

CLNI 91 Global Issues: Crisis in Haiti

A one-credit multidisciplinary seminar

Haiti is generally seen as one of the world's poorest countries. It is ranked lowest in the Western Hemisphere on most human development indices. Haiti is an example of a country with "multisector" challenges, including resource depletion, weak economy, poor governance, weak infrastructure, a large homeless population, corruption, illiteracy, high rates of chronic disease, and malnutrition. These conditions were created by harsh (and at times cruel) historical, political, social, geographic and natural events. International assistance has often made the situation worse. It is understandable that many outsiders conclude that Haitians are victims, and their situation is desperate if not hopeless.

This is a rather insulting conclusion from a Haitian's perspective. Most Haitians do not see their situation as hopeless or helpless, and many do not see themselves as poor. Haitian society is full of concerned and hardworking people seeking solutions and improvements in the face of difficult circumstances. They have a vibrant, artistic, and fun culture with a rich history, powerful spiritual life, and strong values. Although many Haitians feel neglected and victimized (for good reason), their response is a demand for freedom, opportunity, honor and respect. From the Haitian point of view, "life is hard" but "the hands are many." Non-Haitians can adopt a more respectful perspective on Haitian society when they understand Haiti as **vulnerable** and Haitians as **resilient**.

This seminar examines Haitian society from this perspective of vulnerability and resilience. Vulnerability sets the stage for crisis, and this seminar examines how Haiti has experienced more than a decade of crisis, most recently exemplified in the devastating earthquake of January 2010. The earthquake was accompanied by other crises, including hurricanes, crop failures, rapid urbanization, market losses, and epidemics. In each of these crises, Haitians suffered, struggled and adapted. The seminar examines the resilience of Haitians in the midst of this extraordinary challenge. Haitian society and crisis is explored across multiple disciplines: religion, literature, politics, social justice, environment, public health and more. Recovery strategies are discussed across sectors including medicine, psychosocial protection, economic development, agriculture, communications, architecture, engineering, education, governance, and human rights. The course examines global and local aid strategies, and proposes appropriate tactics for assistance.

Class times and location: Monday evenings 5:00–6:45 PM, Social Sciences Bldg 2 room 179.

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Course assistants: Laura Terrill (lterril@ucsc.edu) & Lydia Lambert (llamber@ucsc.edu)

* Please note the course assistants are volunteering their time.

Web site: Readings, handouts, lecture notes, important links, and announcements are on Tony's instructional web site <http://www.tonyhoffmanucsc.net/> (username is "student" and the password is "bonjour").

Assignments: Students are to

- Attend class (yes, roll will be taken).
- Read an authoritative book on Haiti and/or Haitian crisis (suggested readings below), and complete a short book report.
- Do one of the following:
 - a. Support/create a student event to raise awareness about Haiti.
 - b. In a small group, develop and write a proposal for appropriate and sustainable assistance activity in Haiti.

Tentative schedule:

Monday January 9: course introduction: why we need Haiti.

Monday January 16: **MLK appreciation day - no class.**

Monday January 23: The 2010 earthquake.

Monday January 30: Negwe Mawon, the Lambi Cok, and the sound of freedom: historical, cultural and spiritual legacies.

Monday February 6: Crisis, oppression and catastrophe as described in Haitian literature; vulnerable women and children; human needs, human rights.

Monday February 13: The crisis in Haitian medical care and public health.

Monday February 20: **Presidents' Day holiday - no class.**

Monday February 27: Governance, politics, the international community and reconstruction.

Monday March 5: Education, technology and architecture for the future: the way forward.

Monday March 12: Summing up, project presentations, and strategies for the future.

Suggested Readings:

Charles Arthur (2002). *Haiti in Focus: A Guide to the People, Politics, and Culture*.

Patrick Bellegarde-Smith (2004). *Haiti: The Breached Citadel*.

Patrick Bellegarde-Smith & Claudine Michel (Eds.) (2006). *Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture: Invisible Power*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Patrick Bellegarde-Smith & Claudine Michel (Eds.) (2006). *Haitian Vodou: Spirit, Myth, and Reality*. Indiana U. Press.

Pablo Butcher (2010). *Urban Vodou: Politics and Popular Street Art in Haiti*.

Terry F. Buss (2008). *Haiti in the balance: Why foreign aid has failed and what we can do about it*. The Brookings Institution.

Edwidge Danticat. *The Farming of Bones*. Penguin, 1999.

Edwidge Danticat. *Brother, I'm Dying*. Vintage Press, 2008.

Edwidge Danticat (1996). *Krik? Krak!* Vintage Press,

Paul Farmer (2005). *The Uses of Haiti*, Third Edition Common Courage Press.

Paul Farmer (2011). *Haiti after the earthquake*. New York: Public Affairs Books.

John T. Fishel & Andrés Saenz (Eds). *Capacity Building for Peacekeeping: The Case of Haiti*. (National Defense University, 2007).

Philippe Girard (2010). *Haiti: The Tumultuous History - From Pearl of the Caribbean to Broken Nation*. MacMillan.

Arché Jean. *The Role of Agriculture in The Economic Development of Haiti*. 2nd Edition, 2008.

Jennie M. Smith. *When the Hands Are Many: Community Organization and Social Change in Rural Haiti*. (2001).

Margaret Trost and Paul Farmer. *On That Day, Everybody Ate: One Woman's Story of Hope and Possibility in Haiti* (2008).

Laurence Wolff. *Education in Haiti: The Way Forward* (2008). Partnership for Educational Revitalization in the Americas - PREAL.

The World Bank (2007). *Social Resilience and State Fragility in Haiti*. (World Bank)