

COMMUNITY HEALTH SCIENCES 295

SELECTED TOPICS IN DISASTER RELIEF AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

A 2 Unit Graduate Level Seminar

Date/Location: Tuesdays 12-1:50PM 41-235 CHS

Instructor: Steven J. Rottman, MD, FACEP
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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Overview and Objectives: The underlying premise of this course is that mass population emergencies do not fall neatly into any one discipline. Recognizing that disaster relief necessarily involves professionals from many different fields, selected representative, broad-based topics for this seminar have been selected. These include an introduction to the physical forces which result in natural disasters; principles of civilian as well as municipal service preparedness and response; the public health effects of disasters; the role of the international community and relief agencies in humanitarian assistance; the delivery of health care to displaced populations; and research methods in the disaster setting.

At the completion of this course, students will:

1. Have a broader view of the kinds of hazards (both natural and human-generated) that can impact human populations.
2. Understand the logistical difficulties in establishing relief services for large numbers of displaced people.
3. Have the beginning tools to conduct a hazard analysis of a given region and undertake the surveillance of needs of an affected population.
4. Understand the basics of developing a disaster plan and the inter-organizational relationships inherent in disaster response.
5. Have a sense of the research methods which might be useful in studying the consequences of disasters and effective relief efforts.

Course Requirements

Required Text:

Noji, Eric. 1997. *The Public Health Consequences of Disasters*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Additional readings will be provided by the instructor during the quarter

Evaluation

Students will be evaluated based upon class participation (20%), an in-class mid-term examination (30%), and a team project (50%) designed to develop an approach to solving a problem in disaster and humanitarian relief. At the first class session, students will complete a brief informational questionnaire which will be used to group students into teams for the final project. The team project is to design a proposal for a disaster plan for a selected community and should focus on the principles presented in the course, including: a hazard analysis for the targeted community; pre-existing living, health care and geo-political conditions; immediate response to an incident; considerations for the care of displaced populations; and rehabilitative strategies. Final projects are limited to 12 typed pages, double spaced, minimum 10 point font, with appropriately cited references. These projects will be presented by the teams to the class at the last regularly scheduled class meeting. There is no final examination in this course.

Class Schedule and Assignments

Week 1
April 1

An Overview of the Impact of Natural and Man-Made Disasters

Required Reading:

Noji: Chapter 1. The Nature of Disaster: General Characteristics and Public Health Effects

Physical Forces of Natural Disasters:

Volcanoes and Weather Related Problems

Required Reading:

Noji: Chapters 9-14

Week 2
April 8

Physical Forces of Natural Disasters:

Earthquakes

Required Reading:

Noji: Chapter 8. Earthquakes

Week 3
April 15

Public Health Considerations of Displaced Populations

Required Reading:

Noji: Chapters 4 and 5

Week 4
April 22

Technological and Bioterrorism Disasters

Required Reading:

Noji: Chapters 16-19

Week 5
April 29

Mid Term Examination (12-12:50PM)

Mental Health Aspects of Disasters

*Guest Speaker: Judith Siegel, PhD
UCLA School of Public Health*

Required Reading:

Noji: Chapter 6

Week 6
May 6

Public Health Consequences of War

*Guest Speaker: Ronald Halbert, MD
UCLA School of Public Health*

Required Reading:
Noji: Chapters 15 and 20

Week 7
May 13

The Role of International Relief Agencies

*Guest Speaker: Stephen Commins, PhD.
Senior Human Development Specialist
The World Bank*

Required Reading

Handout provided:
Natural Disasters: Protecting the Public's Health
PAHO Publication 575: Chapter 13 (82-88)

Week 8
May 20

Special Location **2nd UCLA Conference on Public Health and Disasters**

All students are invited to the afternoon sessions of this national meeting as guests of the conference
2PM – 5:30
Torrance Marriott Hotel
3635 Fashion Way
Torrance CA

Week 9
May 27

Research Methods in Disasters

*Guest Speaker: Kimberley Shoaf, Dr PH
UCLA School of Public Health*

Required Reading:
Noji: Chapters 2-3

Week 10
June 3

Presentations of Group Projects

(Presentations limited to 15 minutes each)