

**Sociology 103: Contemporary Social Theory (Fall 2022)**

Tuesdays, 4-7 pm, 174 SOCS

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:30-4 pm, and by appointment

In the years 2020-22, the world was in the grip of the Covid-19 pandemic. Yet there is a much more devastating disaster on the horizon: the global environmental crisis. Some of its consequences are apparent already, including fire and flooding (and the proliferation of pandemics). This course will consider these two crises – and disasters in general – from the standpoint of knowledge and action. Put differently, how aware are we about looming disasters, how do we assess them, and what do we do about them. That is, the course is about knowledge, risk, and action (or ignorance, denial, and inaction).

All the readings will be available electronically, but no electronics in the classroom, please.

Requirements

Participation (20%)

Examination (40%)

Final project (40%)

Schedule

30 August: Introduction

6 September: Pandemics Past

Alex de Waal, New Pandemics, Old Politics, 2021, chaps.1-3

13 September: The Covid-19 Crisis

de Waal, chap.6

20 September: The Global Environmental Crisis

David Wallace-Wells, The Uninhabitable Earth, 2019

27 September: Knowledge and Science

Bruno Latour, We Have Never Been Modern, 1991, chaps.1-2

4 October: Knowledge and Relevance

Immanuel Wallerstein et al., Open the Social Sciences, chaps.3-4

11 October: Risk and Disaster

Frank H. Knight, Risk, Uncertainty and Profit, 1921, chaps.6-7

18 October: Risk and Responsibility

Judith N. Shklar, The Faces of Injustice, 1990

25 October: Interregnum

1 November: Understanding Action

Max Weber, Economy and Society, 2019 (orig. 1922), chap.1

8 November: Living the Present, Anticipating the Future

Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, 1954 (orig. 1922), chap.3

**15 November: PRESENTATION**

**29 November: EXAMINATION**

**2 December: PROJECT DUE**