

Psyc119 Psychology of Disaster
Lagniappe 2006
<http://www.tulane.edu/~jruscher>

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Stern 2007 x3324
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Course Description

Psychology of Disaster is a first-year writing course that focuses on the psychological experiences of disaster victims, as well as factors influencing how non-victims perceive and respond to disaster. Psyc119 fulfills the first-year college writing requirement. Please note that Psyc119 does not contribute to the major or minor requirements for Psychology, nor does it substitute for Introductory or General Psychology course (Psyc100, 101, or 102).

The first portion of the term will focus on the psychological experiences of disaster victims, including stress and coping, ruminative thoughts, and assessment of risk. The second portion of the term will focus on how non-victims perceive and respond to disaster, including the group decision-making, the role of the media, and helping behavior. Concurrently, these topics will provide the backdrop for the broadest aspects of good writing (e.g., organization) through the finer technical points of writing (e.g., grammar; sentence structure).

Course Format and Approach

Given Tulane's location in New Orleans, this course draws heavily upon the Katrina disaster. However, we will read and discuss the psychological effects of other natural and human error-based disasters, including earlier major hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, the space shuttle tragedies, and terrorist attacks. On Thursdays, I will assign a writing assignment that you will begin in class; Thursday sessions will meet in Stern 3023 where you each will have access to a computer and internet connection.

Assignments and Evaluation

Eighty percent of your final grade in the course will derive from writing assignments, including critiques, short essays, and a longer essay on a topic of your choice. Details appear on page 3 of the syllabus. You will not be "tested" on the material covered in the course. The remaining 20% of the final course grade will derive from attendance and active participation in class discussion. [Note: Some of the readings are "scholarly" articles that include technical procedures and statistics that are more appropriately read by advanced majors, graduate students, and faculty. For such papers (which include "methods" and "results" sections) please focus on the abstract, introduction, and discussion sections.]

Technology Issues and Classroom Etiquette

Blackboard. Important announcements from class will be posted on the *Blackboard* website. If you miss class or arrive late, you are advised to consult the Announcements page. Grades will be posted on *Blackboard* unless you explicitly request **in writing** that the information not be posted. If you have difficulty accessing *Blackboard*, please call the help number at 862-8888.

Audiorecording. Unless approved by the ERC **and** cleared with me, audio- or video-recording of class or lab is prohibited.

Cell phones, beepers. Please turn off your cell phones and beepers; I will try to extend the same courtesy. If you anticipate an emergency (e.g., you belong to the TEMS unit), please set it to vibrate or some other silent signal. During examinations, you should allow your voice mail to answer for you and **turn your phone off.**

Electronic mail. For security reasons, I do not send grades via electronic mail. Please do not ask. Also please plan to check you @tulane.edu address on a regular basis, or set this account to forward to your preferred account

Hard-copies. Please plan to submit hard-copies of your work. I like to write directly on students' papers, and I dislike requests to open email attachments. Please plan ahead to make certain that you have ample time to print off your assignments on a working printer.

Honor Code. Students enrolled in this LAS course are expected to abide by the Honor Code of the Liberal Arts and Sciences. You may find the Honor Code on the web at <http://www.tulane.edu/~lasdean/honor%20code.htm> or may obtain a copy from your Dean's office. Please rest assured that I take the honor code very seriously, and do not hesitate in bringing cases before the Honor Board.

Topics and Readings

Recounting the Experience

- 5/15 Introductions: Where were you when...
Read for 5/15 Ruscher: *The Emotional Flood* and Keyser *Lessons in Ruins*
- 5/16 Discussion of Ruscher; Keyser
Due by 12pm: Critique of Fishman *The Miracle Survivors* and DSMIV (*PTSD*)
- 5/17 Outlines and Organization, illustrated with Fishman and DSMIV:
- 5/18 Stern 3023: Outlines and Headers for personal narratives (Due in class 5/23)
Due by 12pm: Critique of Steinglass & Gerrity *Natural disasters and PTSD*

Stress and Coping

- 5/22 Discussion of Steinglass & Gerrity
Due by 12pm: Critique of Bonnano *Resilience in the face of trauma*
- 5/23 Discussion of Bonnano
- 5/24 Header sentences for essay on PTSD, using DSMIV, Fishman, Bonnano, Steinglass&Gerrity
- 5/25 Stern 3023: Finding articles with *PsycLit* and *JSTOR* (Due in class 5/30)
Due by 12pm: Critique of Fivush et al., *Weathering the storm*
Due by 12pm: TERM PAPER TOPIC

Rumination and Memory

- 5/29 *Memorial Day Holiday*
- 5/30 Film Clip: *Storm in the Florida Keys*; Discussion of Fivush et al
- 5/31 Debate: *A Trauma Pill?*
- 6/1 Stern 3023: *The Pros and Cons of Suppressing Traumatic Experience* (Due in class 6/5)
Due by 12pm: Critique of Kamptner *Treasured Possessions* and
Montoya *Children's Treasures*)

The Self in Jeopardy

- 6/5 Discussion of Kamptner; Montoya
- 6/6 Making Transitions: *On Possessions*
Due by 12pm: Critique of Norris et al *Revisiting the experience-behavior hypothesis*;
CBS: *Sea-Gypsies*; Warner: *Fatal Choice*
- 6/7 Discussion of individual risk-taking through Norris, T-P, Warner
- 6/8 Stern 3023: ESSAY 1 (Due in class 6/)
Due in class TERM PAPER OUTLINE

Learning from (or ignoring) the Past

- 6/12 FILM: *A Major Malfunction*
- 6/13 Discussion of *A Major Malfunction*
Due by 12pm: Critique of Marshall: *Floodwall failure foreseen; Omissions revealed*;
NYT: *Death of an American City*
- 6/14 Discussion of levee failures and rebuilding NOLA
- 6/15 Stern 3023: *Who is to blame: Individuals or Organizations?* (Due 6/19)

Stereotyping and Media Spin

6/19 FILM: *Inside Hurricane Katrina*
6/20 Lecture: The language of Katrina
 Read (but no critique) VSO: *The Live Aid Legacy*; Pesca: *Are Katrina's victims refugees*
6/21 Debate: *Media Spin and Race*
6/22 Stern 3023: TERM PAPER VERSION 2 (Due in class 6/29)

Helping

6/26 Grammar Check!
6/27 Lecture: Emergency and Non-Emergency Helping
 Due 12pm: Critique of St. John & Fuchs *The heartland responds to terror*
6/28 Discussion of St. John & Fuchs
6/29 3015D: Student term paper presentations ~5 minutes each presenter

Assignments

Critiques

The eight articles critiques spread throughout the term serve two purposes. First, they will encourage thoughtful consideration of the readings prior to class discussion. Second, they will allow continuous feedback on technical writing throughout the term. Late critiques cannot fulfill the first purpose, and only fulfill the second function if they are only marginally late; consequently, late critiques will be credited at 50% of their initial worth.

Each critique should be a 75-100 word commentary on the reading. Typically, the reading sparks a particular question the reader, and the commentary is a short essay on why this issue is important, unanswered (or answered well) by the reading, or what other sources provide on the same issue. Typed double-spaced *hard-copies* of critiques should be placed in my Stern 2007 mailbox by 12 pm. The eight due dates are: 5/16 (Fishman); 5/18 (Steinglass & Gerrity); 5/22 (Bonnano); 5/25 (Fivush et al.); 6/1 (Kampter; Montoya); 6/6 (Norris et al; CBS; Warner); 6/13 (Marshall; NYT); 6/27 (St. John & Fuchs)

Critiques are worth 16% of the final grade (i.e., ~ 2% each). In assigning grades, I will note whether students utilize feedback from earlier critiques on later ones.

Short Writing Assignments

The short writing assignments all will begin in class on Thursdays in 3023. As well as allowing feedback on technical writing, these assignments will allow feedback on the broader writing tasks on which we will be working: outlining and creating header sentences, supporting arguments, transitioning among topics.

Typed double-space papers are due in class on the following dates: 5/23 (Outline & Header); 5/30 (Article Search); 6/5 (Essay 1 ~500words); 6/19 (Essay 2 ~500words)

These assignments are worth 24% of the final grade (i.e., ~6% each). In assigning grades, I will note whether students utilize feedback from critiques and earlier assignments; late assignments will be credited at 50% of their initial worth.

Term Paper (2000 words)

The term paper is a 2000 word essay, which will be revised once. Many psychology of disaster topics are possible, as long as scholarly support can be provided. By 5/25, topics should be approved by me. On 6/8, students should bring a detailed outline to class, and should be ready to begin writing header sentences. Initial versions of the term paper (typed, double-spaced) should be submitted in class by 6/15, and will be worth 15% of the final grade. I will return papers by 6/19. The revised version, worth 30% of the final grade, will be due 6/29.

Reading List

- American Psychiatric Association (2000). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders. Post-traumatic stress disorder*. Washington DC: American Psychiatric Publishing.
- Associated Press (2006). Scientists at work on a pill to fade traumatic memories. *CNN.com* 2/6/06
- Bonanno, G. A. (2005). Resilience in the face of potential trauma. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 14, 135-138
- CBS News. (2005). Sea gypsies see signs in waves. *Sixty Minutes*
- Fishman, S. (2003). The miracle survivors. *New York Magazine*, 9/11/2003
- Fivush, R., Sales, J. M., Goldberg, A., Bahrick, L., & Parker, J. (2004). Weathering the storm: Children's long-term recall of Hurricane Andrew. *Memory*, 12, 104-118
- Kamptner, N. L. (1995). Treasured possessions and their meanings in adolescent males and females. *Adolescence*, 30, 301-318.
- Keyser, T. (2005). Lessons in the ruins. *TimesUnion*. December 11, 2005
- Marshall, B. (2006). Floodwall failures foreseen, team says. *Times-Picayune*. 3/14/06
- Marshall, B. (2006). Omissions revealed in levee design. *Times-Picayune*. 3/17/06
- Montoya, M. (2005). Children's treasures. *Times-Picayune*. 11/28/05
- New York Times Editorial (2005). Death of an American City, *New York Times*. 12/11/05
- Norris, F. H., Smith, T., & Kaniasty, K. (1999). Revisiting the experience-behavior hypothesis: The effects of Hurricane Hugo on hazard preparedness and other self-protective acts. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 21, 37-47.
- Pesca, M. (2005). Are Katrina's victims refugees or evacuees? *National Public Radio*
- Ruscher, J. B. (2005, October). The Emotional Flood. *SPSP Dialogue*
- St. John, C., & Fuchs, J. (2002). The heartland responds to terror: Volunteering after the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building, *Social Science Quarterly*, 83, 397-415,
- *Steinglass, P. (1990). Natural disasters and post-traumatic stress disorder: Short-term versus long-term recovery in two disaster-affected communities. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 20, 1746-1765
- VSO (2002). The Live Aid Legacy. http://www.vso.org.uk/news/pressreleases/liveaid_legacy.asp
- Warner, C. (2005). Many made fatal choice to stay behind. *The Times-Picayune*. 12/27/05

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