

Lecture Notes: Disaster Vulnerability and Resilience

Session 12

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Reflections on the Semester

Reminders:

1. **Mandate:** Our charge as scholars and professionals is to reverse the trend of inequity in vulnerability. Each in our own way must generate solutions.
2. **Inspiration:** We wanted to teach a course with a group of interdisciplinary scholars (leaders in the field) to push students' thinking in new directions
3. **Message:** Our understanding of hazards must be embedded in understanding their context: physical, political, social, etc.
4. **Goal:** To recognize that though we look at certain problems and see them from a particular perspective (based on our training and education), we can also develop sensitivity to a diverse array of concepts, and this will allow us to think in a more integrated way.

Themes:

1. **Definitions:** Think carefully about what is a disaster, risk, hazard on a global scale to a local scale.
2. **Natural hazards:** The class focused mostly on natural hazards, with only a little time spent on about technological hazards.
3. **Vulnerability:** We also looked at vulnerability both in terms of physical vulnerability (structure and infrastructure, the natural environment) and in terms of social vulnerability. We talked about analyzing/assessing vulnerability, what it means to be vulnerable. We looked at the disaster-pressure-release model and the role of institutions: financial institutions, political institutions, and policy processes. We talked about how institutions can be a source of resilience or foster further vulnerability.
4. **Resilience:** We looked at policy tools and social factors, but really ideas about resilience were integrated throughout the class.

Questions:

1. What are some of the key messages and ideas that you will take away from this semester?
2. What surprised you about the class?
3. What in your thinking has changed?
4. How might that move forward into your professional practice?