

# GEOG 294-01: Geography of Environmental Hazards

## Spring 2008, 107 Carnegie Hall 1:00-2:30 PM

**Instructor:** Kenny Blumenfeld

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**Office hours:** T, Th 11:30-12:30 PM, or by appointment

**Course website:** [http://umn.edu/~blume013/Env\\_haz](http://umn.edu/~blume013/Env_haz)

### OVERVIEW

**Course Objectives:** (1) To gain a broad understanding of geophysical and biological hazards around the world, the populations they affect, and what—if anything—we are doing or can do about them, and (2) to gain a deep understanding of one particular hazard (of your choosing).

**Course Materials:** There is no textbook for this course. Most readings will be articles (at least 2/3 of which will be academic or technical) or book chapters. You will be responsible for obtaining your own copies of each reading once it is assigned and available. You should always have a notebook handy, just in case, as well as a pen. We may watch a film or two, and if you miss class, you will be responsible for obtaining a copy. Each student will spend considerable time in the library and/or on the internet, so you must be familiar with both.

**Expectations:** This course requires *full participation* from each student. I expect you will *complete all assigned readings before class* and will *be ready* for a lively discussion. You will *write a few “sudden” essays*, which will be brief and on-the-spot, *one short paper* (3-5 pages), and *one longer paper* (not more than 15 pages, double-spaced, 12-pt font). You will also *give a presentation to the class* at the end of the semester. I will not be administering traditional exams, but I do reserve the right to keep you on your toes as I see fit. Lastly, in lieu of a final exam, you must *schedule an office visit* with me near the end of the semester, during which time I will lightly grill you on various topics from the course.

### Grading-approximate, subject to small changes with notice

term paper: 35%

short paper: 10%

presentation: 10%

sudden essays etc.: 15%

participation: 20%

Office visit: 10%

**Grading basis:** For each assignment, as well as for the final grade, I use the following guidelines:

A	Achievement is outstanding relative to course/assignment requirements
B	Achievement significantly above course/assignment requirements
C	Achievement meets course/assignment requirements in every respect
D	Achievement fails to meet course/assignment requirements but is worthy of credit (final grade)
F	Failure to meet course/assignment requirements; no course credit granted (final grade)

As an example, an ‘A’ paper will not merely do everything I ask, but it will do so with elegance, flair and style; a ‘B’ paper will do everything I ask and do it quite well, *or* it will be lacking a requirement or two but otherwise excellent; a ‘C’ paper will either merely “cover all the bases,” or it will be a good paper that

is severely deficient with respect to the assignment; 'D' papers, which I hope not to face, will be lacking both in substance and in quality, and 'F' papers, well...let's hope not!

I will use the +/- system, with the following numerical equivalents:

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F
%	≥94	90-93	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	60-69	<60

Your ultimate grade will rely heavily upon your written and oral communications skills, including your willingness and eagerness to develop and improve them. If you foresee any problems performing in either of these areas, please see me as soon as possible so we can map out the best route for you. The Macalester Academic Excellence (MAX) Center (Kagin Commons) may be beneficial for students with writing or time-management issues. You can view their resources online at <http://www.macalester.edu/max/>.

## **CLASS POLICIES**

**Attendance:** Your attendance is essential to your success in this course. If you absolutely cannot make it to a class, please notify me in advance, if possible. We will have many discussions/debates that will be difficult to replicate outside of the course period, and absences will require considerable effort to make up.

**Academic Honesty:** Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will result in a failing grade for the course. Please consult me (or your student handbook) if you are in doubt about the legitimacy of your work.

**Assignments:** Please turn in assignments during the weeks in which they are due. Any work turned in the following week will incur a 10% reduction per day. Of course, I will make allowances for "excused" absences, but it is up to you to make your case. Unless stated otherwise, I will accept hard copies only. Please note that your longer paper will be broken up into smaller pieces that will comprise a portion of your grade.

**Incompletes:** Extraordinary life circumstances (illness, family emergency) may warrant an incomplete grade, but merely falling behind will not. If you feel you cannot keep up with the work, please notify me and we may be able to work something out. Incompletes are last-resorts for people in significantly tumultuous situations and are not intended as fallbacks for people who have merely gotten themselves into trouble.

**Special Needs:** I want to provide accommodations for any student requiring special assistance in this class. Please contact me as soon as possible to make arrangements, and if necessary, please make sure to contact the Disability Services Office.

**Respectful Treatment of Others:** Hopefully this course will expose widely varied perspectives and insights, as we all have different worldviews, values, beliefs and even life-purposes. You may not agree with everything or everyone in the course, but you are expected to treat everyone with respect. I encourage you to critique and deconstruct topics and ideas, but I will not tolerate any personal attacks (I actually do not expect any such things, but I want to be clear in the off-chance something nasty arises).

Please note: I have designed this course to be flexible and inclusive, and to be shaped to some extent by the interests of the students. Thus, the final reading list will evolve over the course of the semester. We will meet each Tuesday and Thursday through May 1, with the exception of 18 & 20 Mar, and 15 & 17 April. The schedule below therefore reflects only dates for which set assignments will be due or for which topics are set. Readings assigned for a given week must be completed before class on the following Tuesday, unless otherwise stated. Additional assignments and readings will be added. Please check the website for updates.

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>READINGS (assigned)</b>	<b>DUE</b>
<b>Jan</b> 29,31	Introductions, overview of environmental hazards	(Th): Tobin and Montz (1997); Smith (2004)	Due: statement of expectations Discuss: direction of course
<b>Feb</b> 5, 7	Definitions, history and scope		Due: Research blurb (identify topic for term paper) Discuss: Tobin and Montz; Smith
12, 14	Mitigation	USGS (online)	Due: Preliminary reference list for term paper
19, 21	TBA(Tectonic hazards?)		
26, 28	TBA (Tectonic and secondary hazards?)		Due: annotated reference list
<b>Mar</b> 4, 6	Climatic hazards	IPCC AR4 WGI (online)	
11, 13	Climatic hazards		Due: flowchart/outline of relevant hazard mitigation program
18, 20	<i>No class—SPRING BREAK</i>		
27, 29	Climatic hazards		
<b>Apr</b> 1, 3	Biophysical Hazards		Due: 1 <sup>st</sup> draft term paper
8, 10	Biophysical hazards		Due: short paper
15, 17	<i>No Class—AAG meeting, Boston</i>		
22, 24	Synthesis, review		Due: final draft
29	Presentations		Presentations; meet with Kenny (out of class)
<b>May</b> 1	Presentations		Presentations; meet with Kenny (out of class)
10 (Saturday) 1:30, 3:30 PM	Meet with Kenny if you could not during previous week		