WEEK 1: INITIAL COMMENTS REGARDING THE RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC BY AMERICAN CITIZENS AND INSTITUTIONS

REFLECTION EXERCISE before class [Each week please share your reflections during class. As we progress through the course, we will consider how each week’s discussion may be influenced by views we express[ed] in prior weeks’ classes.]: consider what has impressed you most about how you and our fellow Americans and societal institutions have responded to the coronavirus pandemic; what variations in individual and institutional behavior have you observed?

WEEK 2: RESPONSES BY OTHER SOCIETIES AND CULTURES TO THE PANDEMIC

REFLECTION EXERCISE before class: consider what has impressed you about differences in pandemic response among countries and cultures

WEEK 3: RESPONSES BY THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES TO THE PANDEMIC

REFLECTION EXERCISE before class: consider the responses to the pandemic by the President, his political advisers and political appointees, Federal health and labor agencies, the Senate and the House


WEEK 4: RESPONSES BY STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO THE PANDEMIC

REFLECTION EXERCISE before class: consider how the States, their agencies and their political subdivisions have responded to the pandemic

TITLE: CONSIDERING CATASTROPHIC RISK IN LIGHT OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC
INSTRUCTOR: CLEM DINSMORE

WEEK 5: AMERICAN SOCIETAL WEAKNESSES ILLUSTRATED BY THE PANDEMIC AND RESPONSES TO IT

REFLECTION EXERCISE before class: consider the material weaknesses in American society, its cultural attitudes, its health, labor and economic welfare policies and its institutions that have become apparent during the pandemic


WEEK 6: ANTICIPATING A FUTURE PANDEMIC

REFLECTION EXERCISE before class: consider the reforms that need to be undertaken for American governmental and non-governmental institutions to respond more effectively and at less cost to a future pandemic; consider human health/disease prevention systems and how you think of the current vulnerability of human societies to diseases including ones previously considered “conquered”

WEEK 7: PREDICTABILITY VERSUS PROBABILITY OF CATASTROPHIC RISKS: human time horizons and human empathy; relevance of extinction of other species to human time horizons

REFLECTION EXERCISE before class: reflect upon your family and community relationships and probable lifespans of children, grandchildren and other family and community members [including refugees from elsewhere in our country or other countries] and how those relationships and the decline of species upon which humans depend for food may influence your consideration of, and sensitivity to, sources of catastrophic risk


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WEEK 8: HUMAN TECHNOLOGIES AS SOURCES AS WELL AS POTENTIAL MEANS OF MITIGATING CATASTROPHIC RISKS: nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; Fukushima Daiichi and Chernobyl nuclear disasters; Deepwater Horizon oil spill disaster; food production technologies [monoculture of limited food crops]; gun violence

REFLECTION EXERCISE before class: reflect upon how human [including food production] technologies that have social, economic or arguably political benefits can cause catastrophes, if such technologies are not well designed, constructed, operated, managed or controlled; consider whether and how you, family members or friends may have experienced harm from such technologies
TITLE: CONSIDERING CATASTROPHIC RISK IN LIGHT OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC
INSTRUCTOR: CLEM DINSMORE


WEEK 9: HISTORICAL CAUSES OF MASS SPECIES EXTINCTIONS

REFLECTION EXERCISE before class: consider how the workings of Earth’s physical, chemical and biological systems have disrupted life on Earth and have determined which species may survive and how the instability of Earth systems may influence your perception of the stability of the natural and manmade world

TITLE: CONSIDERING CATASTROPHIC RISK IN LIGHT OF THE
CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC
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Yellowstone supervolcano actually erupted?” [March 15, 2014];
National Geographic, “How a ‘forgotten' tsunami 600 years ago changed
history” [Megan Gannon, May 27, 2019]; Earth & Environmental
Systems Podcasts (Lecture 10, plate tectonics), www.mines.edu; Melvyn
Bragg’s BBC radio 4 (“In Our Time”) podcast on plate tectonics; Geoff
9, 2019]

WEEK 10: HUMAN WARS, GENOCIDES, FAILURES OF NATION STATES
AND REFUGEE FLOWS
REFLECTION EXERCISE before class: reflect upon humans’
capacity to cause catastrophes and the sources of societal stresses that
prompt such catastrophes; consider, also, whether you perceive any
current societal stresses in our country or the world as potentially
leading to wars, genocides and failures of nation states
SUGGESTED VIDEOS, READING AND LISTENING: The Brutal
Realities of WW I [www.facinghistory.org]; World War II Museum [New
Orleans], “Did More Russians or Americans Die In W.W. II? [September
17,2018];” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Holocaust
Encyclopedia: Jewish Losses During the Holocaust: By Country; New
Yorker Radio Hour, Episode 54 (David Remnick): “Syria, the World's
Nightmare;” New York Times, The Daily podcast (Michael Barbaro)
“What [Central American] Migrants are Fleeing”

WEEK 11: FOREST FIRES AND FLOODS [natural AND man induced or
aggravated]
REFLECTION EXERCISE before class: consider both the forest
fires and flooding that are “natural” [i.e., not aggravated by human
behaviors] and those that appear increasingly so aggravated; consider
further whether the distinction between the two may be disappearing
SUGGESTED VIDEOS, LISTENING AND READING: “If Only We
Listened to Scientists Before a Hurricane [Jill Trepanier op ed, New York
Times, September 9, 2020];”“Fire tornadoes, ‘ember attacks’: Australia’s
perfect climate-change storm” [Andrew Freedman & Sarah Kaplan,
Washington Post January 14, 2020]; “Drought, Fire, Deluge: Climate’s

WEEK 12: COSTS OF INCREASING FREQUENCY OF EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

REFLECTION EXERCISE before class: consider the social, economic, environmental, private financial and governmental fiscal impacts/costs of the increasing frequency of extreme weather events/disasters; consider your level of concern for these impacts/costs

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WEEK 13: CONCLUSION; FIDUCIARY RESPONSIBILITY OF HUMANS FOR OTHER HUMANS [FAMILY AND NON-FAMILY] AND SPECIES 

REFLECTION EXERCISE before class: draft a concise outline regarding how you now think about considering and managing risk including sources of catastrophic risk to yourself, other humans and other species

Corporate Governance, University of Delaware School of Business
[www.weinberg.udel.edu including Elson and Goossen, “Climate change and the corporate board: too hot not to handle? [First Quarter, 2017]”]