
When these phenomena occur together, in varying combinations, they comprise complex emergencies — overlapping, intersecting processes that can overwhelm a government and possibly an entire country, create and deepen humanitarian disasters, interrupt economic development, and lead to foreign policy crises. (Think, for example, of the crisis in Syria today, Ebola in west Africa, or Nepal’s most recent earthquake.) The causes of these crises are many, ranging from political extremism, poverty, resource scarcity and weak states to inadequate governance and diplomatic failures.

We will spend the semester investigating complex emergencies and the ways that states, societies and international humanitarian actors respond to them. Along the way, we will explore competing philosophies of humanitarian response (including neutrality and impartiality), international humanitarian law, thorny problems that arise when humanitarians meet difficult political actors, efforts to use international human rights law to resolve seemingly intractable problems, and ways the international community responds to (and sometimes does not) - and tries to solve (and often does not) -- these emergencies.

We will study several recent and contemporary cases (from different regions), and seminar members will also explore specific elements of emergencies in their essays.

Readings and reference materials

Source material for this subject is voluminous, varied and invariably interesting.
We will use David Keen’s *Complex Emergencies* (Polity Press 2008) to help anchor our early class discussions and debates. It will be available for purchase before the term begins. For those who are interested, two additional volumes will be available for purchase: Elizabeth Ferris’s, *The Politics of Protection* (Brookings Institution 2011); and Didier Fassin and Mariella Pandolfi’s edited collection, *Contemporary States of Emergency* (Zone Books 2013).

Most of our reading (and viewing) will be based around current and historical news reports, articles, participant testimonies, websites, videos, blog sites and case studies. The library will also maintain a collection of relevant volumes on reserve.

**Prerequisites for enrolling**

This seminar is intended for upper division students. Previous experience in this field is not required; all seminar members should have completed University prerequisites in Government and History.

**Course requirements**

Our seminar will be successful if everyone attends every class, prepares carefully, and participates actively. The subject is constantly changing, and our collaborative work will help to further our collective understanding of the problem of complex emergencies.

Written work will be graded on the basis of clarity, structure organization, quality of argument, familiarity with class material, and improvement as we all become more comfortable with the subject.

Clearly drafted memoranda responding to each week’s readings will be due by noon each Monday (posted on Canvas); everyone is expected to review all of these short memos before class on Tuesday. (This requirement counts toward class participation.)

Three carefully crafted papers (approximately 2500 words in length) will be assigned during the semester. (50% of the course grade)
Seminar members are expected to participate actively in every class session, lead class discussions as designated (including reporting on written assignments), and work together as needed to further our collective conversation. (50% of the course grade.)

I will expect seminar members to meet with me individually during the course of the semester to discuss classroom and written assignments.

**Honor code and academic integrity**

The core values of the University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community. Should you have any questions regarding University policies concerning academic integrity, please visit the website of the Office of the Dean of Students: [http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu)

**Accommodations**

The University provides, on request, appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Students for whom such services are needed should contact -- at the beginning of the semester -- the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities. (512-471-6259: [http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssp/](http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssp/))

**Religious holidays**

The University requires students to notify instructors at least fourteen days prior to a pending absence due to religious observance. If you must miss a class, an assignment or a project in order to observe a religious holiday, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

**Emergency evacuation policy**

The Office of Campus Safety and Security (512-471-5767: [http://www.utexas.edu/safety](http://www.utexas.edu/safety)) recommends the following safety practices: When a fire alarm is activated, please evacuate the building, assemble outside...
and follow instructions from the faculty; do not re-enter the building until instructed by the Austin Fire Department, the UT /Austin Police Department or the Fire Prevention Services office. Please familiarize yourself with the closest exit doors in the building. Should you need assistance for possible evacuation, please inform me during the first week of class.