

RELIGIOUS RESPONSES TO DISASTER  
RELS V194-004  
TR 3:30 – 4:45 Marquette 406  
Spring 2007

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**OBJECTIVE:** To explore religious responses to disaster in the context of diverse faiths, with special attention paid to the 2005 Katrina and Rita disaster in New Orleans. A comparative religions approach will be taken with a special emphasis on the collection and study of oral histories. It will be seen that religious worldviews influence the ways that individuals and congregations respond to personal and collective disasters. Students will be encouraged to think critically about different religious responses to disaster and evaluate which ones are most conducive to personal and community resilience and hope.

**Texts:** Lola Vollen and Chris Ying, eds., *Voices from the Storm: The People of New Orleans on Hurricane Katrina and Its Aftermath* (McSweeney's Books, 2006). VOLLEN & YING

CNN Reports, *Katrina: State of Emergency* (Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2005). CNN

Harold G. Koenig, M.D., *In the Wake of Disaster: Religious Responses to Terrorism and Catastrophe* (Templeton Foundation Press, 2006). KOENIG

Harold S. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (Anchor Books, 1981). KUSHNER

Articles on BLACKBOARD, including the chapters of:

Ama Adhe, *The Voice that Remembers: One Woman's Historic Fight to Free Tibet* (Wisdom Publications, 1997). ADHE

Selected student reports on Religious Responses to Katrina and Rita website,  
<<http://www.loyno.edu/~rrkr>>. WEBSITE

Bible. New Revised Standard Version of the Bible is recommended.

T Jan. 9           Introductory class.

R Jan. 11           Oral History Assignment  
VOLLEN & YING: "A Note about Methodology," 231-32.  
Discussion of the oral history assignment.

T Jan. 16           Exploring Katrina  
VOLLEN & YING: "Introduction" and "Life before the Storm," 1-41;  
CNN, "Introduction," and "Prologue," 7-9.

**T Jan. 16, 7:00 – 9:30 p.m., Monroe 157: Showing of "Scared Sacred" (1 hr. 45 min.)**

R Jan. 18           Discussion of "Scared Sacred."

- T Jan. 23      **Reflection paper (15 pts.) on “Scared Sacred” should be turned in. 5 pts. will be deducted from the grade of a late paper.**  
Exploring Katrina, August 27-29, 2005  
 VOLLEN & YING: “Saturday, August 27,” 45-52; “Sunday, August 28,” 53-66; “Monday, August 29,” 67-83.  
 CNN, “Day One, Sunday, August 28, 2005,” 10-17; “Day Two, Monday, August 29, 2005,” 18-29.
- R Jan. 25      **STUDENT SHOULD HAVE SELECTED A CONGREGATION APPROVED BY THE INSTRUCTOR. [See further instructions below.] 5 pts. will be deducted from the grade of the final paper if this deadline is missed.**  
Exploring Katrina, August 30-September 1, 2005  
 VOLLEN & YING: “Tuesday, August 30,” 85-105; “Wednesday, August 31,” 107-16;  
 “Thursday, September 1,” 117-29.  
 CNN, “Day Three, Tuesday, August 30, 2005,” 30-37; “Day Four, Wednesday, August 31, 2005,” 38-55; “Day Five, Thursday, September 1, 2005,” 56-77
- T Jan. 30      Exploring Katrina, September 2-4, 2005  
 VOLLEN & YING: “Friday, September 2,” 131-46; “Saturday, September 3,” 147-52; “Sunday, September 4,” 153-58  
 CNN, “Day Six, Friday, September 2, 2005,” 78-91; “Day Seven, Saturday, September 3, 2005,” 92-105; “Day Eight, Sunday, September 4, 2005,” 106-17.
- R Feb. 1      Exploring Katrina, September 5-14, 2005  
 VOLLEN & YING: “The Week After: Monday, September 5 – Sunday, September 11,” 159-77.  
 CNN, “Day Nine, Monday, September 5, 2005,” 118-27; “Day Ten, Tuesday, September 6, 2005,” 128-39; “Days Eleven-Fourteen, Wednesday-Saturday, September 7-10, 2005,” 140-55.
- T Feb. 6      **BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR THE ORAL HISTORY REPORT SHOULD BE TURNED IN. 5 pts. will be deducted from the grade of the final paper if the bibliography is not turned in on this date.**  
Exploring Katrina, Looking Back  
 VOLLEN & YING, “Weeks after the Storm,” 179-98; “Looking Back,” 199-229; “Appendices,” 233-81.  
 CNN, “Unraveling Katrina,” 156-75; “The Numbers,” 176.
- R Feb. 8      VIDEO: “Hexing a Hurricane” (45 min.)
- T Feb. 13      QUIZ #1: Exploring Katrina  
Psychological and Religious Responses to Disaster; Government Responses to Disaster  
 KOENIG: “Psychological and Spiritual Consequences of Disasters,” 1-12; “Religion and Coping with Stress and Disaster,” 29-42; “National, State, and Local Disaster Planning and Response,” 13-27
- R Feb. 15      Organized Faith-Based Responses to Disaster  
 KOENIG: “The Faith Community’s Role during Disaster,” 43-53; “Faith-Based Organizations Involved in Disaster Response,” 55-73; “Preparing Faith Communities for Disaster,” 83-96.
- T Feb. 20      OFF – MARDI GRAS BREAK
- R Feb. 22      OFF – MARDI GRAS BREAK
- T Feb. 27      QUIZ #2: Individual and Community Religious Responses to Disaster  
Katrina and Theodicy  
 BLACKBOARD: Selwyn Crawford, “Storms as Wrath of God?” (*Dallas Morning News*); Peter Steinfelds, “Scarcely Heard Question: How God Could Have Allowed Catastrophe to Occur” (*New*

*York Times*); Michael Eric Dyson, "Supernatural Disasters? Theodicy and Prophetic Faith," 179-243.

Theodicy in the New Testament

BIBLE: Romans 8:28; Luke 13:4-5; Matthew 5:45; Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 2:9; II Timothy 2:11; I Peter 4:13; Colossians 1:24.

- R Mar. 1 Katrina and Theology in Action  
BLACKBOARD: Paul Blom, "Recovery and Renewal: The Body of Christ Organizes for Recovery," 61-77, and "Resurrection and New Life: The Body of Christ Reaches Out and Rebuilds," 79-90 [on activities of Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregations].  
WEBSITE: Anna Toujas, "Being the Hand of God: Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans and Hurricane Katrina"; Gavin Finnegan, "Masjid Abu-Bakr al Siddiq: Rebuilding New Orleans on a Foundation of Faith."  
DVD: "Trying to Get Home" (30 min.) [On the recovery work of St. Paul Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod) and Lutherans from Minnesota.]
- T Mar. 6 QUIZ #3: Katrina, Theodicy and Theology  
MID-TERM EXAM
- R Mar. 8 **FIRST DRAFT OF ORAL HISTORY PAPER DUE. This paper is worth 20 pts. 5 pts. will be deducted from its grade if it is turned in late.**  
Religious Responses in the Disaster Prone Environment  
BLACKBOARD: Michael Barkun, "The Disaster-Prone Environment," 62-90.  
BLACKBOARD: Christine Steyn, "Millenarian Tragedies in South Africa," The Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement and the Bulhoek Massacre," 185-202.
- (F Mar. 9 Mid-Term Grades Due)
- T Mar. 13 QUIZ #4: Religious Responses in the Disaster Prone Environment  
Jewish Perspectives: When Bad Things Happen to Good People  
KUSHNER: "Why I Wrote This Book," 3-8; "Why Do the Righteous Suffer?" 9-35; "The Story of a Man Named Job," 36-52.  
BIBLE: Deuteronomy 27-28; Joshua 24: 14-28; 1 Samuel 12; 2 Kings 17: 7-23; Job.
- R Mar. 15 No class
- T Mar. 20 A Jewish Perspective: When Bad Things Happen to Good People  
KUSHNER: "Sometimes There Is No Reason," 53-63; "No Exceptions for Nice People," 64-80; "God Leaves Us Room to Be Human," 81-96.
- R Mar. 22 A Jewish Perspective: When Bad Things Happen to Good People  
KUSHNER: "God Helps Those Who Stop Hurting Themselves," 97-124; "God Can't Do Everything But He Can Do Some Important Things," 125-44; "What Good, Then, Is Religion?" 145-62.
- T Mar. 27 QUIZ #5: Jewish Perspectives: When Bad Things Happen to Good People  
A Buddhist Perspective on Disaster  
ADHE: "Appendix: Historical Summary," 237-44; His Holiness the Dalai Lama, "Foreword," vii; "Preface," ix-xiii; "Part One: Before the Years of Sorrow," 3-37.
- R Mar. 29 A Buddhist Perspective on Disaster  
ADHE: "Part Two: Invasion and Imprisonment," 41-129.  
VIDEO: "Satya: A Prayer for the Enemy" (30 min.)
- T Apr. 3 OFF – SPRING BREAK

R Apr. 5	OFF – SPRING BREAK
T Apr. 10	<u>A Buddhist Perspective on Disaster</u> ADHE: “Part Three: Lotus in the Lake,” 133-79.
R Apr. 12	QUIZ #6: A Buddhist Perspective on Disaster <u>A Buddhist Perspective on Disaster</u> ADHE: “An Unstilled Voice,” 183-235.
T Apr. 17	No Class
R Apr. 19	No Class
T Apr. 24	<b>FINAL REPORT DUE. This report is worth 30 pts. 5 pts. will be deducted from the grade of this paper if both a hard copy and electronic file are not turned in by this date.</b> <u>Student Reports</u>
R Apr. 26	<u>Student Reports</u>
T May 1	<u>Student Reports and Review for Exam</u>
FINAL EXAM	Tuesday, May 8, 2:00 – 4:00

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Course Scale and Grading Scale

The final grade is based on a 200-point scale broken down as follows.

- 30 pts. Class attendance and participation in class discussions
- 20 pts. Participation on Course Discussion Board
- 15 pts. Reflection paper on movie, “Scared Sacred” (2 hrs.), shown outside of class
- 30 pts. Mid-Term Exam
- 30 pts. Final Exam
- 20 pts. First Draft of Oral History Report
- 30 pts. Final Draft of Oral History Report
- 25 pts. Five 5-point true-false quizzes on the reading assignments

The grading scale follows:

- A 90-100%
- B 80-89.5%
- C 70-79.5%
- D 60-69.5%
- F 59.5% or below

### Class Attendance and Class Discussion

Class attendance and participation in class discussions will be graded: 15 pts. before the Mid-Term, and 15 pts. after the Mid-Term. Participation in class discussion is very important for this course. The student should have read each assignment thoroughly before class and be prepared to discuss the issues related to the readings. The instructor will be looking to see if students’ comments reflect that they have read the assignments and have thought about them. Regular attendance is counted in this grade. Missing classes and sitting silently in class will adversely affect this portion of the grade.

## **Participation on the Discussion Board in the Course Blackboard**

Participation on the Discussion Board will count for a total of 20 pts.: 10 pts. before the Mid-Term and 10 pts. after the Mid-Term. Students are encouraged to post news articles and URLs for relevant websites, and to initiate their own threads for discussion. The instructor will read all postings and evaluate them for the thoughtfulness of their content. A superficial comment for the sake of posting a message will not be given the same weight as a thoughtful comment. To get full credit for this portion of the grade, the student needs to post at least two thoughtful comments a week. Comments posted a week or more later will not be counted for the week in question. Students should plan to log in twice each week, read the other students' comments, and contribute to the overall discussion between students and the instructor.

## **Reflection Paper on the Movie "Scared Sacred" Shown Outside of Class**

A movie by Velcrow Ripper entitled "Scared Sacred" (1 hr. 45 min.), which examines religious responses from diverse faith perspectives to disasters in different parts of the world, will be shown outside of class. Students will be given instructions for writing a reflection paper on the movie. The papers will be graded. A maximum of 15 pts. can be earned by thoughtful reflection papers.

If students are unable to attend the evening showing of the movie, the DVD will be on reserve in the library. **The reflection paper is due on January 23, typed and double-spaced.** If the paper is late, 5 pts. will be deducted from the grade of the paper.

## **Exams**

A Mid-Term and a Final Exam will be given, each counting 30 pts. toward the final grade. The exams will consist of one or more essay questions, which will be given to students in advance.

Make-up Exams will be given only in the case of a severe illness or a family emergency. In either case, the instructor should be informed at once.

## **True-False Quizzes**

A total of six true-false quizzes will be given on the reading assignments. Each quiz will consist of 10 true-false statements counting .5 pt. each, for a total of 5 pts. At the end of the semester the quiz with the lowest score will be dropped, leaving five quizzes counting a possible total of 25 pts.

There will be no make-up quizzes. If a quiz is missed, that will be the one that is dropped. Subsequent missed quizzes will diminish the final grade by 5 pts.

For the student's convenience the approximate dates for the quizzes are given on the syllabus. These dates may be changed by the instructor. The student is responsible for knowing the date for a quiz, even if the announcement was made in a class that the student missed.

## **Oral History Report**

One-quarter of the final grade is allotted to the reports reflecting the student's field research on the religious responses to Katrina in a selected congregation. The report should be 10 to 12-pages, typed and double-spaced. 20 pts. may be earned for the first draft of the paper; 30 pts. may be earned for the final report. Final reports that are in excellent condition will be put on the Religious Responses to Katrina and Rita website at <http://www.loyno.edu/~rrkr>.

The oral history reports should focus on the impact of Katrina (and possibly Rita) on the congregation and its members, and the individual and congregational responses to the disaster. Research should be done on the history of the denomination or religion; the group's theology, beliefs, and practices; the history of the specific congregation; the impact of Katrina and Rita on the congregation and its members; and what the members and the congregation are

doing in response and how they relate their responses to their faith. At least three interviews should be conducted with members of the congregation, including its leader or minister.

It will be important for students to select a congregation, check with the leader or minister to see if permission is given for research in that congregation, and begin attending services, visiting the congregation at various times and interviewing the leader/minister and at least two other members early in the semester. The first draft of the paper, which is due right after the Mid-Term Exam, should be in the best possible condition, with citations given correctly according to the Term Paper Checklist, no typographical errors, good organization and writing, and thoughtful analysis. The first draft of the paper will be graded on a 20 pt. scale, and returned to the student with comments on how it can be improved.

The student will have the rest of the semester to finalize the paper by doing further research by reading or visiting the congregation and interviewing members, correcting typographical errors and incorrect citations. The final paper is expected to be in excellent shape. The final paper, due at the end of the semester, will be graded on a 30 pt. scale.

The last three classes of the semester will be devoted to student reports on their oral history research. These oral reports will be counted as part of the discussion and attendance grade.

The first draft and the final report should be turned in by the specified dates: 5 pts. will be deducted from the final grade of the paper for each missed deadline.

The final report should be delivered to the instructor in the form of a hard copy and the electronic file uploaded to Blackboard by the specified date. If the paper is not turned in on time in both hard copy and electronic formats, 5 pts. will be deducted from the paper's final grade.

**The student should note the following deadlines relevant to the Oral History Report. 5 pts. will be deducted from the paper's grade if any of these deadlines is missed.**

- Jan. 25**            **The congregation for the oral history research should have been selected by the student. This will involve a prior visit to the congregation, and speaking with the leader/minister to get permission for the research. 5 pts. will be deducted from the final grade of the paper if the student does not report to the instructor by this date the congregation he or she will be researching. Only one student will be permitted to research any given congregation.**
- Feb. 6**             **The typed term paper bibliography should be turned in. The bibliography should include sources on the history of the religion/denomination, sources on the history of the congregation, and an indication of which members will be interviewed. The bibliography will not be graded. It will be returned to the student with the instructor's comments. 5 pts. will be deducted from the grade of the final paper if the bibliography is turned in late.**
- Mar. 8**             **The FIRST DRAFT of the report is due, typed, double-spaced. This paper should be in as good a condition as the student can make it by the mid-term point. It is worth 20 pts. and will be graded. The instructor will return the first draft to the students with comments for improving the report. 5 pts. will be deducted from the grade of the first draft if it is turned in late.**
- Apr. 24**           **FINAL REPORT is due, typed, double-spaced. This report is worth 30 pts. It should be in perfect condition. It will be graded. The final report should be delivered to the instructor in hard copy and electronic file uploaded to the Blackboard drop box on this date. 5 pts. will be deducted from the grade of the paper if both of these formats are turned in late.**

