PLAN 670: OVERVIEW OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Fall 2011 - Monday, 6-9 p.m.
Saunders Hall 713

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This course provides an interdisciplinary overview to the field of disaster management and humanitarian assistance. It serves as the entry course for the Graduate Certificate in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance. It also provides background knowledge and skills relevant to urban and regional planners who are increasingly concerned about the connections between environmental change, risk reduction, and resiliency. As such, the course is concerned with the broad field of disaster studies and all phases of the disaster cycle including preparedness, response, recovery, mitigation, adaptation to environmental change and development. The course is a core requirement for the Graduate Certificate in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance.

COURSE STRUCTURE

The course is structured as an advanced, graduate level, international seminar. Parts of the class will include lectures from international faculty and researchers who are part of the Asia-Pacific Initiative hosted and facilitated by the Telecommunications and Information Policy Group (TIPG). We will also include lectures and presentations from Hawaii-based practitioners, researchers, and professionals in the field of disaster management and humanitarian assistance. To the extent possible, students will be encouraged to take full advantage of web-based and other electronic media on all aspects of disaster management. For example, the Emergency Management Institute maintains a website with self-study programs on many aspects of disaster management: http://training.fema.gov/IS/.

COURSE MATERIALS

All of the required readings are available on the UNU Learning Portal: http://learn.unu.edu/. From time to time, the instructors may send you additional readings or relevant news stories via email.
**Course Requirements**

**Class Attendance:** As a member of this seminar, you will be expected to attend each class and to arrive on time and well prepared. If you cannot attend class because of an illness, an emergency, or another legitimate reason, please email me.

**Participation:** Your participation in seminar discussions, activities and small group work is critical to the success of the class. I will expect you to participate in meaningful ways that you find comfortable and rewarding. I will expect students to treat each other with courtesy and respect and you should expect the same from me.

**Course Website and Blog:** The online portal be an essential tool for you this semester. You will need to enroll and learn the basics - how to access course readings and documents, and how to post messages to the class discussion boards.

**Assignments**

**Assignment #1 - What Went Wrong?**

Write a 4-5 page (double spaced) description of a disaster. Why does the particular event qualify in your mind as a disaster? What definitions of a disaster did you utilize in identifying this as a disaster? What went wrong? Describe the harm in terms of the physical forces, environmental damages, and socio-economic impacts. Who was affected and how where they affected? Make sure to include a bibliography of the sources you consulted. In addition, prepare a short 3-5 slide presentation to accompany your assignment.

Due on September 26, 2011

**Assignment #2 - Book Review**

Pick any recent book related to disaster management and/or humanitarian assistance. Write a 4-5 page (double spaced) review of the book. The first part of the review should succinctly describe the contents of the book. What is the main argument(s)? What data does the author(s) use to make the argument(s)? What methods do they rely on? The second part of the review should critique the book. What’s missing? How could the methods, data, or other aspects of the book be improved? The third part of the review should focus on the book’s contributions to field of disaster management and humanitarian assistance.
Describe how the information contained in the book is useful (or not) in terms of disaster preparedness, response, recovery or other aspects of the disaster cycle, or in the theory or practice of humanitarian assistance.

Due on October 24, 2011

Assignment #3 - Best Practice Case Study

Write an 5-6 page (double spaced) case study of a best practice in disaster management and humanitarian response. Be specific as to which part of the disaster cycle (preparedness, response, recovery, mitigation, adaptation, etc.) it is most closely tied to. What makes it a best practice? What are the lessons to be learned? How does the best practice address the concerns of communications, leadership, planning, operations, budget, etc. identified by Donohue and Tuohy (2006)? Who should be doing the learning? Are there specific disciplines, careers, occupations, functional roles or target capabilities that need changing? How transferable are the practices to other places, cultures, and environments? What, if anything, could be done to improve this best practice? For this assignment, team projects are allowable – up to three members per team. Prepare a 3-5 slide presentation to accompany your paper.

Due November 23, 2010

Assignment #4 - Final Project: Disaster Resiliency Paper

Write a 12-15 page paper (double spaced) on some aspect of disaster management or humanitarian assistance. Please describe how your academic background or training or disciplinary orientation supports this particular topic. While you are free to choose any topic you are interested, you will be assessed on how you were able to integrate the course knowledge, tools, lectures, presentations, and readings with your particular academic interests relevant to disaster management and/or humanitarian assistance. Please closely review the course syllabus as well as other sources and relate the topic to the relevant course content. Some of you might be interested in theoretical aspects of citizen participation or how people communicate during times of disaster or emergency while others might want to concentrate on more pragmatic aspects of programs such as those related to GIS and disaster mapping or vulnerability assessments. Some of you might be interested in exploring the connections between sustainability, resiliency, ecosystems management and urban planning and design. You can examine programs and efforts here in Hawaii or look at citizen or community-based programs on the mainland or internationally. Please relate these themes to resiliency, that is, the capacity to absorb shocks, recover quickly, and learn from the experience so that the
community of interest is better prepared for disasters.

Proposal due November 28, 2011

Final paper due December 12, 2011

CLASS PARTICIPATION

There are many ways to participate. You help lead discussions. You can bring in readings. You can add to the course portal in terms of finding links, articles, files and other contributions. You can participate in our international discussions. You think of interesting people to invite to class. You can share your ideas, energy, and discoveries with us. You can help make this a lively, useful, and thought-provoking experience. You can help all of us to make the interesting connections between your backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge and the course themes.

GRADING POLICIES

Your grade will be determined by:

- Assignment 1: What Went Wrong? - 10%
- Assignment 2: Book Review - 20%
- Assignment 3: Best Practice Case Study - 20%
- Assignment 4: Final Project - 40%
- Class Participation - 10%

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH: OFFICE HOURS, PHONE, AND EMAIL

If you have any questions or want to talk about an assignment, please write me at rumbach@hawaii.edu or call 956-6868. I will be holding regular office hours on Mondays from 2-4 p.m. in Saunders Hall 107F. There is a signup sheet posted outside my door – please sign up in advance if you would like to meet. If you cannot come to office hours during the scheduled time but would still like meet, please send me an email.