
Economics 5252

From Disaster Relief to Sustainable Development

Main Purpose

To explore, seek to understand and to encourage follow-up research into 'lessons from experiences' regarding disasters, disaster prevention, relief, recovery and sustainable development.

General Approach

While particular attention will be paid to insights that can be acquired from the work of economists (including back to Keynes and his *Economic Consequences of the Peace*, 1919, and *The General Theory of Employment*, 1936, to such present day writings as by Mark Carney, *Value(s): Building a Better World for All* (2021), the importance of ideas from across disciplines will always be emphasized as well.

Experiences and lessons from a variety of institutions will be drawn upon -including from the World Bank (e.g. *Natural Hazards, Unnatural Disasters: The Economics of Effective Prevention*, Washington, 2010); OXFAM (e.g. Oxfam: *The First 50 Years*. Oxford University Press, 1992) and The Red Cross (e.g. Caroline Moorehead, *Dunant's Dream*, London and Harper, 1998) and UNESCO (*World Social Sciences reports*) and (routinely) such papers as *The Economist* (e.g. June 2025 on *American Disorder*)

Weekly Class Sessions

(1) Workshops.

Active participation by members of the class will be encouraged, especially through the use of workshops (e.g. themes will include 'Ethics, Recovery, Development and Peacebuilding'. [This was originally used at the Military College in Romania]; 'Towards a Green Plan for the Red Cross', [initially designed for the International Federation of Red Crescent Societies, following the UN Conference on the Environment in Brazil]; 'Projects in Support of Responsible Ocean Governance' (2025) [for International Ocean Institute Workshops]; 'The University as a Partner in Relief with Development', written for the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada- and later (2025) much revised for a forthcoming book by that title. A new document in-the-making, 'Rethinking Relief and Development for Atlantic Canada' [2025], could be a chance for you to make a local contribution to public policy today -not least as Canada explores future options, following Trump's chaotic arrival back on scene.

(2) Review Discussions of Suggested Readings

Prior to most class sessions, particular articles, book chapters, etc. will be made available for your review/discussion purposes (e.g. only for some initial examples:

- *The Social Sciences, Disasters and Relief Aid* (Unesco, World Social Sciences Report, 1999);
- *Resettlement* ('Uprooting and Rebuilding Communities in Newfoundland and Labrador': extract from book edited by Isabelle Côté and Yolande Rottie-Sherman', 2020).
- *On Issues and Initiatives: The International Red Cross in Times of Duress and Ambiguity* (Canadian Peacekeeping Press, 2004)...[A 2026 edition awaits your research?]

(3) Visiting Guest Speakers

Guest speakers (always with practical field experiences) will periodically be invited guests to this class to share some of their insights. Some films and other materials will also be drawn upon.

(4) Emergency Management Organizations

This class has frequently been privileged to hold a special session at Nova Scotia's EMO headquarters in Dartmouth, hosted by the EMO director. It is anticipated we will also hold one this term.

(5) *Projects in Search of Relief with Development*, (Ian McAllister, Linus Learning, New York, 2016).

This book will be on reserve at the Killam Library and copies will be available at the Dalhousie Bookstore in the S.U.B.

The book includes a variety of discussion questions, some case studies that will be drawn upon in class sessions (e.g. Nepal earthquake of 2015, insights from the World Bank on natural disasters in Bangladesh, reflections by the International Committee of the Red Cross on experiences in Somalia). It is accompanied by a 2025 workshop -for your use.

The book also takes the reader to important readings, as by Anderson and Woodrow, *Rising from the Ashes* [indeed this course evolved from some of their research shared at a Harvard workshop held in Geneva].

(6) Over the term, a series of planning frameworks will be introduced (many of which are also discussed in *Projects in Search of Relief with Development*, but not all).

They will include:

- Capacities and Vulnerabilities Analysis; (Harvard Studies)
- Social Cost-Benefit Analysis; (World Bank experiences)
- The structure of Five-Year Development Plans (World Bank and some Ghana examples)
- Emergency Management Frameworks [EMO]
- Stages of Economic Growth (from Walt Rostow to Mark Carney in the context of Canada today) [How do governments really develop 'strategic plans' and compare their situations on the world stage].

What will you, course members, be invited to do?

A/ 1. You are asked to read diligently a variety of papers, book chapters, etc, and:

2. To share some of your own experiences relevant to the course subjects and also to provide help to any of your colleagues in the class who may need your encouragement and advice. You are asked to

participate in the workshops -but do not be overwhelmed; quite often there are really no clear answers to some of the discussion questions.

B/ 1. You are asked to write at least one book review -as for a journal/professional magazine/paper. The book need not be very recent: it is important that you believe you would benefit from reviewing the particular work you select. They might well come from books suggested in *Projects in Search of Relief with Development*, but that is not required. It could well be a book that has just been published.

2. You are asked to write brief critiques on all or some of the class sessions -for your own follow-up use and to share if you wish to. Some previous examples will be shown to you.

3. You are asked to review and critique at least two course workshops. e.g. 'Ethics, economics, peacekeeping and development';...'The University as a Partner in Relief and Sustainable Development';... 'Possible insights from Romania for recovery programs for Ukraine';... 'Rethinking development for Atlantic Canada in 2025';... 'Projects in Support of Responsible Ocean Governance'.

4. You are asked to read about, perhaps make direct contact with an agency (government, UN, volunteer agency, e.g. Red Cross/Oxfam, etc.) and write a brief review of what you learned from the process... [you might well find that this leads to a job opening for you, or initiates a thesis topic?]

5. Write a careful review of Projects in Search of Relief with Development, including suggestions you might make for a second edition that is now in-the-making.

C/ You might already be writing a thesis (or even a book) on a subject that connects with this course. If that is the case, then please discuss it with me (Ian McAllister) and the requirements for you could be carefully adjusted (within the overall course framework).

[D/ A written exam (plus a follow-up interview) could also be arranged as an alternative to item B, should suggestions (in B) prove to be not possible for you. However, you would probably learn more from following the suggestions in B.]