CAPSTONE SEMINAR ON HISTORICAL RESEARCH: 
NATURAL DISASTERS IN WORLD HISTORY

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
As the capstone course for history majors at San Diego State University, this course prepares you to write an 20-page scholarly research paper based on original research in primary sources. Student papers will formulate and answer a significant question about how people from a particular time period and culture responded to, explained, described, survived, made use of, remembered, and/or drew meaning from a major catastrophe such as a famine, plague, earthquake, flood, or fire. In the first unit of the course, the class will read, discuss, and analyze in writing important scholarly studies of major disasters in the nineteenth and twentieth century world. Those readings will introduce you to different types of primary sources and to diverse scholarly approaches -- ranging from demographic analysis and gender studies to cultural, political, oral, and environmental history -- that will serve as models for your own research. In the second unit of the course each person will select a particular natural disaster to research, and a realistic and appropriate research question to focus on. After demonstrating how your research question draws on and contributes to scholarship on your topic, you will locate relevant primary sources (such as letters, diaries, memoirs, poems, census statistics, newspaper reports, oral histories, photographs, relief agency records, and disaster memorials) on the disaster selected, and analyze them to write an 18-20 page paper on a well-defined historical question. Major disasters from any region and time period are acceptable as long as sufficient primary and secondary sources on that event are available. Throughout the course, you will work on recognizing and making use of appropriate scholarly approaches, framing a research question in the context of an academic literature, locating and analyzing primary sources, building a historical argument, and improving their academic writing.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:
1. History majors will recognize and evaluate different scholarly approaches to famines and other natural disasters.
2. History majors will develop a realistic and significant research question.
3. History majors will place their research question within an appropriate body of scholarship on their topic of research.
4. History majors will locate and analyze different primary sources on their topic.
5. History majors will cite all sources using Chicago-style footnotes or endnotes.
6. History majors will build a historical argument and support it with ample primary and secondary-source evidence.
7. History majors will strengthen their academic writing.
COURSE FORMAT:
Because this is a seminar rather than a lecture-course, each class will be devoted to discussion of assigned readings, peer review activities, and student presentations. On specified weeks we will not meet as a group for the full session, but you will be required to consult with me individually about your research and writing.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
- Attendance and Participation 10%  - Primary Source Analysis 10%
- Discussion Papers 20%  - Oral Presentation & Outline 10%
- Proposal and Bibliography 10%  - Final Paper 30%
- Introduction and Historiographical Overview 10%

1. Class Participation - 10% of total grade
   a. Regular attendance: Discussion is a vital component of a seminar course, so attending class is crucial. You cannot participate in discussions and peer review if you are not present. Moreover, we will meet together only 12 times during the semester, so you are expected to attend EVERY class. I will accept written documentation for a legitimate reason (illness or emergency) for ONE absence. Every absence after the first one lowers your participation score by one full grade. This means that 2 absences will lower your class participation grade to an 80%, 3 to a 70%, and so on.
   b. Active Participation: - Your active participation is vital to this course. Discussion and analysis of primary and secondary source readings is a crucial part of H450. To receive full credit for participation, you must complete the assigned reading before class, bring the assigned readings to class for each discussion, contribute constructively to the discussions on a regular basis, listen to your colleagues’ presentations and comments, and prepare adequately for your own presentations.

2. Five Weekly Discussion Papers – 20% of total grade
To ensure that you complete course readings prior to the day for which they are assigned and arrive in class ready to discuss and analyze those readings, during the first unit of the course each week you will turn in a typed discussion paper based on specific questions posted on blackboard that week. Please number your responses.
   - The questions for each discussion paper will be posted on blackboard a week before the paper is due. Answers to each week’s reading questions should be approximately 3-4 pages in length, double-spaced, and typed in 11 or 12 size font with standard margins.
   - Discussion papers are due at the beginning of class. You will write a total of 5 papers.
   - For students who submit all 5 papers, I will drop the lowest scoring paper. If you do not submit all 5, you will receive a zero on the missing paper – that zero will NOT be dropped from your DP total.
   - The papers due on 2/15 and 2/29 include questions based on the secondary or primary source you are required to order and bring to class for those sessions, so plan ahead.
   - Your typed answers should be thoughtful, based on the readings, and written in full sentences. I will grade on both grammar and content. All papers must be typed.
   - You must cite your sources after each paragraph and quote. Use Chicago-style footnotes.
   - Since a key goal of these discussion papers is to help you prepare for class discussions, late papers will not be accepted.
3. Paper Proposal and Bibliography – 10% of total grade
This assignment is due on Monday, March 14th. It consists of 2 parts, and should be roughly 3 typed pages in length. **No late papers accepted.**

**1. Your proposal** (roughly 2 pages in length) should be written in essay form and must include the following components:
   - **a.** Introduce your topic and research question. Begin by describing the broad context of your topic, and narrow it down to the specific subject(s), location, and time period you will research. Then state what your major research question is, and your tentative hypothesis about that question.
   - **b.** Describe the significance of your topic and question. Explain why this topic and question interests you. Then introduce between 2 and 4 key authors who have written about your topic. How might your focus build upon and contribute to their work? What new perspectives do you hope to offer?
   - **c.** What historical approach or method will you employ in your research? Here I suggest that you draw on one or more of the approaches used in the famine readings assigned for the first unit of the course.

**2. Your bibliography** (roughly 1 page) should list at least 10 primary and secondary sources relevant to your topic. **List primary and secondary sources separately**, under A and B. **Give full citation information** for all sources, and use Chicago style to do so. Internet sources are acceptable if they contain primary sources and come from an academic or government website.
   - **A.** List at least 5 secondary sources on your topic that you intend to use.
   - **B.** List at least 5 specific primary sources on your topic that you intend to use.
   **NOTE:** You will NOT get credit for listing only the name of a newspaper, source collection, or archive you plan to use. Instead, you must give the title, date, and page numbers of the particular newspaper article, selection in a primary source collection, or archival document you intend to use.

4. Formal Introduction and Historiographical Overview – 10% of total grade.
- This assignment is due at the beginning of class on Monday, April 4th. **No late papers accepted.** Your formal introduction to your term paper should be roughly 2 pages in length, and the historiographical overview of how 3-5 key secondary sources have approached your topic should be roughly 3 pages in length, for a total of 5 full pages.
- In class on 4/7, students will conduct peer reviews of each other’s work in small groups. **Therefore, bring FOUR copies of this assignment for in-class peer review.**

5. Primary Source Analysis – 10% of total grade
Submit your Primary Source Analysis is due in class on Monday, April 14th. **No late papers accepted.** Your paper should be 5-6 pages in length. In it you will analyze how between 3 and 5 of your key primary sources address your historical question. During class students will conduct peer reviews of each other’s work in small groups. **Therefore, bring FOUR copies of this assignment for in-class peer review.**

6. Oral Presentation (10 minutes) and Outline – 10% of total grade
- On 4/25 and 5/2, each student will give a formal oral presentation of the major arguments put forward by his or her term paper. Each presentation must begin with a
typed outline showing the planned organization of the paper. View the outline as a “roadmap” of your paper that shows your audience where you will start and end, and what you will pass along the way. Submit a hard copy of your outline to me as well. Each presentation should be 10 minutes in length. It should be well-organized and concise.

7. Term Paper – 30% of total grade.
The hard copy of your term paper is due on Monday, May 9th at 4:00pm (the final exam time slot for H-450) in our classroom. The body of your paper should be no shorter than 18 full pages and no longer than 20 full pages in length (the title page and bibliography will not be counted in this total). You must submit a hard copy of your paper directly to me on 5/9. Before accepting your paper that day, I will check to see that it includes correct Chicago-style citations, a formal bibliography, and page numbers. **You must ALSO upload an electronic copy of your paper to turnitin.com via Blackboard by or before 3:45pm on 5/9. No late papers will be accepted.**

**Staple your approved paper proposal (with my comments on it) to the back of your term paper. I will be looking to see that you integrated the suggestions provided on your proposal.**

**PLAGIARISM POLICY:** Students who cheat or plagiarize on any exam or paper will receive a zero on that assignment, and I will formally document the incident in an Academic Dishonesty Incident Report. Academic integrity is expected of every student. Students must not plagiarize the work of others. This means that if you quote from any work (including internet sites), you must put quotation marks around that material, and you must cite it in full in a parenthetical citation. Plagiarism also includes using someone else’s phrases, strings of words, special terms, or ideas and interpretations without citing your source, even if you have not quoted directly from that source. In short, you must give credit where it is due. Please read the SDSU Catalog’s definitions of cheating and plagiarism printed below. If you have doubts, feel free to come and ask me. I also recommend that you take the 30 minute online plagiarism tutorial titled “SDSU Plagiarism: The crime of intellectual property” by SDSU librarian Pamela Jackson, at http://infotutor.sdsu.edu/plagiarism/index.cfm

**TURNITIN.COM:** In this course you are required to upload your term paper through Turnitin.com, accessed through the Blackboard site for this course. In order to detect plagiarism, Turnitin.com checks submitted papers against a large data-based of previously submitted student papers, library databases and publications, and over 20 billion web pages. If you remain registered in this class, you will be considered as having given your permission to have your papers included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. You may remove your name and any other personally identifying information from your paper prior to submitting it to Turnitin.com via Blackboard.

- Please use Mozilla Firefox to access Blackboard (NOT Internet explorer).
What file formats does Turnitin support? Turnitin supports Microsoft Word (.doc & .docx), PDF, HTML, and WordPerfect. Note: Turnitin does not accept PowerPoint files, media files, or a document with only images.

If you haven’t used Blackboard or turnitin.com, there is a good online tutorial available to students at http://turnitin.com/en_us/training/student-training. You’ll need to know how to upload your paper. If you need more instruction on Turnitin, consult the ITS Turnitin resource page at: http://its.sdsu.edu/tech/plagiarism.html, visit the Student Computing Help Desk in Love Library 220, or call the Help Desk at 619-594-3189.

Course Readings:

Required Books: The following books are available at KB Books at 5187 College Avenue (Tel. 619-287-2665), and at Aztec. I strongly encourage you to purchase both books because it will be very useful to have your own copies to refer to for course assignments and class discussions. If you are unable to purchase them, however, you will find a copy of Brundage on reserve at the SDSU library, and can access an electronic copy of Booth via the SDSU library.


3. All other required readings will either be posted on Blackboard (BB), or are journal articles accessible via the SDSU library website. **Be sure to print out the Blackboard readings and journal articles assigned for a given week and bring them to class for use during discussion.**

Required readings on Blackboard:


Required Journal articles to access via SDSU library website:

-Kathryn Edgerton-Tarpley, “Family and Gender in Famine: Cultural Responses to Disaster in North China, 1876-1879,” *Journal of Women’s History* 16.4 (2004): 119-147;

Recommended Sources:


2. If you do not purchase Turabian’s manual, be sure to consult the following web pages, which give examples of how to use Chicago style citations. Start with the Writing
Guides on the SDSU History Department website. The Writing Guides include a section on how to use Chicago style for citations:
http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~histweb/writing_guides.htm
See also:
http://junoconcordia.ca/faqs/turabian.html

Course Outline:

UNIT I: THE CRAFT OF RESEARCH: APPROACHES, SOURCES, TOPICS,
AND ARGUMENTATION IN SCHOLARSHIP ON FAMINE

Week 1: Mon. January 25th
INTRODUCTION: Writing History; Writing Famine

Week 2: Mon. Feb. 1st
TOPICS: Changing Interpretations of the Past; Different Approaches to the Study of Disasters
READING: Brundage chapters 1 and 5; Blackboard (BB): Ted Steinberg, Acts of God: The Unnatural History of Natural Disaster in America, pp. xv-xxiii (introduction); Edgerton-Tarpley, Tears from Iron: Cultural Responses to Famine in Nineteenth-Century China, pp. 1-12.
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Discussion Paper 1

Week 3: Mon. Feb. 8th
LIBRARY VISIT (Library Addition 76 (basement) -- 4:00-5:15pm – meet at top of stairs under library dome at 4:00pm).
TOPICS: Getting Started: Secondary Sources; Famine Causation and Demography
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Discussion Paper 2
** Practicing what was learned: After our 2/8 class, use a tool introduced during the library visit to search for and ORDER (via Circuit) a scholarly secondary source book not available at SDSU that concerns a disaster you may select for your paper. **Order it by Wednesday 2/10 to ensure that you’ll have it to bring to class on 2/15.

Week 4: Mon. Feb. 15th
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS SESSION (4:00-5:15pm – meet at top of stairs under library dome at 3:55pm)
TOPICS: Introduce your secondary source ordered via Circuit (Bring it to class);
- Digging in: Primary Sources;
- Experiencing and Responding to Disaster

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Discussion Paper 3  **Part of DP 3 concerns the scholarly book you were required to order via Circuit, so be sure to order it by Wed. 2/10 to ensure that it arrives in time for you to use it. Bring your Circuit book and slip to class.

Week 4, continued: *Sign-up for required individual meetings (weeks 5-7) to discuss your paper topic, question, and sources. Arrive at your scheduled meeting with me with a one-page typed overview that identifies your possible paper topic, raises two possible research questions about that topic, and lists at least 2 primary sources and 2 secondary sources on that topic.

*Practicing what was learned.  Make an appointment at Special Collections, or use WorldCat to find and order a PRIMARY SOURCE from the disaster you are considering. Bring it to class on 2/29 to share with the class. Allow time to order a great source via InterLibrary Loan (ILL) if necessary.

Week 5: Mon. Feb. 22nd
TOPIEKS:
Choosing a Topic and Raising a Research Question;
Winners and Losers: Gender, Class, and Race during Disasters
READING: The Craft of Research, Part I, prologue and chapter 1, Part II – all;
Kathryn Edgerton-Tarpley, “Family and Gender in Famine: Cultural Responses to Disaster in North China, 1876-1879,” Journal of Women’s History 16.4 (2004): 119-147;
(Access the Edgerton-Tarpley article via SDSU library website – type in journal title in “Articles & Journals,” and then find the specific article. I posted a scanned copy of Backwater Blues on Blackboard, but it is not terribly clear. An e-book copy is available via the SDSU library system).
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Discussion Paper 4; Individual meetings during my OH.
   *REMEMBER: If you haven’t already done so, find/order a PRIMARY SOURCE related to your possible topic in time to make use of it next week (2/29).

Week 6: Mon. Feb. 29th
TOPIEKS:  Discussing the Primary Sources Brought to Class;
Making and Supporting an Argument and Choosing Evidence;
Legacy of Disaster: Remembering and Forgetting; Environmental Impacts
READING: The Craft of Research, part III and chapter 16;
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Discussion Paper 5. **Part of DP 5 concerns the primary source you were required to find or order after our 2/15 session. Be sure to bring your primary source to class on 2/29.

Week 7: Mon. March 7th

Required Individual consultations with me during class time. You are required to meet with me in person before submitting your paper proposal.

*To receive class participation points, bring the following with you to your consultation: A one-page typed overview that identifies your possible paper topic, raises two possible research questions about that topic, and lists at least 2 primary sources and 2 secondary sources on that topic. In other words, show that you have thought about your topic and have done some basic research on it.

UNIT 2: RESEARCH, WRITING, AND PEER-REVIEW

Mon. March 14th

TOPIC: Discuss Proposals and Bibliographies with the class.
READING: Review Craft of Research Part II before submitting proposal.
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Submit formal paper proposal and bibliography in class.

Week 8: Mon. March 21

Research day; no class. Please spend this time reading good secondary sources about your topic and searching for and sifting through a wide range of primary sources concerning your topic in preparation for the assignments due after spring break. I will hold extended office hours from 3:00-6:00pm on 3/21 for those of you who want to discuss your introduction and historiographical overview before submitting it on 4/4.

SPRING BREAK (March 28th-April 1st)

Week 9: Mon. April 4th

TOPIC: Presentation and Peer-Review of Introduction and historiographical overview.
READING: Review Craft of Research, chapter 16; Brundage, chapter 5.
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Submit formal introduction to your paper and brief historiographical overview of how key secondary sources have approached your topic. Bring FOUR copies of this assignment for in-class peer review. *Sign up for required individual meetings on 4/21.

Week 10: Mon. April 11th

TOPIC: Discussion and Peer-Review of Primary Source Analysis assignment.
READING: Review Brundage chapter 6 before writing your analysis.
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Submit primary source analysis in class. Bring FOUR copies of this assignment for in-class peer review.

Week 11: Mon. April 18th

Required individual meetings with professor to discuss primary source analysis assignment and overall progress on the paper. Students will sign up ahead of time for a 10-minute time slot between 2:30pm and 6:30pm on 4/18.
Week 12: Mon. April 25th
TOPIC: Student Presentations 1-7: Each student will give a formal oral presentation (10 minutes) of his or her term paper. Each presentation must begin with a typed outline showing the proposed organization of the paper.
READING: Craft of Research parts IV and V.
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Typed outline and oral presentation (students 1-7)

Week 13: Mon. May 2nd
Student Presentations 8-14: Each student will give a formal oral presentation (10 minutes) of his or her term paper. Each presentation must begin with a typed outline showing the proposed organization of the paper.
READING: Review Craft of Research parts IV and V.
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Typed outline and oral presentation (students 8-14)

The hard copy of your term paper is due on Monday, May 9th at 4:00pm (the final exam time slot for H-450) in our classroom. Before accepting your paper that day, I will check to see that it includes correct Chicago-style citations, a formal bibliography, and page numbers, and a copy of your accepted paper proposal. You must ALSO upload an electronic copy of your paper to turnitin.com via Blackboard by or before 3:45pm on 5/9. No late papers will be accepted.
WRITING TIPS:

ABBREVIATIONS:
I will use several abbreviations when grading your papers. Here is my abbreviation “code.”

TS: Topic sentence needed  CON: Conclusion needed
EV: Lack of concrete evidence  UC: Unclear, needs further explanation
FR: Sentence fragment  RO: Run-on sentence
TRANS: Insert a transition  IC: Improper citation
AWK: Awkward wording; rephrase  SPA: Subject-Pronoun agreement error
VT: Verb tense: keep verb tense consistent  SVA: Subject-Verb agreement error
ILLOG: Illogical. The sentence/idea does not logically follow from the previous one.

I will mark all grammatical errors in your first few weekly papers. It is up to you to take note of the stylistic errors you made and refrain from repeating them in later assignments. Here is a list of the most common errors I see in student writing assignments. Please seek to avoid them.

a. Subject-Pronoun agreement errors, such as:
   Incorrect: “China is a large country. They have 1.3 billion people.
   Correct: China is a large country. It has about 1.3 billion people. OR: There are 1.3 billion Chinese people. They are concerned about overpopulation.

b. Use of it’s instead of its (it’s = it is)

c. Incorrect use of their, there, and they’re
d. Subject-Verb agreement errors.
e. Confusion over when to use effect (noun) versus affect (verb). Example: What effect did the 9/11 attacks have on the U.S.? The attacks affected America’s economy and political landscape in complex ways.
f. Incorrect use of two, to, and too

g. Confusion over when to use an apostrophe
h. Incorrect use of commas versus semicolons versus colons
   i. Gandhi, not “Ghandi” or “Ghandhi”
k. Oppressed pheasants instead of peasants
l. Sentence fragments and run-on sentences
m. Frequent changing of verb tense in the same paragraph or even the same sentence. Choose a tense and stick with it. As a general rule, write in the past tense when discussing past events.
n. Lack of or incorrect use of citations. You must use Chicago style footnotes or endnotes for your papers for H-450W.

**For detailed guidance on how to write a history paper and for specific examples of the proper use of Chicago style footnotes or endnotes, please see the Writing Guides listed on the SDSU History Department’s website, found at: http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/histweb/index.htm**