HIST 374
Dr. Hicks
mhicks1@iit.edu

Fall 2016
Hermann Hall 007
Wednesday 5:00-7:40pm

"There's no disaster that can't become a blessing,
and no blessing that can't become a disaster."
                    --Richard Bach

Course Description:

Disasters have played a key role in constructing the modern world. This course introduces you to the history of key social, economic, and technological changes in industrializing nations by focusing on episodes and incidents that have created paradigm shifts—disjunctures between how things were done before them, and how things were done after. During the semester we will investigate the contexts of different historical disasters to analyze how disasters catalyze change.

We will be particularly concerned with ascertaining how disasters produce regulatory and legislative changes on a national and even global scale. We will discuss the technological and social changes effected by disasters in the realms of power production, environmental stewardship, manufacturing, transportation, infrastructure, public health, reproduction, food production, and more.

Since our understanding of what constitutes a disaster is constructed through public discourse and popular media, this class will employ a variety of media and learning approaches. In addition to discussion, lecture, and required readings, you will watch documentaries, research newspaper articles, and participate in constructing a public (online) resource interpreting particular disasters' roles in history.

Readings must be completed for the day that they are listed. There may be unannounced reading quizzes to ensure that everyone is keeping up. They may be written or oral. Readings will be on reserve on our Blackboard site if they are marked with an (R), or linked from the syllabus.

Your course grade will be broken down as follows:
Attendance and participation: 20%
Reading quizzes, class exercises, article searches: 20%
Blog comment assignments (in lieu of papers): 20%
Midterm Exam: 20%
Final Project: 20%

Resources that you will be expected to use in this class include the databases linked from Galvin Library's History Research Guide: http://guides.library.iit.edu/content.php?pid=114040&sid=986140. A key resource we will be using for class assignments is the Historical London Times Newspaper database. Familiarize yourself with it as soon as possible:
http://ezproxy.gl.iit.edu/login?url=http://find.galegroup.com/ttda/start.do?userGroupName=chic7029

Contact Nichole Novak (nnovak2@iit.edu), the humanities librarian, for further help with these resources. Google is not an academic resource, and I do not expect you to use it as a panacea for your class assignments or studies. Same goes for Wikipedia: I hope we can all agree that reading an online encyclopedia of dubious credibility is not college-level humanities research.

You can get help with improving your writing at the **Humanities Department Writing Center** located in Siegel 232-233. I highly recommend this resource to everyone in the class, regardless of whether or not English is your first language: http://www.iit.edu/csl/hum/resources/writing_center.shtml

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verified disabilities. In order to access these resources or get special provisions in class you must register with Aggie Niemiec aniemiec@iit.edu in the Disability Service Office (312 567.5744 or disabilities@iit.edu) at the **beginning of the semester** and you must **speak with me at the beginning of the semester** as well so we can plan for the needed accommodations.

Cheating, plagiarism, and academic dishonesty are serious offenses and will not be tolerated. They will result in a failing grade on the assignment and possibly in the course (at my discretion) and the University will levy sanctions as well. If you are in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty, re-read the code of student conduct and sections on academic dishonesty in the student handbook: http://www.iit.edu/student_affairs/handbook/pdfs/handbook_fy13.pdf (page 27).
If you are still confused, make an appointment to speak with me during my office hours **before** you pass in an assignment. Remember that it is *never* appropriate to use someone's ideas or words without giving them credit, and that copying text from sources or peers--in addition to being plagiarism and cheating-- short-circuits the learning process and is the exact opposite of what I want to see.

Course Schedule:

Aug 24 **Class introduction: Useful Disasters, Useless Disasters
and
London Cholera, the Birth of Epidemiology, and the Rise of Sewer Engineering and Water Management**
Excerpts from Johnson, *The Ghost Map* (49 pp.) (R)
Bazelgette biographical sketch:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/bazalgette_joseph.shtml
Listen to 99% Invisible episode on Chicago's sewage history (15 min podcast), browse pictures in blog post:
http://99percentinvisible.org/episode/episode-86-reversal-of-fortune/
"IIT Biologists Determine the Molecular Mechanisms of Enzyme Action in Cholera and Related Diseases" IIT Today, August 21, 2015 (R)
Exercise: Working With Historical Documents. Using the historical *London Times* database, find a collection of no more than 10 and no fewer than 5 articles that give you greater insight into the history of cholera and industrialization in the UK. Discuss what you have learned in small groups and then share with the larger class. The London *Times* database is linked from the library's history research guide (under the Articles & Databases tab): http://guides.library.iit.edu/history

Aug 31 **Urban Disasters and Substandard Infrastructure**
Finish readings listed for first class and do the assignment below.
Assignment: Use what you learned in the last class to search the historical London *Times* database for the 4 most important or interesting articles you find on the history of cholera and industrialization in the UK in the 18th and 19th c. In a short essay (300-600 words) explain the

historical significance of the articles you chose, focusing on telling us how your chosen articles show change over time and what new insight they help lead us to. Essay is due in a comment post on the Digital History Lab blog (http://digitalhistorylab.com) by September 9th at 9pm.

Sept 7 The Great Chicago Fire and Disasters as Simulacra (or "If a disaster happens and nobody pays attention, does it matter?")
and
Engineering Mistakes: The 1907 Quebec Bridge Collapse
Pauly, "The Great Chicago Fire as a National Event"(15 pp.) (R)
Kranakis, "Organizational Culture and the Quebec Bridge Collapse" (32 pp.) (R)

Sept 14 Who Dies, and Who Cares? Class, Gender, and Ethnicity as Dimensions of a Disaster
Miller, "Why Economists Are Wrong About Sweatshops and the Antisweatshop Movement" (R)
Selected news articles on Bangladesh sweatshop collapse (R)
Kalpona Akter excerpt from "Invisible Hands: Voices from the Global Economy" (R)
Excerpts from *The Lowell Offering* (website)
Triangle Shirtwaist Fire Documentary (watch in class)
Triangle Shirtwaist documents, newspaper/website exercise (will be provided in class or on Blackboard) (R)
"The Myth of the Ethical Shopper":
http://highline.huffingtonpost.com/articles/en/the-myth-of-the-ethical-shopper/
Raj M. Desai, "Does the developing world need a welfare state to eliminate poverty? Some insights from history"
http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/future-development/posts/2015/07/30-welfare-developing-world-desai#.VbtR-GOQRcs.twitter

Skim: NYT investigative reporting articles on labor abuse of manicurists:
http://mobile.nytimes.com/2015/05/12/opinion/justice-for-nail-salon-workers.html?_r=0

Sept 21 Dangers of the Industrial West: London Fog
Thorsheim, "Interpreting the London Fog Disaster of 1952" (14 pp.)
Stradling and Thorsheim "Smoke of Great Cities" (22 pp.)
And read:
http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=873954
http://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/history/topics/perspect/london.html
http://www.epa.gov/apti/course422/apc1.html
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/2543875.stm
Picture slideshow of London Smog:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/pop_ups/02/uk_the_great_smog_of_1952/html/1.stm
Smog laws in Hong Kong increase lifespan:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/2502283.stm
Optional:
Pittsburgh's industrial history:http://m.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2013/01/aghast-over-beijings-air-pollution-this-was-pittsburgh-not-that-long-ago/267237/
Browse Pittsburgh Smoke Control Images:
http://digital.library.pitt.edu/images/pittsburgh/smokecontrol.html

Article Exercise in Class: Using different packets of historical newspaper articles from the *Times* of London (which I will provide) you will attempt to figure out what happened during the 1952 London Fog Disaster. Afterward, groups will reconvene and you will exchange narratives to see how your different sources made for narratives that differed between groups.

Sept 28 How To Spin a Disaster: The Challenger Disaster and Windscale
Feynman appendix: http://science.ksc.nasa.gov/shuttle/missions/51-l/docs/rogers-commission/Appendix-F.txt

NASA documents: http://history.nasa.gov/rogersrep/v6exsumm.htm
Editorial, "Windscale Reactor Accident 50 Years On" (4 pp.)
Windscale's later history: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/cumbria/4400443.stm
Cheap energy? Cost of decommissioning: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/4859980.stm
Pros and cons: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/4216302.stm
Fukushima's influence: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-17287740
And look at nuclear accident severity chart:
http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Factsheets/English/ines.pdf
Watch Windscale documentary in class
Assignment: Interpreting a Disaster: Public and Private Knowledge
For October 10th, you will find FIVE historical news articles from the *Times* of London on the Windscale disaster from 1950s-70s. Compare them with what we know today, and look at the speed with which information was (and wasn't) made available at the time. You will write a narrative of what a reasonably informed member of the public would have thought about Windscale, and the safety of nuclear power, on the basis of what you find. Search not only on Windscale, but on nuclear power, nuclear weapons, etc. and narrow down your searches by looking at specific things you found interesting from the documentary. Length: around 800 words. Due by Oct. 10th at 10pm, uploaded to digitalhistorylab.com.

Oct 5   **Urban Renewal**
Watch *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth* documentary in class
Read selections in Public Housing Folder on Blackboard
Final Project assigned: Locate an intractable problem on campus or in Chicago and "design" (envision and describe) a disaster that would help to fix it. Discuss your disaster in detail and explain why it would help bring attention to, and ameliorate the problem you've chosen. Discuss the downsides as well as the upsides of your plan. Is it worth it? How do you decide? Who will get hurt the most? Who will benefit? Give examples from class readings to back up your claims about how your disaster will work and create change. Also give support from newspaper articles describing how similar disasters have "worked" in the past. Length: 9-11 pages. A/V optional. Due on final exam day (which will be set by the registrar).

Oct 12 **Consumer and Worker Protection**
Consumers, Collectives, and Car Safety
Excerpts from Nader, *Unsafe at Any Speed* (R)
Articles on current auto safety controversies:
http://mobile.nytimes.com/2014/11/25/business/woman-cleared-in-death-caused-by-gms-faulty-ignition-switch.html

http://mobile.nytimes.com/2014/11/22/business/gm-bullied-manufacturer-over-poorly-designed-part-email-says.html

Environmental Fears
View in class (if time): "What's motivating Hayes" directed by Jonathan Demme for New Yorker Presents (pilot on Amazon prime, about 10 mins)

Excerpts from Carson, *Silent Spring*
(readings continued below)
"What the World Needs Now is DDT" NYT article:
http://www.nytimes.com/2004/04/11/magazine/what-the-world-needs-now-is-ddt.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm
And read:
http://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/history/topics/epa/15c.html
http://prtl.uhcl.edu/portal/page/portal/EIH/outreach/tfors/history

Brief <u>MIDTERM REVIEW</u> in class

Oct 19 **<u>MIDTERM EXAM</u>**

Oct 26 NO CLASS—Take this opportunity to get a jump on your final projects, and **do the following assignment**: As part of your preparation for your final project, find one scholarly article (not a news article) that relates to the disaster that you plan to "design" in your final paper. Write a brief (5 sentence) description of why you're thinking of using it, what new insight it might hold for the purposes of our class, and one or two discussion questions for the class based on the article. Post your brief essay and a stable link to your article as a comment on www.digitalhistorylab.com no later than **October 28th at 5pm**. I will choose a set of 2-3 articles that go together well and post them on Blackboard for the class to read.

Nov 2 **Your Turn**
Read the articles provided by your classmates that I have posted online (see above)
Discussion based on the assignment above, further discussion about final project if needed.

Nov 9 **Who Cleans Up the Mess?**
Bhopal Articles on Blackboard
Class exercise—Sorting out the facts:
From the perspective of humanitarian group in the UK: http://www.bhopal.org
From Union Carbide's perspective: http://www.bhopal.com
(Also read Union Carbide's historical timeline: http://www.unioncarbide.com/history)
From the perspective of local government: http://www.mp.gov.in/bgtrrdmp/default.htm
Optional: watch *Bhopali* documentary outside of class (check www.canistream.it)

Transnational Recycling, Waste, and Labor
Read Articles from Baltimore Sun on Pulitzer website:
http://www.pulitzer.org/works/1998-Investigative-Reporting
News articles Blackboard on Guangdong Recycling, Foxconn, and Utah data center
Rana Plaza articles on Blackboard from Voices of Witness
Optional: watch *Shipbreakers* of Alang documentary outside of class (check www.canistream.it, or, I will set up a showing in the evening if there is enough interest)

Time for questions about Final Project

Nov 16 **Fukushima and Deepwater Horizon**
Selected articles on Fukushima
http://www.npr.org/2011/04/12/135353240/fukushima-vs-chernobyl-what-does-level-7-mean
http://www.npr.org/2011/06/20/137303620/reports-why-things-fell-apart-at-fukushima-plant
http://www.npr.org/2011/04/12/135324541/cleaning-up-fukushima-a-challenge-to-the-core
http://www.npr.org/2011/07/19/138513212/commission-u-s-must-redefine-nuclear-plant-safety
"Amartya Sen's Capability Approach, Democratic Governance and Japan's Fukushima Disaster" by Sachie Mizohata:
http://japanfocus.org/-Sachie-MIZOHATA/3648

Deepwater Horizon:
NOAA archive: http://response.restoration.noaa.gov/deepwaterhorizon
NOAA current efforts: http://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/
Timeline: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-10656239

Optional: Watch CONTAINMENT documentary outside of class, if it is available:
http://containmentmovie.com/

Time for questions about Final Project

Nov 23 **Thanksgiving Break: NO CLASS**

Nov 30 **Summation/Final Review**
Final Project/Paper due
Finance and Markets: Mortgage-Backed Securities and Complex Financial Tools
Complex tools that outrun our understanding
Before coming to class, listen to NPR podcast "The Giant Pool of Money" (1 hour):
http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/355/the-giant-pool-of-money
Read Ullman, "Errant Code? It's Not Just a Bug" (Knight Capital):
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/09/opinion/after-knight-capital-new-code-for-trades.html?_r=1&hp
"Surveillance laws are being rewritten post-Snowden, but what will really change?"
http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/jun/06/surveillance-privacy-snowden-usa-freedom-act-congress

Final Project due on our final exam day (which will be set by the registrar)

Have a good winter break!