

UCSD - Ethnic Studies 87 – Freshman Seminar – Fall 2008

The Racial & Natural(ized) Disasters

Prof. Denise Ferreira da Silva

Meetings: Thursdays – 3:30-4:20 p.m.: (09/25, 10/02, 10/16, 10/23, 10/20)

Location: SSB 103

Off. Location: 225 SSB - **Off. hours:** Tue (5:00-6:30p) & Thu (5:00-6:30p) or by appt

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Description: In this seminar, we will examine the prevailing constructions of natural disasters, such as the ongoing HIV-AIDS in Africa, the 2004 Tsunami in Southeast Asia, and the 2007 San Diego fires. More particularly, we will discuss whether and how they reproduce and erase the economic (colonialism, imperialism, and globalization) and symbolic (racialization) processes which have configured the present global conditions.

Requirements:

Course materials: Media (newspapers, magazines, etc.) coverage of these events

Assignment: In each meeting the class will discuss examples of media coverage of each of these “natural” disasters, which each student will have collected. Our task in the seminar will be threefold:

- 1) To identify how those affected by the natural event, authorities, political leaders, and experts explain the causes of the loss of lives they entail.
- 2) To identify scientific, historical, economic, and symbolic (views of the specificity of the populations affected) explanations advanced.
- 3) To discuss and assess whether and how the preventive measures suggested would diminish the number of deaths.

What this reading of the available material we will allow us is to understand the ways in which symbolic and economic explanations are used to explain the social consequences of natural disasters – i.e. loss of lives, homes, jobs, etc. More importantly, this will also allow us to identify whether authorities, political leaders, affected people, and experts choose different (either symbolic or economic) explanations.

Tentative Schedule

September 25 – Introduction

October 2 – 2004 Tsunami (Southeast Asia: Thailand)

October 9 – 2007 Fires (North America: San Diego)

October 16 – 2007 Hurricane Dean (Latin America: Mexico)

October 23 – HIV-AIDS (Sub-Saharan Africa)

October 30 – Conclusion