

## Assignment 2: Understanding Hazards in Context

GEO 2152  
Due November 18  
Weight 25%

### Objectives

The purpose of this assignment is to further hone your critical thinking skills regarding hazards and disasters, their impacts, and how we adjust to them. One of the drawbacks of assignment 1 is that it is highly reductionist, in the sense that you only see the summary numbers concerning these tragic events. This assignment will focus more on how those numbers are actually felt on the ground in places that experience disaster. You will review **one type of hazard/disaster** in a formal essay. You are required to use primarily academic literature: journal articles and books - which can be supplemented with other reference materials. The primary goal of this assignment is to understand some of the key issues studied by academics concerning hazards/disasters. Where possible cite empirical papers (research studies) as opposed to only theoretical papers (summaries of the literature).

### Tasks

1. Identify a hazard/disaster type that interests you. Here are some examples:
  - Hurricane Katrina (hurricane hazard/disaster)
  - Walkerton (E-coli hazard/disaster)
  - Urban pesticide use (chemical technological hazard)
  - Chernobyl (nuclear radiation hazard/disaster)
  - 2004 Indonesian tsunami (earthquake/tsunami hazard/disaster)
  - Bhopal (chemical technological hazard/disaster)
  - Three Mile Island (nuclear radiation hazard/disaster)
  - lots more - when in doubt, ask
2. Find academic journal articles/books about this hazard/disaster type. [Geobase](#) is a good journal article database to start your search.
3. Write an essay that discusses how academics write about this hazard/disaster. What are the central issues: early warning? emergency preparedness? loss sharing? Take a specific position - that is formulate a thesis - in your paper in your introduction. An example of a thesis might be: "The majority of the literature on the industrial disasters like Bhopal disaster focuses on failures in technological systems rather than population vulnerability, prevention and mitigation as outlined by Author, year. This former is unhelpful for managers and workers in similar situations worldwide, but in low income countries in particular. This essay will emphasize how the latter issues need more attention by researchers."

### Hints

1. Form and explicitly state identifiable argument(s) - you are given a lot of room to create your argument based on your review of the literature. See point 3 above.
2. Find authoritative work on your hazard - find papers that are cited frequently by other authors in the field. The [Web of Science](#) can be used to do this.
3. Use journal articles and books - yes, reports, internet sources etc. may be used, and may be relevant, but for the (social) "scientific" state of the art, journals are good because they are typically peer reviewed by other scientists before they are published. Further, journals are the main source of up-to-date research in the area as books typically take years to publish. Books are very good for synthetic work - that is, they typically summarize empirical research and theory. Many books are peer reviewed, but it is often difficult to tell if this is the case.

4. **focus, Focus, FOCUS** - you are given a lot of leeway in this assignment - some would say, "you have been given just enough rope to hang yourself". Thus, keep your messages/arguments focused. Do not simply retell what you see in the articles. The best papers will not simply summarize, they will synthesis and interpret. Show the reader what can be learned by reading current research on this hazard/disaster type.
5. **Subheadings** - I am a big fan of subheadings, and you will notice most journal articles and book chapters have them.
6. **Reference List** - You should include in your reference list all scholarly articles that you cite in the text of your essay.

### Submit

1. Your **essay** (typed, double-spaced, formal style, title page, reference list, **MAX 1000 words which is about 4 PAGES** not including title and references etc.).
2. Your essay to [turnitin.com](https://turnitin.com)
  - Course ID = 2462026
  - Course password = hazards

In lieu of a turnitin report (note below, you **lose 1 mark** if you do not submit) you can submit a signed, dated page attesting to appropriate citation and overall lack of [plagiarism](#) in your essay - "I do hereby certify that...etc etc". You will not lose the mark if you submit one or the other. Turnitin is preferred.

All of this should be presented on letter size paper and stapled. Please do NOT use any sort of folder, binder or protective cover (they are cumbersome).

### Marking

25 marks (5 style + 20 content)

Style (5/20 marks)

- **title page** (-1)
- **reference list** (-1)
- **introductory paragraph** (-1) - introduce the purpose of your paper, state your position on the degree to which the two domains overlap, and provide a roadmap for the rest of the paper
- **concluding paragraph** (-1) - revisit your main point about paper quality, summarize, comment on potential directions for future research in this area
- **spelling/grammar** (-2 max) - up to two marks can be lost, the first few are free, from then on marks are deducted at the TA's discretion
- **formal style** (-2 max) - other formal style issues (e.g., slang, acronyms, contractions) TA's discretion

Content (20/25 marks)

- **Introduction** - 2 marks - give a clear context and road map for the paper.
- **Remaining Content** - 16 marks
- **Conclusion** - 2 marks - summarize, conclude and point out potential implications
- **Turnitin Report missing?** - (-1) - you need to submit report OR a signed, dated document attesting to appropriate citation and overall lack of [plagiarism](#) - "I do hereby certify that...etc etc". For more info, see the Submit section above.