
WRITING 230SK



Writing Across Cultures

Earthquakes, Humanitarian Aid and the Anthropology of Reconstruction

Semester 2017

M/T/Th – Section 230SK-1: 10-11:40 / Section 230SK-2 : 3:45-5:25

Areas of Knowledge: Anthropology, Writing

Course format: Seminar

Instructor's Information

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Prerequisite(s), if applicable

For Duke Students, completion of Writing 101

Course Description

Writing Across Cultures

Earthquakes, International Aid, and the Anthropology of Reconstruction



Peru, Earthquake of June 1970

A month after the 2010 earthquake that took the lives of more than 200,000 people in Haiti, former President and U.N. envoy Bill Clinton proposed a reconstruction plan named “Building Back Better”. This project, a revised copy of the 2004 “Building Back Better” reconstruction plan designed after the 2004 tsunami in South Asia, proposes to better the economic situation of Haiti through industrialization and international aid. This plan was forcefully critiqued by Haitian politicians and NGO leaders because it excludes Haitians from the reconstruction process and doesn’t address Haiti’s main problems: the lack of housing and food security. This example shows one of the main issues we will explore: humanitarian interventions designed by international experts disconnected from the experiences of the local communities they seek to help.

Reconstruction – the main concept of this course – is not the plain rebuilding of infrastructure and buildings. As we will see, post-earthquake reconstruction periods are traversed by deep social, religious, and political changes. In this course, we will explore immediate post-disaster moments and post-earthquake reconstruction plans in various regions of the world. We will craft arguments by comparing cases and thinking about reconstruction patterns. We will take Portugal, Haiti, China, the United States and Peru as our main examples to ask questions about disaster and reconstruction. Using the disciplines of social anthropology, development studies, history and urban planning, we will write projects that analyze earthquakes and post-disaster periods with a special focus on reconstruction projects that yielded positive outcomes.

Written elements of the course are not only final products that lead to a grade. They are instead the vessels of our learning experience and each assignment will enable us to explore specific issues with specific writing strategies and goals. We will craft outlines, experimental mini-essays and work with a wide range of informal writing activities in and out of class while learning to give meaningful feedback to peers. We will sharpen our research skills by ethically sourcing information and generously use scholarly ideas to write original texts that will shed light on past and current reconstruction phases within the global landscape. As a participant in Writing 101, we will **engage with the work of others, articulate an argument backed with strong research position, and learn how to effectively revise and edit essays.**

Over the semester, we will seek to understand how disaster and reconstruction are interpreted by different actors such as states, NGOs or local communities throughout the globe. While I hope you will partake in the pleasure of learning about vibrant cultures and unique frames of thoughts, the ultimate goal of our course is to help you **sharpen your writing skills, critical thinking and research abilities in a cross-disciplinary and collaborative atmosphere.** Many important parts of our lives are about writing good essays: from the cover letter that will make you stand out in a job search to the papers that will help you fashion your original thinking in the fields of engineering, medicine or linguistics, etc., you will need the organizational and collaborative skills to be a convincing writer. Our workshop seminars will hopefully help you to become a more confident writer who can navigate between various writing genres with ease and pleasure!

Course Goals / Objectives

The central goal of this course is to provide students with an intellectually rigorous practice of critical reading and argumentative writing expected in other classes and in life beyond the university. Intellectual writing typically includes the following features:

- Locates the project within the context of previous thinking on the subject and puts authors in dialogue
- Makes a central claim and provides scholarly evidence
- Formality and precision in the execution of the work

This course also provides students with knowledge of reconstruction processes in various cultural contexts in post-disaster moments. It is an interdisciplinary course where we think about communities, institutions and effective ways to offer disaster relief in a regional and theoretical comparative framework.

Required Text(s)/Resources

All our course readings are in Sakai > Resources. There you will find two files: 1) Writing strategies
2) Disasters and Reconstruction

Course Requirements / Key Evidences

The course is divided in three sections built around specific writing projects that will help us to develop research and writing skills. The class comprises three complementary building blocks. In our introductory unit - **Unit 1** - we will create an online map where we will reference major earthquakes and their repercussions. In **Unit 2**, we will compare the 1755 Lisbon earthquake and the new scientific paradigms it generated to a different case study in a **6-page essay** that addresses the science, literature and politics that lie behind reconstruction processes. In **Unit 3**, we will fully use the anthropological lens to critically assess reconstruction phases in Haiti in a 10-page comparative essay. In brief, we will go ourselves through various **reconstruction processes** by bringing seemingly fragmented ideas together to build original narratives and arguments. The essays will go through peer review and multiple stages of revision and editing. You will workshop your papers in class in order to produce well-organized essays that put scholarly ideas in dialogue.

Assessment Information / Grading Procedures

Letter grades map approximately onto the following scale, which I will use in calculating your final grade for the course:

A+ (97–100), A (93–96), A- (90–92)
B+ (87–89), B (83–86), B- (80–82)
C+ (77–79), C (73–76), C- (70–72)
D+ (67–69), D (63–66), D- (60–62)
F (0–59)

Unless I have approved a deadline extension in advance, late submissions will be lowered by a full letter grade per 24-hour period. Late penalties begin immediately. For instance, since submissions are due before class on the day assigned, the maximum grade for an essay turned in after the start of class will be “B.” No credit is granted for short assignments turned in late.

Course Policies and Guidelines

- ❖ **Participation:** This course is structured as a workshop seminar; therefore, your attendance and participation are crucial to both you and your classmates. **Arriving more than 10 minutes late or unprepared to participate qualifies as an absence.** Repeated tardy arrivals are disruptive; three lates will be counted as an absence. Plan to attend every class meeting! If you cannot come (sickness, schedule conflict), send me a short, explanatory e-mail. It will be your responsibility to catch up, including getting notes and class materials from a classmate. You will be granted **a maximum of two absences** (or absence equivalents, as described above) for the course – STINF absences count as part of this maximum. Each further absence will result in the lowering of your final course grade by one increment (e.g. an A becomes A-, A- becomes B+, etc.). Upon your third absence, I will contact your Dean.

I will keep track of your participation in workshops and peer-review sessions. I will use a “√+; √; 0” system to keep track of your in-class writing and of the quality of feedback you provide to your peers.

- ❖ **Submitting Papers and Document Design:** Students must upload papers on Sakai on time at the date indicated on this syllabus. Unexcused late papers will not receive anything higher than a “B”. Students anticipating the need for an extension must talk to the instructor at least one week in advance. Please, paper submitted electronically should always be saved as Microsoft Word doc.x with **standardized filenames according to the following format:**

yourlastname.assignment#.docx (ie: "joos.1a.docx)

I ask you to present your work in a professional fashion. Aspects of professional-quality

academic documents include:

12 pt. Times New Roman font (or equivalent) Proofread Double line spacing

One-inch margins all around Edited Titled

In accordance with MLA formatting guidelines (page numbers, headings, etc.)

Formatting MLA guidelines can be found here:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

- ❖ **Integrity:** Academic writing is seldom self-contained with respect to its ideas and proof. Quoting and citing sources strengthens your writing by explicitly situating your argument within an ongoing conversation and body of evidence. There are several systems for documenting sources. In this course, we will learn and employ X-style citation. We will discuss quotation, paraphrase, and citation in class.

Copying without attribution from the work of a classmate, from a printed text, or an electronic text weakens your integrity as a student and writer and prevents you from engaging properly with other scholars through writing. Getting caught carries very serious consequences. If I suspect anyone of plagiarism, I am *obligated* to report it to the Duke University Office of Student Conduct. Plagiarism can result in failure of the course and/or suspension from Duke University.
- ❖ **Duke Community Standard:** 1. I will not lie, cheat, or steal in my academic endeavors, nor will I accept the actions of those who do; 2. I will conduct myself responsibly and honorably in all my activities as a Duke student. Please ask me if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism. You may also consult: <http://library.duke.edu/research/plagiarism>.



WORKING SCHEDULE

Course Introduction – Defining Disaster and Reconstruction

WEEK 1

Monday, April 17

- Please read carefully the syllabus
- Introductions and free writing

Tuesday, April 18

Please read:

- Aftershocked: Reflections on the 2015 Earthquakes in Nepal – Read “Introduction” + “Can Nepal’s Youth Build Back Better and Differently?” (link below)

<https://culanth.org/fieldsights/741-aftershocked-reflections-on-the-2015-earthquakes-in-nepal>

- https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/11/world/asia/nepal-removes-leader-of-post-earthquake-rebuilding-effort.html?_r=0

Discussion: Nepal’s earthquake + Assignment 1 – “Mapping Earthquakes”

Thursday, April 20

- Anne Lamotte – short assignments (resources>readings>writing strategies)
- Mini presentations of cases

Workshop: writing descriptions with evidence and sources

WEEK 2

Monday, April 24

Please read:

- Oliver-Smith -- what is a disaster?

- They Say/I Say - Chapter 12 “Entering Class Discussions” in Sakai>Resources>Writing Strategies folder

And watch: “Quakes from Hell”

Tuesday, April 25

- **ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE TONIGHT AT MIDNIGHT**

Please read:

- Presentations with online map

Thursday, April 27

Please read:

- Oliver-Smith – 500 year old disaster
- Presentations with online map

Part One: History and Modern Urban Planning

Writing Goals: Reading for writing; Critically assess scholarly ideas

WEEK 3

Monday, May 1st

Please read:

- John R. Mullin “The Reconstruction of Lisbon following the earthquake of 1755: A study in despotic planning”

And watch (beware, this documentary can be hard to watch at times – crude violence, annoying music and effects, etc. BUT it’s a quick way to learn about the 1755 earthquake!):

- Smithsonian Lisbon Documentary – “God’s Wrath”:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qtXI3WYGVA>

Large workshop: Discussion of Assignment 2 – Reading/Interpreting a Prompt and Basics of Research.

Tuesday, May 2nd

Please, read QUICKLY:

- Dynes: “Rousseau, Voltaire and the Lisbon Earthquake”
- Maria Barreiros “Urban Landscape”

Discussion on disasters, science and society. Workshops on “summarizing arguments” + reading critically/taking notes

Discussion on Lisbon earthquake and workshop on summary/working with quotes. **“Small Assignment 1” is due TODAY at midnight. Use Chicago Style for citations -- see quick guide here:**

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Thursday, May 4

Please read:

- Anne Lamotte – “Shitty first drafts”

Find a good post-earthquake reconstruction case. Go online and read about it. Then, go to the library website and try to find a scholarly article that fits your needs. Read it well and be ready to talk about it!

“Small Assignment 2” is due tonight at midnight

WEEK 4

Monday, May 8: Workshopping Assignment 2

Tuesday, May 9: Workshopping Assignment 2 – **Assignment 2 due tonight at midnight**

Thursday, May 11: for today, please read:

Wenchuan – Grateful urban Citizens

Part two: Comparing the Haiti and China Earthquakes

WEEK 5 –Wenchuan and China

Monday, May 15

Read Sorace and quickly read selection in “Wenchuan” file in Sakai> Resources

Assignment 3: Comparative essay

Tuesday, May 16 - TBD

Thursday, May 18-TBD

WEEK 6 - Haiti

Monday, May 22

- Laura Wagner: “Haiti is a Sliding Land” + Schuler chapters in “Haitian Earthquake” file in Sakai>Resources

Discussion of Wagner’s chapters and Lecture by Dr. Joos on Haiti

Dr. Joos’ “Female Economies” (Sakai: “Joos_Demolition”)

Tuesday, May 23 - TBD

Thursday, May 25 - TBD

WEEK 7 – Comparative and final essay

Monday, June 1- Peer Review

Tuesday, June 2 - TBD

Thursday, June 4 – Final Essay due

For this week, please read:

Week 9: Emergency and Humanitarianism

For this week, please watch:

- Fatal Assistance:

<https://warpwire.duke.edu/w/618BAA/>

And read/listen:

- Laura Sullivan:

<http://www.npr.org/2015/06/03/411524156/in-search-of-the-red-cross-500-million-in-haiti-relief>

Tuesday, October 25th: Workshop: audience and scholarly writing.

Thursday, October 27th: Workshop: crafting a comparative argument

- Katz, J. “Bon Dola”
-

Peer-review of draft 1 – large workshop + walk and talk

Movie: Potomitan. Take notes on this important movie!

- Liza McAlister “Telethon and Reconstruction”

Understanding Haiti through music – we will play vinyl records and enjoy some Caribbean treats

Large workshop: revising our final essays