CHERNOBYL: Legacies of a Meltdown

ANTH E400/E600 (Sections 28278 and 15693)
Meets: Ballantine Hall 141
Wednesday 2:30-4:45 p.m.

Instructor: Sarah D. Phillips
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Office Hours: Wednesday 12-2pm
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Course Description

In this course students will learn about the far-reaching and intersecting environmental, political, social, and health effects of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident. This course offers an integrated view of Chernobyl and other ecological disasters, illustrating the important environmental aspects of such events, but also other ways in which calamities such as Chernobyl reverberate locally and globally with persons and societies. We will interweave discussions of policy and international law with considerations of ethics, risk, social entitlements, subjective experiences of health and disease, and others. The course will utilize anthropological approaches to studying complex events such as Chernobyl via unique literatures and media sources that highlight local, humanistic interpretations of the disaster while placing the accident's effects in a dynamic, multidisciplinary, global context. Going beyond Chernobyl as an environmental case study, we will examine the symbolic uses of the accident, local interpretations of nuclear catastrophe, and Chernobyl as an example of various globalizing forces. Ultimately, the course will guide students through the labyrinth of Chernobyl effects while highlighting the linkages between ecological, medical, political, and social aftershocks of a techno-environmental catastrophe.

Research and writing projects on various aspects of Chernobyl and similar events will allow students to pursue their own interests in their respective fields. Students will have the chance to interact with experts on Chernobyl. We will create an informational internet site on Chernobyl effects, including bibliographies, links to relevant sites, translations of little-known research and creative works on Chernobyl, and students' own writings.
Each week’s agenda will encompass scholarly and popular writings, films, and interviews that convey a diverse array of perspectives. These range from policy-oriented works and documentary films, to poetry, plays, and newspaper articles.

**Course Requirements**

Major requirements for this course include timely completion of the readings, active participation in class discussions, two short essays, and a final research paper and presentation.

**Essays**: The essays are due on February 14 and April 3. Undergraduate essays should be 5-6 pages; graduate essays should be 6-8 pages. Specific essay topics/questions will be distributed two weeks before essays are due.

**Final Research Paper and Presentation**: The research paper is to be a semester-long project. Students must schedule a meeting with me to discuss their proposed topics early in the semester. Student presentations will be held during the last class meeting on April 25. The research paper (8-10 pages for undergraduates, 10-15 pages for graduate students) is due Thursday, May 3.

Additionally, each student is expected to contribute interview questions for the class interview of Dr. Sergii Mirnyi on April 18, and to chip in material and ideas to our class Web page on Chernobyl.

**Grades will be calculated as follows**:
- Attendance: 15%
- Participation in Class Discussions: 25%
- Essays: 20% each
- Research Paper: 25%
- Class Presentation: 10%
- Interview questions and Web page participation: 5%

**Readings**

The following books are available for purchase at IU bookstore and TIS:


An optional book you may enjoy reading is:

All other course readings are on E-reserves. The E-reserves password is “chernobyl400.”

**Course Schedule**

**Wednesday, January 10**
Overview of the course and course syllabus.
In-class video: *Chernobyl Heart*

**Wednesday, January 17**
What Happened on April 26, 1986? Chernobyl in Physics, Chernobyl in Theater
Guest speaker: Dr. W. Mike Snow, Professor of Physics, IUB
http://www.physics.indiana.edu/faculty/Snow.shtml


http://www.unu.edu/unupress/unupbooks/uu21le/uu21le0h.htm#the%20accident%20and%20its%20immediate%20aftermath


**Wednesday, January 24**
The Cover-up: Whitewashing a Disaster
Guest speaker: Steve Raymer, Associate Professor of Journalism, IUB
http://www.steveraymer.com


Lyubov Kovalevska, 1986. Warning piece in *Literaturna Ukraina*.


In-class video: Excerpts of *Chernobyl: Chronicle of Difficult Weeks* (dir. V. Shevchenko, 1987)

**Wednesday, February 7**

**Radiation Unleashed: Environmental Effects Near and Far, Part I**


Liubov Sirota, “At the Crossing.”
http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/chernobyl_poems/chernobyl_poems.html


Transcript from Living on Earth: Forgetting Chernobyl (April 5, 1996)

In-class video: Footage of the exclusion zone taken by Paul Thacker, and *Chernobyl: The Taste of Wormwood* (excerpts)
Wednesday, February 14
Environmental Effects Near and Far, Part II
Case Study on the far-flung effects of an accident

Essay #1 due


In-class video: An Invisible Enemy—considers the effects of Chernobyl on Sami reindeer herders in Norway (52 min.)

Wednesday, February 21
Biological and Health Effects of Chernobyl


(Skim) WHO, “Health Effects of the Chernobyl Accident and Special Care Programmes” (2006)


Transcript from Living on Earth: Chernobyl at 20 (April 21, 2006)

Liubov Sirota, “Radiophobia.”
http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/chernobyl_poems/chernobyl_poems.html

Sofia Maidanska, “Letter No. 27,” in *Shifting Borders*, p. 386

Bolha Ipatava, “Chernobyl.” *Index on Censorship* 1, p. 141.

**Wednesday, February 28**

**Chernobyl Embodied: Biological Citizenship**


Oksana Zabuzhko, “Love.”

Liubov Sirotka, “Your glance will trip on my shadow.”
http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/chernobyl_poems/chernobyl_poems.html
(last poem)

Liubov Sirotka, “Burden,” and “Fate (Triptych).”
http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/chernobyl_poems/chernobyl_poems.html


Interview with Tetiana Yashchinko, a Chernobyl liquidator suffering from “radiation AIDS,” June 28, 1996.
(On E-res as “Yashchinko”)

**Wednesday, March 7**

**Disaster and Migration: People Uprooted, People Displaced**


Lyubov Sirota, “Pripyat.”
http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/chernobyl_poems/chernobyl_poems.html

Lina Kostenko, Two Untitled poems in Shifting Borders, pp. 374-375.

In-class video: From Chechnya to Chernobyl

Wednesday, March 14
Spring Break--No Class

Wednesday, March 21
Chernobyl’s Political Effects: Galvanizing the Greens, and Ukrainian and Belarussian Independence


Liubov Sirota, “They Did Not Register Us.”
http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/chernobyl_poems/chernobyl_poems.html
(2nd poem)


(On E-res as “Ukraine under Perestroika”)
Transcript of 2004 class interview with environmental activist Nataliya Preobrazhenska


In-class music video: *Chornobyl'ska Zona* (Taras Petronenko and Hrono)

**Wednesday, March 28**  
*Comparative Disasters: Mistakes Repeated, Lessons Learned*  
Student-led discussions

**Wednesday, April 3**  
*Chernobyl on Display: Chernobyl Museum, “Dark” Tourism*  
*Essay #2 due*  
In-class video tour of the Chernobyl Museum in Kyiv


Read Paul Thacker’s Chernobyl blog before class:  
http://taxthestupid.livejournal.com/?skip=40 (scroll down to June 27, 2005)

Explore website of “Elena” (KiddofSpeed) before class:  
http://www.kiddofspeed.com

**Wednesday, April 11**  
*Imagining Chernobyl, I: Chernobyl in Humor and Symbols; Chernobyl Fascinations*


Read interview with Sergii Mirnyi:
http://bellona.org/articles/mirnyi_iview2

Sergii Mirnyi, 2006. A Chernobyl Comedy. (Screenplay)

In-class video: clips from Andrei Tarkovsky's Stalker
In-class video game: Stalker

Wednesday, April 18
Imagining Chernobyl, II

Sergii Mirnyi, Worse Than Radiation, and Other Stories.


In-class interview with Sergii Mirnyi
In-class t.v. show: Millennium

Wednesday, April 25
Last class: Student presentations and Chernobyl feast

Thursday, May 3
Research papers due