EADP 5800 - International Disaster & Crisis Communication - Costa Rica

Instructor Information
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Disability Accommodation:
ODA Statement: The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with ODA to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For study abroad courses, students requesting accommodations should notify their faculty leader as early as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Note that while the ADA does not extend beyond US borders, and international accessibility requirements vary broadly from US standards, UNT study abroad programs will endeavor to provide accommodations wherever practicable. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information: UNT Office of Disability Access. You may also contact ODA by phone at 940.565.4323.

Course Rationale:
Crises, disasters, and risks pervade our lived experience. We are bombarded daily with media accounts of these phenomena. Communication plays a central role in risk/disaster planning, real-time disaster response, and post-disaster recovery and sensemaking. These issues become more challenging in countries with diverse populations and significant socio-economic disparity. This cross-listed course introduces students to an overview of issues pertinent to international disaster phenomena that are of interest to communication and disaster scholars. They should also possess a rudimentary knowledge of the theoretical and empirical approaches taken toward those phenomena.

Location:
Costa Rica, located in Central America, provides a wonderful opportunity to study the nexus between hazards, disasters, emergency management and crisis communication in a safe and interesting setting. Costa Rica is threatened by a variety of hazards, including volcanoes, earthquakes, flooding, mudslides, drought, wildfire, landslides, tsunamis, climate change, and sea level rise. The risks posed by these hazards create a significant threat to life, property, infrastructure, environment, and the country’s economy, and in particular the tourism economy.

Purpose and Objectives:
The purpose of this course is to examine hazards, risks, and disasters at the intersections of communication and culture, in a particular geographical region (Costa Rica). At the conclusion of this course, students should have a basic understanding of the dimensions of international disaster phenomena that are of interest to communication and disaster scholars. They should also possess a rudimentary knowledge of the theoretical and empirical approaches taken toward those phenomena.
Specifically, the goals for this course are for students:

1. To learn about the hazards and risks present in Costa Rica.
2. To learn about theoretical underpinnings of crisis and disaster communication from an intercultural perspective.
3. Gain knowledge about pertinent issues related to international disasters and emergency management.
4. To interact with Costa Rica’s citizens and officials to learn their perspectives of emergency management and risk/disaster communication.
5. To explore both the Atlantic and Pacific coastal areas in Costa Rica and learn about the diverse hazardscapes, cultures, and vulnerabilities present in these locations.

Required Textbooks and Readings:
All readings will be posted on Canvas.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Daily Journal. Each student will keep a daily journal of their experiences while in Costa Rica. This journal must be turned in by noon on May 29th. These entries should include the following components:

   a. Daily Activities: Your journal entry should include detail about places visited, background information about the place(s) we visited or activities you engaged in.

   b. Insights gained: Each day needs to include thoughtful insight about what you have learned/gained from the days’ experience. What did you find interesting? What did you find fascinating? What were some surprises along the way? The more that you elaborate in your insights the more it will help you to recall the event, the historical background, and the location. This section can also include your thoughts about the group, the weather, personal insights on what you are experiencing from the trip.

   c. Cultural Information: This section of your journal includes customs, traditions, language or phrases, animals, politics, environmental uniqueness, activities and events that are unique to the Costa Rican people. What did you find in Costa Rica that is considerably different or “foreign” to your thinking as a citizen/resident in the United States? You may want to create bullet points in this section so that it will be easy to collect and write down.

   d. Hazard and Crisis Communication Themes: Each day, the readings will cover a specific theme in the areas of hazards and/or crisis communication. This section of your journal should reflect on those themes as they applied to your experiences in Costa Rica. For example, you may want to provide a brief synthesis of the reading, compare the concepts and ideas presented in the reading to your experiences in Costa Rica, and/or discuss any key findings you found interesting.

2. Current Events Presentation: While in Costa Rica, students will work either individually or in teams to research a current event underway in that country. Themes and sources for news will be provided the first day of class. As a group, you will prepare a 8-10 minute presentation on that current event / and or current events that fall under a particular theme. You are encouraged to use power point / Prezi for your presentation, but it’s not required. Keep it interesting, informational, and professional.
3. Participation
Being present in class, for excursions, and during travel, and actually participating are minimum requirements for a “B” level participation grade. For any grade higher than that, your participation grade will depend on the quality of your contributions. Quality comments include: adding new insights to the readings/excursions/experiences, offering a different, unique, and relevant perspective on an issue, moving the discussion and analysis forward, extending rather than repeating others’ comments, and demonstrating reflective thinking. We will be having discussions during our travel and/or at the conclusion of most days, which will provide a great opportunity to earn these points.

4. Term papers: In 7-8 page paper describe the important components of the Costa Rica’s culture, particularly addressing how its culture interacts with disaster communication, disaster response, hazard and vulnerability assessment, and/or risk communication. Your paper should include a definition of national culture (including proper citations), a description of Costa Rica’s culture, and an explanation of why you believe your description adequately describes the country’s culture. Your paper should also address how Costa Rica’s culture influences hazard and disaster management and risk communication. As with all written assignments, your paper should have a recognizable introduction, body, and conclusion. Be sure to use relevant examples from your observations of the people, guest lectures, and excursions. Please use in-text citations (Author, Year) and reference the course readings as appropriate. Your paper must be typed, double-spaced, 12 pt Times New Roman, 1-inch margins, and free of typographical errors. It must also include a list of references cited. The paper is due by noon May 29th, 2020.

Total points breakdown
- Journal 100 pts.
- Term Paper 100 pts.
- Current Events Assignment 50 pts.
- Participation 50 pts.
- Online Discussion 50 pts.
- Total 350 pts.

Grade Range:
- A = 315-350
- B = 280-315
- C = 245-279
- D = 210-244
- F = < 210 points

Course policies

While in Costa Rica - If you are seriously ill, you may be excused from attending an activity, but you must contact your instructor (telephone their rooms or cell phone) regarding your illness as soon as possible.

Denton Online Component - In order for this class to be successful, your attendance and participation are imperative. Upon returning to UNT, there will be an online discussion component. Students are expected to be appraised on the readings and assume a constructive role in class discussions, asking questions, thoughtfully attending to the ideas of others, and sharing your own insights. This component of the course is aimed at helping students synthesize their thoughts and experiences during the course and successfully complete the required term paper.

Late work. Except under the most extreme circumstances (and documentation of those circumstances is required), no late work will be accepted. If you encounter an emergency situation of some kind, it is best to communicate with me about it earlier rather than later. It is not fair to others
who met the deadlines if I accept yours late. Before attempting any of the written assignments, please see the course packet for instructions and grading criteria.

**Academic Dishonesty.** All persons shall adhere to the Code of Student Conduct regarding academic honesty, including acts of cheating and plagiarism. Of particular concern in a course with written and oral assignments is the issue of plagiarism. Plagiarism is defined by Webster’s (1989) as “the appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work” (p. 1100). In other words, plagiarism is stealing. You must cite your sources accurately and consistently in both your oral and written assignments. Penalties for plagiarism will vary according to severity and will range from a failing grade to prosecution through the University System.

**Completing the Course**
Students are expected to complete all assignments for this course during the semester. Assigning a grade of “incomplete” is rare, and in order to request an “I,” the student must meet these requirements: a) The student must have completed at least 75% of the course assignments; b) The student must be passing the course; c) There must be an unforeseen and compelling reason why the course cannot be completed on time (usually a medical or military reason); and d) The student must present a plan for completing the assignments within the time period specified in the catalog.

**Course rules**
1. You’re expected to attend all organized activities; your down time is yours but that does not excuse you from missing organized activities.
2. Always travel in pairs or groups.
3. Always have your phone on you.
4. Punctuality is mandatory; your participation grade is partially determined by your timeliness.
5. If a student is detained by law enforcement, the course instructors will NOT alter their plans to address your situation.
6. Regardless of Costa Rica’s drug laws, you are NOT permitted to partake. See the rule above about arrests.
7. The drinking age in Costa Rica is 18. If you choose to drink, be responsible, and remember Rules #1, 4 and 5.
8. Be flexible; our schedule, destinations, and activity plans may change.
9. No complaining.
10. * Readings on the schedule with an asterisk next to them are for Graduate students only.