

39 Union Street

New Brunswick, NJ 08901

848-932-5500

[ruoffcampus@echo.rutgers.edu](mailto:ruoffcampus@echo.rutgers.edu)

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## Academic Integrity Policy

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The foundation of this course and any scholarly endeavor is academic integrity. I fully expect that all students will adhere to principles of academic integrity in their work. You are responsible for understanding the [Rutgers University policies regarding academic integrity](#). Ignorance of these policies or the consequences for violations is not an acceptable excuse. All written work must be a student's own original work. **Collaboration on writing assignments (i.e., essays and take-home exams) is not permitted.** Any and all references to sources within your own essays must be properly cited according to the bibliographic conventions of the [Chicago Manual of Style](#), which is available through the [Alexander Library](#) and online at the [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#).

If you have any questions about quoting, paraphrasing, or referring to the work of others, please ask! It is better to be safe than sorry—better to have too many citations than too few and thus run the risk of unintentional plagiarism. Any and all violations of academic integrity in this course will result in the formal consequences and disciplinary action that are outlined in the [Rutgers policies on academic integrity](#). **I have a zero-tolerance policy for academic dishonesty and refer all violations directly to the [Office of Student Conduct](#).**

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## Students with Disabilities

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Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey abides by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments (ADAA) of 2008, and Sections 504 and 508, which mandate reasonable accommodations be provided for qualified students with disabilities and accessibility of online information. If you have a disability and may require some type of instructional and/or examination accommodation, please contact the professor during the first week of the semester so that we can arrange accommodations. If you have not already done so, you will need to register with the [Office of Disability Services](#), Lucy Stone Hall, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Ave., Suite A145. Phone: 848.445.6800 Online: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

## Schedule

*The professor reserves the right to modify the schedule (e.g., shortening or eliminating assignments) as warranted by the ongoing public health emergency or other unforeseen events. Weekly modules will be based on the following readings (some will be required and some recommended), with occasional modifications.*

### Week 1: Conceptualizing Accidents & Disasters

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#### Week of Sept 1

#### Module 1.1 Introductions and Course Overview

How to Think Historically about Disasters in the Context of COVID-19

James Fallows, [“The 3 Weeks That Changed Everything.”](#) *The Atlantic*, June 29, 2020

Ed Yong, [“How the Pandemic Now Ends.”](#) *The Atlantic*, August 12, 2021

## Module 1.2 Theorizing Normal Accidents and Unnatural Disasters

Greg Bankoff, “No Such Thing as Natural Disasters,” *Harvard International Review*, August 23, 2010 [Canvas]

Mohun, *Risk*, introduction (pp. 1-8)

*Recommended:* Charles Perrow, *Normal Accidents: Living with High-Risk Technologies* (Princeton University Press, 1999 [1984]), pp. 3-12 [Canvas]

*Recommended:* Naomi Klein, “Disaster Capitalism: The New Economy of Catastrophe,” *Harper’s Magazine*, October 2007, pp. 47-58 [Canvas]

## Week 2: Encountering Disaster in the New World

### Week of Sept 7

#### Module 2.1 Narrating Epidemics

Miguel León-Portilla, [Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico](#) (Beacon Press, 2006), excerpts on plague (pp. 91-93)

Mohun, *Risk*, chap. 2 (“The Uncertainties of Disease”) (pp. 33-51)

#### Module 2.2 The Ways of Providence and the “Blessings of Disaster”

Increase Mather, *Remarkable Providences: Illustrative of the Earlier Days of American Colonization* (London: John Russell Smith, 1856 [1684]), [chap. 10](#) (“Of Remarkable Tempests, etc., in New-England”)

Mohun, *Risk*, chap. 1 (“Fire Is Everybody’s Problem”) (pp. 11-32)

## Week 3: Knowing Natural Hazards in Colonial & Early America

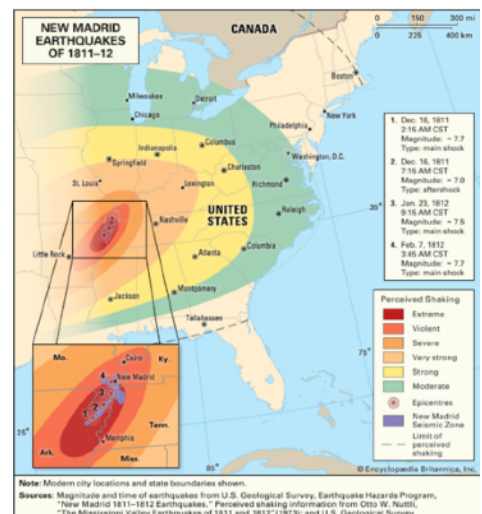
### Week of Sept 13

#### Module 3.1 Hurricanes and Empire in the Atlantic World

[“Captain Langford’s Observations of his own Experience upon Hurricanes, and their Prognosticks.”](#) *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 20 (1698): 407-416

*Recommended:* R. Bohun, *A Discourse Concerning the Origine and Properties of Wind, with an Historicall Account of Hurricanes, and Other Tempestuous Winds* (Oxford: W. Hall, 1671), [pp. 255-292](#)

#### Module 3.2 The New Madrid Earthquakes (1811-1812) and Disaster Science



“No such thing as ‘natural disasters’”

University of Memphis Center for Earthquake Research and Information, [4 eyewitness accounts of New Madrid Earthquakes](#): [Eliza Bryan's letter to Lorenzo Dow](#) (1816); [Dillard's Account in Foster](#) (1869); [Anonymous—from the Lexington Reporter](#) (1812); [Louis Bringier—Notes on the Geology and Minerology...](#) (1821)

## Week 4: The New Industrial-Accident Society

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### Week of Sept 20

#### Module 4.1 Industrial Accidents and the Pricing of Injury

Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* (Harper & Brothers, 1901 [1874]), [chap. 20](#) (“A Catastrophe”), [Recommended: [chap. 37](#) (“The End of the ‘Gold Dust’”)]

Mohun, *Risk*, chap. 5 (“Railroads, or Why Risk in a System is Different”) (pp. 91-115)

#### Module 4.2 Constructing Narratives of the Great Chicago Fire (1871)

[“Account by an Eye-Witness.”](#) *Harper's Weekly*, October 28, 1871

Elias Colbert and Everett Chamberlin, *Chicago and the Great Conflagration* (Cincinnati and New York: C. F. Vent, 1872), pp. [201-235](#), [374-387](#), [445-453](#)

## Week 5: Predicting Extreme Weather

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### Week of Sept 27

#### Module 5.1 Weather Prophets and the Blizzard of 1888

##### *Paper #1 due this week*

[“In a Blizzard's Grasp.”](#) *New York Times*, March 13, 1888

[“A Visit to the Prophet Who Predicted the 1888 Blizzard.”](#) *New York Times*, July 16, 1916

Recommended: A. W. Greely, “The Great Storm of March 11-14, 1888,” *National Geographic Magazine* 1, no. 1 (1888): 37-39 [Canvas]

#### Module 5.2 American and Cuban Meteorological Infrastructures and the Galveston Hurricane (1900)

Isaac Monroe Cline, *Storms, Floods, and Sunshine* (1945), [chap. XVI](#) (“Cyclone of September 5-10, 1900—The Galveston Hurricane”)



## Week 6: The Profits of Disaster

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### Week of Oct 4

#### Module 6.1 Creative Destruction and the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire (1906)

Kevin Rozario, “What Comes Down Must Go Up: Why Disasters Have Been Good for American Capitalism,” in *American Disasters*, ed. Steven Biel (NYU Press, 2001), pp. 72-102 [Canvas]

“No such thing as ‘natural disasters’”



Ted Steinberg, "Smoke and Mirrors: The San Francisco Earthquake and Seismic Denial," in *American Disasters*, ed. Steven Biel (NYU Press, 2001), pp. 103-126 [Canvas]

## Module 6.2 Intimacies of Disaster

Selections from Malcolm E. Barker, ed. *Three Fearful Days: San Francisco Memoirs of the 1906 Earthquake and Fire* (San Francisco: Londonborn Publications, 1998): James Hopper, "A Strange Elation" (pp. 109-111), Hugh Kwong Liang's story" (pp. 119-123), Mary Edith Griswold, "Three days adrift" (pp. 125-131), Louise Herrick Wall, "The dignity of ruins" (pp. 201-204), Charles B. Sedgwick, "Sublime spectacle" (pp. 207-209), "As told by the children" (pp. 277-278), William James, "A 'subjective' view" (pp. 293-297) [Canvas]

Rebecca Solnit, *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster* (Penguin, 2009), pp. 13-33 [Canvas]

## Week 7: The Allure of Accident

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### Week of Oct 11

#### Module 7.1 Commercializing Risk from Coney Island to Action Park

Frederic Thompson, "Amusing the Million," *Everybody's Magazine* 19 (September 1908): 378-87 [Canvas]

Edward F. Tilyou, "Human Nature with the Brakes Off," *American Magazine* 94 (July 1922): 18-21 [Canvas]

Mohun, *Risk*, chap. 10 ("Risk as Entertainment: Amusement Parks") (pp. 214-235)

James Barron, "['People Were Bleeding All Over': America's Most Dangerous Amusement Park,](#)" *New York Times*, October 19, 2019

**Midterm exam due this week**

## Week 8: Disaster Expertise in the Progressive Era

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### Week of Oct 18

#### Module 8.1 Investigating and Reforming the Factory

[Report to the Legislature of the State of New York by the New York State Factory Investigating Commission \(1912\)](#)

[Recommendations of the Commission](#)

Mohun, *Risk*, chap. 6 ("The Professionalization of Safety") (pp. 116-140)

Clips from PBS *American Experience* film [Triangle Fire](#)

#### Module 8.2 The Influenza Pandemic of 1918

PBS *American Experience* film [Influenza 1918](#)

Selected primary sources [Canvas]



## Week 9: Inequities of Disaster Relief

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### Week of Oct 25

#### Module 9.1 Engineering and Flood Control in the Boston Molasses Disaster (1919) and the Mississippi Flood (1927)

Burtis S. Brown, "[Details of the Failure of a 90-Foot Molasses Tank.](#)" *Engineering News-Record* 82, no. 20 (May 15, 1919): 974-76

Richard M. Mizelle, Jr., "[Black Levee Camp Workers, the NAACP, and the Mississippi Flood Control Project, 1927-1933.](#)" *Journal of African American History* 98, no.4 (2013): 511-530

#### Module 9.2 Disaster Relief and the New Deal Order

Michelle Landis Dauber, *The Sympathetic State: Disaster Relief and the Origins of the American Welfare State* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), chap. 4 ("Crafting the Depression") [Canvas]

Pare Lorentz, *The River* (1938), 31 min.

## Week 10: The Rise of the Disaster-Security State

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### Week of Nov 1

#### Module 10.1 Civil Defense

Wilbur J. Cohen and Evelyn F. Boyer, "[Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950: Summary and Legislative History.](#)" *Social Security Bulletin*, April 1951, pp. 11-16

National Security Resources Board, *Survival Under Atomic Attack* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), pp. 3-31

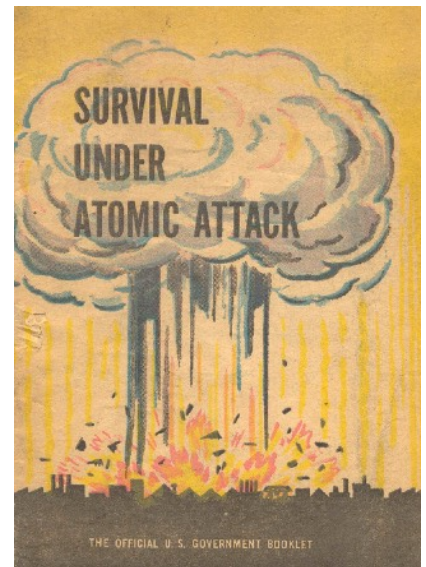
*Duck and Cover* (1951), 9 min.

#### Module 10.2 Cold War Disaster Research and Relief

Federal Disaster Relief Act (1950) [Canvas]

Julia F. Irwin, "[Raging Rivers and Propaganda Weevils: Transnational Disaster Relief, Cold War Politics, and the 1954 Danube and Elbe Floods.](#)" *Diplomatic History* (2015): 893-921

*Recommended:* Scott Gabriel Knowles, *The Disaster Experts: Mastering Risk in Modern America* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), chap. 5 ("What Is a Disaster?") [Canvas]



## Week 11: Nuclear Accidents & Disasters, Fast & Slow

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### Week of Nov 8

#### Module 11.1 Imagining Nuclear Annihilation

"No such thing as 'natural disasters'"

Alex Wellerstein, [“The ‘New’ Nuclear Arms Race”](#) (video lecture), Chain Reaction 2019: A New Moment in San Francisco, June 10, 2019

Alex Wellerstein, [NUKEMAP](#) (website)

## Module 11.2 The Technopolitics of Meltdown

[The KGB’s Report on Explosion and Fire at Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant](#), April 26, 1986, Wilson Center Digital Archive

[KGB Intelligence Message on the Chernobyl Accident](#), February 3, 1987, Wilson Center Digital Archive

Kate Brown, [“Chernobyl’s disastrous cover-up is a warning for the next nuclear age.”](#) *The Guardian*, April 4, 2019

Screening and discussion of [ABC “World News” report on Mikhail Gorbachev’s televised address on the Chernobyl accident](#), May 14, 1986 (3 min.)

## Week 12: Consumer Politics & Environmental Activism

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### Week of Nov 15

#### Module 12.1 Car Crashes and “Body Rights”

Ralph Nader, *Unsafe at Any Speed: The Designed-In Dangers of the American Automobile* (1965), preface [Canvas]

Mohun, *Risk*, chap. 8 (“Negotiating Automobile Risk”), [Recommended: chap. 11 (“Consumer Product Safety”)]

[The Corvair in Action](#) (1960), 6 min.

#### Module 12.2 Environmental Racism and Environmental Justice

U.S. National Library of Medicine, [“Polychlorinated Biphenyls \(PCBs\)”](#) ToxTown, <https://toxtown.nlm.nih.gov>

[“Principles of Environmental Justice”](#) from the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, October 24-27, 1991, Washington, D.C.

Robert D. Bullard, “Anatomy of Environmental Racism and the Environmental Justice Movement,” in *Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices from the Grassroots*, ed. Robert D. Bullard (Boston: South End Press, 1993), pp. 15-40 [Canvas]



## Week 13: NASA, FEMA & Federal Disaster Management

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“No such thing as ‘natural disasters’”



**Week of Nov 22****Module 13.1 Systems Thinking and the Risks of Space Flight****Paper #2 due this week**

Ronald Reagan, [Address on the Space Shuttle Challenger](#), January 28, 1986

[“An Oral History of the Space Shuttle Challenger Disaster.”](#) *Popular Mechanics*, January 28, 2016 [Canvas]

*Recommended: Report to the President by the Presidential Commission on the Space Shuttle Challenger Accident* (June 1986), [pp. 1, 40, 105, 149, 177-78, 198-201](#)

**THANKSGIVING RECESS****Week of Nov 29****Module 13.2 Terrorism as Disaster**

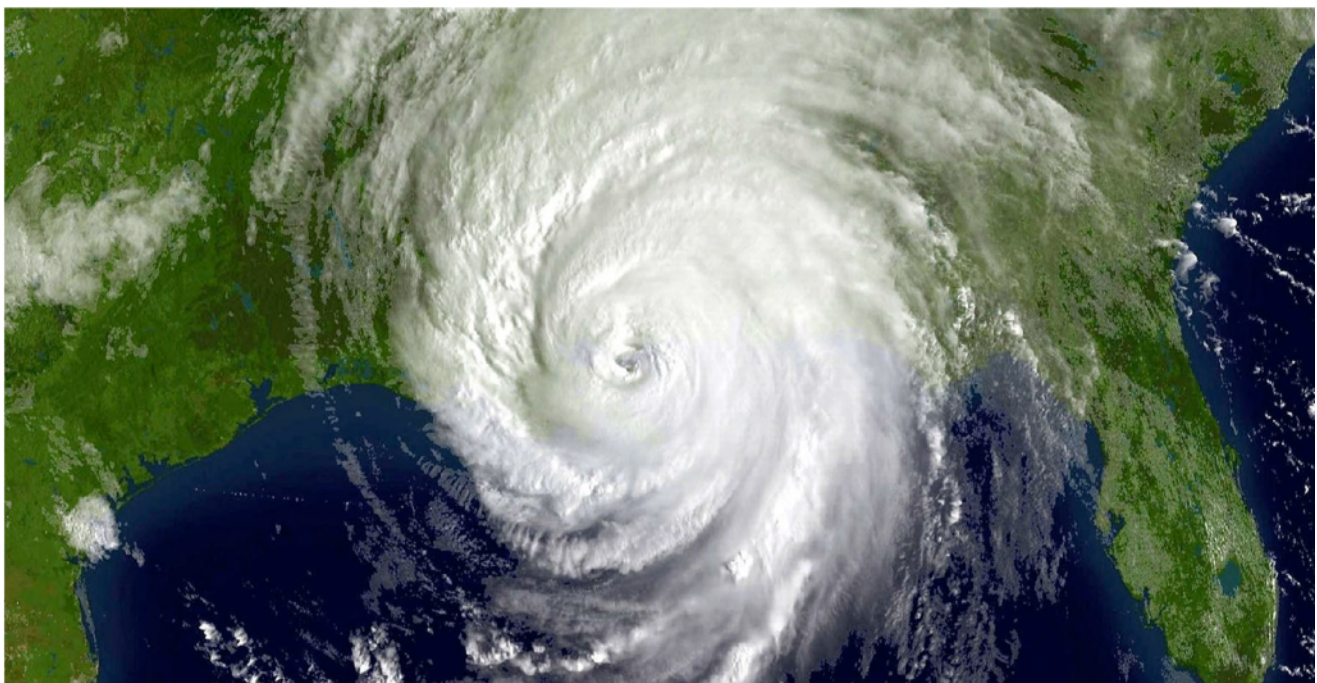
Federal Emergency Management Agency, [World Trade Center Building Performance Study: Data Collection, Preliminary Observations, and Recommendations](#) (Washington, D.C.: Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration, 2002), Executive Summary and Introduction (pp. 1-21)

Lee Clarke, *Worst Cases: Terror and Catastrophe in the Popular Imagination* (University of Chicago Press, 2006), chap. 6 (“Living and Dying in Worst Case Worlds”) [Canvas]

**Week 14: Unnatural Disasters in the Twenty-First Century****Week of Dec 6****Module 14.1 Infrastructure, Racialized Space, and Hurricane Katrina (2005)**

Mia Bay, “Invisible Tethers: Transportation and Discrimination in the Age of Katrina,” in *Katrina’s Imprint: Race and Vulnerability in America*, ed. Keith Wailoo, Karen M. O’Neill, Jeffrey Dowd, and Roland Anglin (Rutgers University Press, 2010), pp. 21-33 [Canvas]

John A. Powell, Hasan Kwame Jeffries, Daniel W. Newhart, and Eric Stiens, “Towards a Transformative View of Race: The Crisis and Opportunity of Katrina,” in *There is No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster: Race,*





*Class, and Hurricane Katrina*, ed. Chester Hartman and Gregory D. Squires (Routledge, 2006), pp. 59-84 [Canvas]

### **Module 14.2 Climate Change, Climate Crisis, Climate Catastrophe**

IPCC, *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, ed. Masson-Delmotte, V., P. Zhai, A. Pirani, S. L. Connors, C. Péan, S. Berger, N. Caud, Y. Chen, L. Goldfarb, M. I. Gomis, M. Huang, K. Leitzell, E. Lonnoy, J. B. R. Matthews, T. K. Maycock, T. Waterfield, O. Yelekçi, R. Yu and B. Zhou (Cambridge University Press, in press, 2021), [Summary for Policymakers](#), pp. 4-41

Screening of [Lowland Kids](#) (2019)

***This course will not have a traditional final exam. Your final exam grade will be based on your Canvas discussion posts for the Week 14 modules (1 paragraph each). This approach is designed to boost everyone's grade while not contributing to end-of-semester exam-related stress.***

**Final exam schedules:** <https://scheduling.rutgers.edu/scheduling/exam-scheduling/final-exam-schedule>

**Final exam policies:** <https://scheduling.rutgers.edu/scheduling/exam-scheduling/final-exam-schedule/final-exam-policies>

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