

SCI 180-001: Natural Hazards & Disasters

Fall 2009**3 credit hours**

Dr. David Barclay: Office: 324 Bowers, (607) 753-2921
E-mail: david.barclay@cortland.edu
Course webpage in the Cortland eLearning system

Office hours: M,W 11:30 am - 1:30 pm; T 11:30 am - 12:30 pm
or by appointment, or at any other time if I am available.

Lecture: Mon, Wed 4:25 pm - 5:40 pm in Bowers 51

Textbook: Abbott, P.L., 2009, Natural Disasters, 7th ed., 526pp.

Catalog course description:

“Study of the interaction between society and natural hazards such as hurricanes, floods, earthquakes and volcanoes. Consideration of both the physical operation and impacts of these phenomena, and how humans evaluate and respond to these threats to their lives and property. Emphasis on current events and recent natural disasters. (3 cr. hrs.)”

Course attendance policy:

I expect you to attend all classes and may take attendance periodically during the semester. Exams, quizzes and in-class assignments can only be made-up with a documented valid reason or prior notice for your absence, so if you want to complete all the assessed work in this course then make sure that you attend every class. Please familiarize yourself with the official college policy regarding attendance and absences (Section 410.12 of the College Handbook).

Be responsible for your own education. Let me know in advance if you know that you are going to miss a class (email is best). If you miss course-assessed work you must contact me immediately with a valid reason for your absence or you will receive a zero. Pay attention in class, keep good notes, do the readings, ask questions, and get involved in class discussions and activities: your participation and attitude will be factored-in to borderline final grade decisions.

Academic integrity:

I expect you to abide by the SUNY Cortland standards of academic integrity (Chapter 340 of the College Handbook). Stated simply, this means that you will not commit plagiarism, nor cheat on exams, nor help others plagiarize or cheat. It is also unacceptable for you to use or possess old papers, quizzes or exams from this course from when it was taught in previous semesters; such materials have only been returned to the students who completed the work and have not been formally released to the college community at large. Do not commit academic dishonesty, because you are ultimately cheating yourself out of an education.

Academic accommodations:

If you are a student with a disability and wish to request accommodations, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services located in B-40 Van Hoesen Hall or call (607) 753-2066 for an appointment. Information regarding your disability will be treated in a confidential manner. Because many accommodations require early planning, requests should be made as early as possible.

Evaluation of student performance:

There will be three exams spaced equally through the semester with the third being held in Finals week. The average of these three exams will comprise 85% of your final grade. Questions on all exams will be drawn from material covered in class since the previous exam, plus possibly additional items that I will identify prior to each exam. Each exam will be mostly multiple-choice with a few short answer and/or calculation questions. I will give more specific information on exam style and a review sheet one week before each exam.

I will also assign between seven and twelve short papers, exercises, numerical problems, and quizzes through the semester, both during class-time and as homework. The average of these assignments, after dropping your lowest score, will be the remaining 15% of your final grade. There will be no make-ups allowed of these assignments without my prior permission or a documented reason for your absence, so make sure that you attend class to complete this work.

A+ = 97-100	B+ = 87-89	C+ = 77-79	D+ = 67-69	E = 0-59
A = 93-96	B = 83-86	C = 73-76	D = 63-66	
A- = 90-92	B- = 80-82	C- = 70-72	D- = 60-62	

eLearning:

This course will use the Cortland eLearning system for posting homework assignments, study materials and grades. These online resources are provided to aid your learning and I expect you to check the course web site often. Please check that you can access the course web site early in the semester and let me know if you need help or experience any problems.

Course overview:

Natural hazards are natural phenomena such as hurricanes, earthquakes and volcanoes that threaten human lives and/or property. The human dimension is essential in this definition. If these phenomena pose no threat to humans then they are simply of interest to geologists within the broader study of our dynamic Earth. The grim reality is that these and other geologic phenomena become disasters through causing billions of dollars of damage and killing thousands of people every year. Studying, understanding and coping with natural hazards are important for the well being of millions of people. Also, considering how humans perceive and respond to natural hazards gives useful insight into how we consider risk, and weigh the benefits of certain activities or locations against possible costs and negative aspects.

Generalized course schedule and readings:

Definitions & Energy	Chapters 1-2
Hurricanes & Thunderstorms	Chapters 11-13
Exam 1 - Monday October 5	
Floods & Earthquakes	Chapters 14, 3-7
Exam 2 - Monday November 9	
Volcanoes & Asteroid Impacts	Chapters 8-9, 16-17
Exam 3 - Monday December 14 @ 4:25 pm	

A detailed schedule will be posted on the course web site and will be updated each week with reading assignments specific to each class (including links to online readings). Please check these often to keep your studying on-track.