

Natural Hazards and Disasters in North America and the Caribbean, c. 1600 to Hurricane Katrina

Historical Contextualization, Master *InterAmerican Studies*, Fall Semester 2015/16,
Wednesday 12-14h, room T2-204,
Asst. Prof. Dr. Eleonora Rohland, Office hours on Wed. 16-17h or by appointment

Summary:

Over the last decade, societies around the globe have experienced climatic extreme events (a.k.a. “natural disasters” or “natural catastrophes”) in increasing number and severity, a fact that climate scientists can now clearly link to anthropogenic climate change. Newspaper and TV reports have provided glimpses of the often long-term materially, politically and socially detrimental effects of such extremes on the affected societies. In this course we will take a deeper look at how societies in the disaster-prone Caribbean and parts of North America have coped with climatic and other extreme events (i.e. earthquakes) at different points in time. We will tackle the following questions: What is a “natural hazard” as opposed to a “natural disaster”? How do societies change through the repeated experience of extreme events over time? What role does memory play for coping with and adapting to natural hazards? Why are some societies more vulnerable to natural hazards than others? And why should we study disasters historically?

We will dive into the interdisciplinary field of historical disaster studies, a sub-field of environmental and climate history. Be prepared to meet not only Historians but Climatologists, Anthropologists, Geographers and Sociologists throughout the course literature! The first three sessions will introduce the most important theoretical concepts employed in this field of research. The following sessions focus on specific kinds of disasters and either on specific case studies or on longer-term overviews over one type of disaster in a particular place.

Course Requirements:

Ability and readiness to read and discuss texts in English. Active class participation and attendance.

Each participant will present the designated key article for his or her session (15 mins; sessions will be distributed in the first introductory meeting on October 21). Presentations should include a short summary of the text, a brief introduction of the author and three theses of the text, as well as three theses about the text. That is, three statements the author makes in the text and three theses you – the participants – derive from reading the text.

Course Syllabus:

Introduction

21.10. *What are historical disaster studies? Orientation in an interdisciplinary field*

SCHENK, G.J., "Historical Disaster Research. State of Research, Concepts, Methods and Case Studies", *Historical Social Research* 32, 3

Special Issue: Historical Disaster Research. Concepts, Methods and Case Studies, ed. by Gerrit Schenk and Jens-Ivo Engels (2007) 9-31.

GARCÍA ACOSTA, V. "Historical Disaster Research." In *Catastrophe and Culture. An Anthropology of Disaster*, edited by S.M. Hoffmann and Anthony Oliver-Smith. 49-66. Santa Fe, 2002.

SUTTER, P.S. "The World with Us: The State of American Environmental History." *Journal of American History* 100, no. 1 (2013): 94-119.

28.10. ***What is a disaster? Terminology and Definitions***

MAUELSHAGEN, F. "Defining Catastrophe." In *Catastrophe and Catharsis. Perspectives on Disasters and Redemption in German Culture and Beyond*, edited by Katharina Gerstenberger and Tanja Nusser. 172-90. Rochester: Camden House, 2015.

OLIVER-SMITH, A., "Theorizing Disaster. Nature, Power, and Culture", in HOFFMANN, S.M. – OLIVER-SMITH, A. (eds.), *Catastrophe and Culture. An Anthropology of Disaster* (Santa Fe: 2002) 23-47.

04.11. ***Vulnerability, Resilience and Adaptation – Present-day Terminology in Historical Context***

BANKOFF, G., "Vulnerability as a Measure of Change in Society", *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters* 21, 2 (2003) 5-30.

CUTTER, S. – BARNES, L. – BERRY, M. – BURTON, C. – EVANS, E. – TATE, E. – WEBB, J., *Community and Regional Resilience. Perspectives from Hazards, Disasters, and Emergency Management*, CARRI Research Report 1, 2008.

NELSON, D.R. – ADGER, W.N. – BROWN, K., "Adaptation to Environmental Change: Contributions of a Resilience Framework", *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 32, (2007) 11.11-11.25.

Hurricanes

11.11. ***What is a hurricane? – The Present-Day Perspective***

KEIM, B.D., AND R.A. Muller. *Hurricanes of the Gulf of Mexico*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009, chapter 4.

EMANUEL, K. *Divine Wind. The History and Science of Hurricanes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, 3-34.

- 18.11. ***“Early” Hurricane Experience in the 16th and 17th-century Caribbean***
SCHWARTZ, S.B., *Sea of Storms. A History of Hurricanes in the Greater Caribbean from Columbus to Katrina* (Princeton: 2015), chapter 2, 33-69.

MULCAHY, M. *Hurricanes and Society in the British Greater Caribbean, 1624-1783*. Early America. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006, Introduction and chapter 2.

- 02.12. ***Hurricane Katrina, 2005: Race, Place, and Disaster Memory***
CAMPANELLA, R., "'Two Centuries of Paradox'. The Geography of New Orleans' African American Population, from Antebellum to Postdiluvian Times", in HURET, R. – SPARKS, R. (eds.), *Hurricane Katrina in Transatlantic Perspective* (Baton Rouge: 2014) 8-37.

COLTEN, C.E. "Vulnerability and Place. Flat Land and Uneven Risk in New Orleans." *American Anthropologist* 108, no. 4 (2006): 731-34.

PFISTER, C. "'The Monster Swallows You'. Disaster Memory and Risk Culture in Western Europe, 1500-2000." *RCC Perspectives* 1 (2011): 2-22.

Famine

- 09.12. ***Conceptual Approaches to Famine***
SEN, A. *Poverty and Famines. An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1981, chapters 1 and 5.

Ó GRÁDA, C. *Famine. A short history*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009, chapter 1.

- 16.12. ***“The Hungry Year” 1789 and the “Year Without a Summer” 1816***
TAYLOR, A., "'The Hungry Year': 1789 on the Northern Border of Revolutionary America", in JOHNS, A. (ed.) *Dreadful Visitations. Confronting Natural Catastrophe in the Age of Enlightenment* (New York, London: 1999) 145-182.

WOOD, G.D. *Tambora. The Eruption that Changed the World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014, Introduction, chapter 1 and 2.

Floods

- 06.01. ***The Johnstown Flood 1889***
KAKTINS, U. – TODD, C.D. – WOJNO, S. – COLEMAN, N., "Revisiting the Timing and Events Leading to and Causing the Johnstown Flood of 1889", *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 80, 3 (2013) 335-363.

GODBEY, E. "Disaster Tourism and the Melodrama of Authenticity: Revisiting the 1889 Johnstown Flood." *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 73, no. 3 (2006): 273-315.

13.01. ***Ohio River Floods in the 19th and 20th century***

LÜBKEN, U., *Die Natur Der Gefahr. Überschwemmungen am Ohio River im neunzehnten und zwanzigsten Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: 2014).

LÜBKEN, U. "Governing Floods and Riots. Insurance, Risk, and Racism in the Postwar United States." *Historical Social Research* 35, no. 4 (2010): 275-88.

Fire

20.01. ***Fire – a “natural” or a “human-made” hazard?***

PYNE, S.J. *Fire. A brief history*. London: The British Museum Press, 2001, chapters 8-10.

PYNE, S.J. "The Fires This Time, and Next." *Science* 294, no. 5544 (2001): 1005-06.

PYNE, S.J. "Problems, Paradoxes, Paradigms: Triangulating Fire Research." *International Journal of Wildland Fire* 16, no. 3 (2007): 271-6.

27.01. ***The Great Thumb Fire 1881 and The Great Chicago Fire of 1871***

TERRIE, P.G., ""The Necessities of the Case": The Response to the Great Thumb Fire of 1881", *Michigan Historical Review* 31, 2 (2005) 90-116.

SKARBEK, E., "The Chicago Fire of 1871: A Bottom-up Approach to Disaster Relief", *Public Choice* 160, 1-2 (2014) 155-180.

Earthquakes

03.02. ***The Cuban Earthquake of 1880 and The Earthquake (and Fire) of San Francisco 1906***

JOHNSON, S., "The Cuban Earthquake of 1880. A Case Study from the Past with Frightening Implications for the Future", in MAUCH, C. – MAYER, S. (eds.), *American Environments. Climate - Cultures - Catastrophe* (Heidelberg: 2012) 117-131.

REES DAVIES, A., *Saving San Francisco: Relief and Recovery after the 1906 Disaster* (Philadelphia: 2011), chapters 1 and 2.

Concluding Session

10.02. ***Course summary and final plenary discussion***

Further reading:

- BECK, U., *Risikogesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: 1986).
- BECK, U., *Weltrisikogesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: 2007).
- BORST, A., "Das Erdbeben Von 1348. Ein Historischer Beitrag Zur Katastrophenforschung", *Historische Zeitschrift* 233, (1981) 529-569.
- BURKE, E. – POMERANZ, K. (eds.), *The Environment and World History* (2009).
- CAREY, M., "Latin American Environmental History: Current Trends, Interdisciplinary Insights, and Future Directions", *Environmental History* 14, 2 (2009) 221-252.
- CROSBY, A., "Afterword: Environmental History, Past, Present and Future", in DIEFENDORF, J.M. – DORSEY, K. (eds.), *City, Country, Empire* (Pittsburgh: 2005) 226-232.
- DOUGLAS, M. – WILDAVSKY, A., *Risk and Culture. An Essay on the Selection of Technological and Environmental Dangers* (Berkeley et al.: 1983).
- ENGELS, J.-I., "Vom Subjekt Zum Objekt. Naturbild Und Naturkatastrophen in Der Geschichte Der Bundesrepublik Deutschland", in GROH, D. – KEMPE, M. – MAUELSHAGEN, F. (eds.), *Naturkatastrophen. Beiträge Zu Ihrer Deutung, Wahrnehmung Und Darstellung in Text Und Bild Von Der Antike Bis in 20. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: 2003) 119-141.
- GARCÍA-ACOSTA, V., "Historical Disaster Research", in HOFFMANN, S.M. – OLIVER-SMITH, A. (eds.), *Catastrophe and Culture. The Anthropology of Disaster* (Santa Fe: 2002) 49-66.
- GLASER, R., *Klimageschichte Mitteleuropas. 1000 Jahre Wetter, Klima, Katastrophen* (Darmstadt: 2001).
- MAUELSHAGEN, F. – PFISTER, C., "Vom Klima Zur Gesellschaft: Klimageschichte Im 21. Jahrhundert", in WELZER, H. – SOEFFNER, H.-G. – GIESECKE, D. (eds.), *Klimakulturen. Soziale Wirklichkeiten Im Klimawandel* (Frankfurt a. M.: 2010)
- MAUELSHAGEN, F., *Klimageschichte Der Neuzeit* (Darmstadt: 2010).
- GROVE, R.H., *Green Imperialism Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism 1600-1860* (Cambridge <etc.>: 1996).
- LEHMKUHL, U. – WELLENREUTER, H. (eds.), *Historians and Nature. Comparative Approaches to Environmental History* (Oxford: 2007).
- LEKAN, T., "Globalizing American Environmental History", *Environmental History* 10, 1 (2005) 50-52.
- MCNEILL, J., *Mosquito Empires. Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914* (Cambridge, New York: 2010).
- ROBIN, L. – GRIFFITHS, T.O.M., "Environmental History in Australasia", *Environment and History* 10, 4 (2004) 439-474.
- SIMMONS, I.G., *Global Environmental History: 10,000 Bc to Ad 2000* (2008).
- UEKÖTTER, F., *Umweltgeschichte Im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert* (München: 2007).
- UEKÖTTER, F. (ed.) *The Turning Points of Environmental History* (2010).
- WHITE, R., "The Nationalization of Nature", *Journal of American History* 86, 3 (1999) 976-986.
- WORSTER, D., "Appendix. Doing Environmental History", in WORSTER, D. – CROSBY, A. (eds.), *The End of the Earth. Perspectives on Modern Environmental History* (Cambridge: 1988) 289-307.