Instructor Information
Dr. Laura Siebeneck
Office: Chilton Hall 204P
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Email: laura.siebeneck@unt.edu
Office Hours: (by appointment)

Disability Accommodation:
The instructor will cooperate with the university's Office of Disability Accommodation to provide reasonable accommodation to students who need it. Students who wish to self-identify and request assistance under this policy should register with the Office (located in the University Union) by the second class day.

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 developing countries with diverse populations and significant socio-economic disparity. This cross-listed course introduces students to an overview of issues pertinent to international disasters and places emphasis on theoretical and practical understanding of disaster management and crisis/disaster communication in Panama.

Location:
Panama, 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. Panama is threatened by a variety of hazards, including flooding, mudslides, volcanos, drought wildfire, landslides, tsunamis, and sea level rise. The risks posed by these hazards create a significant threat to life, property, infrastructure, and the country’s economy. Additionally, the variety of ethnic groups and languages present in Panama creates challenges in communicating these risks to the greater population, especially in coastal areas already experiencing the impacts of sea level rise.

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 (Panama). 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, public administration, 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 crisis and disaster communication from an intercultural perspective.
2. Gain knowledge about pertinent issues related to international disasters and emergency management.
3. To interact with Panama’s citizens and officials to learn their perspectives of emergency management and risk/disaster communication.
4. To explore both the Atlantic and Pacific coastal areas in Panama and learn about the diverse hazardscapes present in these locations.
Required Textbooks and Readings:
All readings will be posted on Blackboard

Recommended Textbooks and Readings:


Additional readings may be distributed in class. These are not “optional readings.” They are relevant to the lecture material, the course assignments, and to the exams. You are responsible for ensuring that you get copies of all class handouts, most of which will be posted on Blackboard.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Daily Journal that includes:
   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 Panamanian people. What did you find in Panama 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 Panama. 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 Panama, and/or discuss any key findings you found interesting.

2. Current Events Presentation: Prior to departing for Panama, students will work 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 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. 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 at the conclusion of most days, which will provide a great opportunity to earn these points.
4. **Term papers:** In a 4-6 page paper (7-8 for graduate students), describe the important components of the Panama’s culture, particularly addressing how its culture interacts with disaster communication, disaster response, hazard and vulnerability assessment, or risk communication. Your paper should include a definition of national culture (including proper citations), a description of Panama’s culture, and an explanation of why you believe your description adequately describes the country’s culture. Your paper should also address how Panama’s culture influences disaster/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. Your paper must be typed, double spaced, and free of typographical errors. It must also include a list of references cited and must have a cover page.

**Total points breakdown**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>100 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term Paper</td>
<td>100 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current Events Assignment</td>
<td>50 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>50 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>300 pts.</strong></td>
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**Grade Range:**

A = 270-300  
B = 240-269  
C = 210-239  
D = 180-209  
F = < 180 points

**Course policies**

**Denton -** In order for this class to be successful, your attendance and participation are imperative. We will conduct this class as a lecture/seminar, performing the roles of teachers and learners simultaneously. This is possible only if everyone prepares in advance for class by giving thoughtful attention to the assigned readings and assumes a constructive role in class discussions, asking questions, thoughtfully attending to the ideas of others, and sharing your own insights. Students who attend class regularly will benefit by enhanced performance on assignments and an opportunity to complete the pop quizzes.

**While in Panama -** 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.

**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.
**Writing quality assumptions.** Every paper you turn in must be of quality, both in content and style. I will not accept papers with grammatical and typographical errors. I expect you to use a computer and to take advantage of the programs that guard against such errors; however, there is no substitute for good proofreading. All papers must conform to the “Writing Guide for Students Papers” in the “undergraduate program” section of the department website, at http://www.comm.unt.edu/writing_guide_for_student_papers.htm ...

**Albino Squirrel**
We need to take pics with the Albino squirrel in interesting places.

**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 Panama’s drug laws, you are NOT permitted to partake. See the rule above about arrests.
7. The drinking age in Panama 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.
## Tentative Itinerary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Activity/reading assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6/4</td>
<td>Denton</td>
<td>Class Introductions/Introduction to syllabus</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Team-building activities</td>
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<td>Discussion about travelling in Panama</td>
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<td>Packing List</td>
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<td>Introduction to Hazards/Disasters</td>
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<td>Introduction to Reading Lists</td>
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<td>Skype with Anthony Spencer of Explore 505</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/5</td>
<td>Denton</td>
<td>Lecture Topic – <strong>Hazard, Risk, and Disasters in Panama</strong></td>
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<td>6/6</td>
<td>Denton</td>
<td>Lecture Topic <strong>Basics of Crisis Communication</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>6/7</td>
<td>Denton</td>
<td>Lecture Topic – <strong>Current Events Assignment / Presentations Due</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Travel Planning Recap</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>6/8</td>
<td>Travel to Panama</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/18</td>
<td>Return to DFW</td>
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Final Papers will be due no later than June 30th at noon.