



(un)Natural Disasters

IAH 207 Section 792
Summer Session I
May 17 to July 1, 2021

What is (un)natural about a hurricane? Its causes? Its impacts?

This class questions the complexity of what “nature” means conceptually and how it’s mobilized in social and cultural contexts. Throughout the course, we will reflect on disaster movies, literature, current events, and cultural theory to sift through multiple, conflicting definitions of nature. These complexities, in turn, will be used to question how concepts such as race, sex, gender, and ability have been shaped in American culture through their relationships to the natural. In this course, we will consider who has been labeled “natural” or “unnatural” at different points in the history of the Americas, and we will analyze the consequences of these categories. Finally, we will connect so-called natural disasters to their sometimes human origins and their disproportionate impacts. By the end of the course, you will be prepared to articulate the ways in which cultural practices around nature change climates: both political and meteorological.

