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COMMUNICATION STUDIES 129

SOCIAL WORK 129

SPRING 2005

**WHEN THEIR WORLD FALLS APART: MANAGING THE  
EFFECTS OF DISASTERS ON FAMILIES AND CHILDREN**

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WHEN THEIR WORLD FALLS APART: MANAGING THE EFFECTS OF DISASTERS ON FAMILIES AND CHILDREN is designed to examine the effects that disasters have on children, their families, and communities. The course gives students an understanding of how to deal with the reactions of people exposed to disasters and how to decrease the chances of long-term psychosocial damage. Objectives of the course include:

- ◆ Identify the types of disasters—natural, technological, and complex (i.e., the result of human design or motivation)—and the effects each has on children, families, and communities
- ◆ Understand common short- and long-term physical, emotional, and mental reactions people may have to disasters as well as family responses
- ◆ Identify risk and protective factors for children, families, and communities involved in a disaster
- ◆ Define crisis intervention and implement guidelines for its use
- ◆ Describe interventions that help children and families develop healthy coping strategies following a disaster
- ◆ Describe how culture, the media, and the grief process influence responses to disasters
- ◆ Describe and implement the roles and understand the reactions of those helping professionals who intervene with individuals and families after a disaster

**TEXTBOOK**

Rosenfeld, L. B., Caye, J. S., Ayalon, O., & Lahad, M. (2005). *When their world falls apart: Helping families and children manage the effects of disasters*. Washington, DC: NASW Press.

**READINGS**

American Psychological Association. (n.d.). *Helping children cope: A Guide to helping children cope with the stress of the Oklahoma City explosion* [On-line]. Available: <http://www.apa.org/practice/kids.html>

Apfel, R. J., & Simon, B. (1996). *Psychosocial interventions for children of war: The value of a model of resiliency* [On-line]. <http://www.ipnw.org/MGS/V3Apfel.html>

Coffman, S. (1996). Parents' struggles to rebuild family life after Hurricane Andrew. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 17, 353-367.

Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2003, February 11). *Helping children cope with disaster* [On-line]. Available: <http://www.fema.gov/rrr/children.shtm>

Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2003, February 11). *Helping children cope with disaster* [On-line]. Available: <http://www.fema.gov/rrr/children.shtm>

Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2002, October 28). *Helping kids' cope after a disaster* [On-line]. Available: <http://www.fema.gov/rrr/children.shtm>

Federal Emergency Management Agency. (1998, January 26). *Your family disaster plan* [On-line]. Available: <http://www.app1.fema.gov/pte/displan.htm>

Gibbs, S. (1994). Post-war social reconstruction in Mozambique: Re-framing children's experience of trauma and healing. *Disasters*, 18, 268-276.

Instructor. (1998). *How to teach children about living in a world with violence* [On-line]. <http://teacher.scholastic.com/professional/teachstrat/worldwithviolence.htm>

University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service. (1995, June). *Children, stress, and natural disasters; School activities for children: Introduction* [On-line]. Available: <http://www.ag.uiuc.edu/~disaster/teacher/csndactx.html>

### **CLASS OPERATING PROCEDURES**

Read assigned material and complete assigned activities on time, and come to class prepared to raise questions, offer comments, and, in general, *deal* with the material. Assigned material serves as background for topics covered in class.

Demonstrate active involvement in class activities. This includes regular attendance and participation in discussions and class experiences. (Participation in in-class activities is not required: you are free to choose not to participate in activities with which you are uncomfortable. Activities will be explained prior to their use so you may make an informed choice.)

You are responsible for all work covered in this class. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to contact another student about class assignments, notes, handouts, changes in schedule, and so on.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

WHEN THEIR WORLD FALLS APART: MANAGING THE EFFECTS OF DISASTERS ON FAMILIES AND CHILDREN is based on 100 points:

- ✓ two reaction papers (10 points each for a total of 20 points)
- ✓ interview paper (25 points)
- ✓ take-home midterm examination (20 points)
- ✓ final examination or project (25 points)
- ✓ instructor's subjective evaluation of your participation in the course (10 points)

## Reaction Papers

Two *thoughtful* reaction papers (each approximately 5 pages), worth 10 points each, due February 21 and April 4. Each paper should integrate material in the assigned readings with something either presented or discussed in class, or experienced in a field experience related to disaster relief.

Perhaps it might be best to approach the paper this way:

- First, what is something in the reading you have done for class, and/or in the class discussions, that triggered a **reaction** from you—perhaps something that struck you as extremely interesting, or weird, or scary, etc.?
- Second, ask yourself why you reacted as you did?
- Third, consider how the material to which you reacted relates to the course material beyond the particular "something" to which you reacted (e.g., the particular reading or discussion).
- Fourth, and this has most to do with being *thoughtful*, consider whether the reaction **raises a question** you can begin to answer—for example, "Why is the use of child soldiers so 'popular'?" What are the countries like that seem to have more child soldiers than others, and what does this tell us?" Or consider whether the reaction **motivates you to find out more about a topic**, which you can begin to do in the reaction paper. Or consider whether the reaction **motivates you to make connections between and among material related to disasters** (whether from the assigned readings or readings "outside class," such as for other courses), which you can begin to make in the reaction paper. And so on, for other possibilities for being thoughtful about the work we are doing.

Yes, five pages is not a lot of room to do all this, but you should be able to begin to be reflective on a topic of importance to you.

## Disaster Interview Paper

One interview paper (Option 1 or Option 2) worth 25 points, due April 18.

Option 1:

This option requires that you either know, or are able to locate through friends, a family that has been through a natural, technological, or complex disaster (e.g., a family living in eastern North Carolina during Hurricane Floyd, a family that suffered from the December 2002 ice storm in North Carolina, a family that experienced the loss of a family member in a plane crash, a family in close physical or psychological proximity to the September 11 terrorist attacks, a family that experienced the loss of a family member in war). Once the family is located, use the literature related to the disaster they experienced (e.g., natural disasters, specifically hurricanes or ice storms; technological disasters, specifically plane crashes; complex disasters, specifically terrorism; complex disasters, specifically war) as a guide to develop several questions—a short interview schedule—to learn about the family's response to the disaster. When developing the interview schedule, be sure that the questions and follow-up questions are expressed in the best way possible, that is, expressed in a way to ensure that the people you interview understand the questions and are able to provide answers that are useful to you.

The write-up of your interview should include the following (*minimum* requirements):

- (a) a cover page with the title of the project, your name, and an abstract;
- (b) a brief explanation why your project is important for you, personally, for others, and, perhaps, for explaining an aspect of how families and children respond to disasters (cite and reference relevant articles, chapters, books, and other source material to support your argument for the importance of your project);
- (c) a brief description of the family and the disaster;
- (d) the interview schedule (i.e., the questions you asked, and their order) and an explanation of *why* you asked each question, why the information each is designed to obtain is important to know (cite and reference relevant source material to support your asking each particular question);
- (e) a description of your results, that is, the responses to your questions, and how the responses fit into the larger context of the literature you read (cite and reference the relevant literature that constitutes the larger context/frame from which you drew your project); and
- (f) a Reference list in APA format or a Works Cited list in MLA format, containing the sources cited. For information on APA style and format, use the APA manual and/or go to:

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocAPA.html>

<http://www.calstatela.edu/library/guides/3apa.htm>

[http://webster.comnet.edu/apa/apa\\_index.htm](http://webster.comnet.edu/apa/apa_index.htm)

For information on MLA style and format, use the MLA handbook and/or go to (for electronic sources, the third source is excellent):

<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/mla.html>

[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r\\_mla.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_mla.html)

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/elecmla.html>

#### Option 2:

This option requires that you interview a helper/caretaker who was responsible for planning and/or responding to a disaster. Use the literature related to the disaster to which she or he responded (e.g., research and writings on natural, technological, or complex disasters) as a guide to develop several questions—a short interview schedule—to learn about the helper's work.

The write-up of your interview should include the following (*minimum* requirements):

- (a) a cover page with the title of the project, your name, and an abstract;
- (b) a brief explanation why this particular helper/caretaker was chosen, and, perhaps, what she or he might contribute to our understanding of how families and children respond to disasters (cite and reference relevant articles, chapters, books, and other source material to support your argument for the importance of your project);
- (c) a brief description of the helper/caretaker and the disaster;
- (d) the interview schedule (i.e., the questions you asked, and their order) and an explanation of why you asked each question (cite and reference relevant source material to support your asking each particular question);
- (e) a description of your results, that is, the responses to your questions, and how the responses fit into the larger context of the literature you read (cite and reference the

relevant literature that constitutes the larger context/frame from which you drew your project); and

- (f) a Reference list in APA format or a Works Cited list in MLA format, containing the sources cited. For information on APA style and format, use the APA manual and/or go to:

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocAPA.html>

<http://www.calstatela.edu/library/guides/3apa.htm>

[http://webster.comnet.edu/apa/apa\\_index.htm](http://webster.comnet.edu/apa/apa_index.htm)

For information on MLA style and format, use the MLA handbook and/or go to (for electronic sources, the third source is excellent):

<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/mla.html>

[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r\\_mla.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_mla.html)

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/electmla.html>

### **Final Examination or Project**

You have the option of completing a final examination (essay format) or a project. The examination is scheduled for May 6. The project is due the last day of classes, April 25 (topics must be approved by the instructor).

The goal of each project, completed individually or in small groups, is to conduct an in-depth study of an area of disaster research of personal interest. Each project should be on a narrowly defined topic. For example, the following three broad topic areas, not covered specifically during the semester, may serve as areas from which to draw specific projects: (a) How Children, Families, and Communities Experience Loss and Grief; (b) Cultural Influences on Responses to Disasters; and (c) The Media and Disasters. Or, perhaps, you may be interested in a particular aspect of a specific disaster, such as Disaster Relief in New York City after the 9-11 Terrorist Attack, or North Carolina's Preparation for Hurricane Season in 2004. *Your topic must be approved by the instructor by March 28.*

The group project culminates in two products. First, a paper that is the basis for the project grade. Second, an ungraded summary handout of the project for each class member, including a bibliography.

The format for the project should conform to the same APA or MLA guidelines as the Disaster Interview Paper.

### **NOTES**

- In compliance with the policy approved by the Administrative Board of the General College and the College of Arts and Sciences, "[s]tudents should expect to be graded on spelling, punctuation, grammar, and style, as well as the content and organization of their work." If you are unsure of your ability to produce a literate paper, or if you have received negative feedback concerning your writing, take advantage of the Writing Center's services (the Writing Center is in the Lower Level of Phillips Hall Annex, 962-7710; the Grammar Hotline is 962-7710). Also, there is an online tutor available at [www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/online.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/online.html), plus many useful handouts available online <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts.html>).

→ All work is to be handed in *in class*. Late work loses **two** points per day for each day late, including weekends and holidays.

### COURSE OUTLINE

Class time will be used primarily for individual and small group activities, viewing videos, discussing assigned readings, and a combination of lecture and discussion of material presented to expand on assigned readings. ***To ensure each class is successful, it is essential for you to attend class, to read assigned material prior to class, and to participate in class discussions and activities.*** Also, when reading assigned material, keep in mind that the readings are “cumulative,” that is, each reading concerns issues discussed in several classes. (Note: dates below are approximate.)

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|--------------|---|
| January 24   | ⇨ Course Introduction<br>⇨ Why Study Disasters and Their Effects on Children and Families?<br>read: course syllabus<br><i>When Their World Falls Apart</i> , chapter 1  |
| January 31   | ⇨ Models for Considering the Effects of Disasters<br>read: Gibbs, S. (1994). Post-war social reconstruction in Mozambique: Reframing children’s experience of trauma and healing. <i>Disasters</i> , 18, 268-276.<br><i>When Their World Falls Apart</i> , chapter 2  |
| February 7   | ⇨ Children and Disasters<br>read: Apfel, R. J., & Simon, B. (1996). <i>Psychosocial interventions for children of war: The value of a model of resiliency</i> [On-line]. <a href="http://www.ippnw.org/MGS/V3Apfel.html">http://www.ippnw.org/MGS/V3Apfel.html</a><br><i>When Their World Falls Apart</i> , chapter 3 |
| February 14  | ⇨ Families and Disasters<br>read: Coffman, S. (1996). Parents’ struggles to rebuild family life after Hurricane Andrew. <i>Issues in Mental Health Nursing</i> , 17, 353-367.<br><i>When Their World Falls Apart</i> , chapter 4  |
| February 21  | ⇨ Natural Disasters<br>read: <i>When Their World Falls Apart</i> , chapters 5<br><b>Reaction Paper 1 due</b>  |
| February ??  | ⇨ Technological Disasters<br>read: <i>When Their World Falls Apart</i> , chapters 6   |
| February 28  | ⇨ Complex Disasters<br>read: <i>When Their World Falls Apart</i> , chapter 7  |
| March 7 & 21 | ⇨ Interventions with Families and Children<br>read: American Psychological Association. (n.d.). <i>Helping children cope: A Guide to helping children cope with the stress of the Oklahoma</i>  |

*City explosion* [On-line]. Available:

<http://www.apa.org/practice/kids.html>

Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2003, February 11).

*Helping children cope with disaster* [On-line]. Available:

<http://www.fema.gov/rrr/children.shtm>

Federal Emergency Management Agency. (1998, January 26). *Your*

*family disaster plan* [On-line]. Available:

<http://www.fema.gov/rrr/famplan.shtm>

Instructor. (1998). *How to teach children about living in a world with violence* [On-line].

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/professional/teachstrat/worldwithviolence.htm>

*When Their World Falls Apart*, chapters 8, 9, and 10

**Take-home Examination March 21 (due March 23)**

March 28 &  
April 4

⇒ Interventions with Groups

read: University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service. (1995, June).

*Children, stress, and natural disasters; School activities for children: Introduction* [On-line]. Available:

<http://www.ag.uiuc.edu/~disaster/teacher/csndactx.html>

*When Their World Falls Apart*, chapter 11

**Reaction Paper 2 due April 4**

April 11

⇒ Interventions with Communities

read: *When Their World Falls Apart*, chapters 12 and 13

April 18

Helper Self-Care

read: *When Their World Falls Apart*, chapter 14

**Interview Paper due**

April 25

Wrap-up

**Project due**

May 6

Final Exam, 12:00 p.m.

*Every exit is an entry someplace else.*

Tom Stoppard