

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:

Mary Mycio, 2005. Wormwood Forest: A Natural History of Chernobyl. Washington, D.C.: Joseph Henry Press.

Adriana Petryna, 2002. Life Exposed: Biological Citizens after Chernobyl. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

An optional book you may enjoy reading is:

Irene Zabytko, 2000. The Sky Unwashed, A Novel. Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books.

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>

Optional: Mike Edwards, 1987. "Ukraine." National Geographic, May, pp. 595-631.

David Marples, "Introduction," "The Accident and Its Immediate Aftermath," "The Affected Community," and "Regeneration and Recovery" from his chapter "The Chernobyl Disaster: Its Effects on Belarus in Ukraine," in The Long Road to Recovery: Community Responses to Industrial Disaster, ed. James K. Mitchell, United Nations University Press, 1996.

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

Vladimir Gubaryev, 1987. Sarcophagus: A Tragedy.

Wednesday, January 24

The Cover-up: Whitewashing a Disaster

Guest speaker: Steve Raymer, Associate Professor of Journalism, IUB
<http://www.steveraymer.com>

Mike Edwards, 1987. Chernobyl--One Year After. National Geographic 171(5):632-653.

Lyubov Kovalevska, 1986. Warning piece in Literaturna Ukraina.

Yurii Bohatiuk, 1986. "The Chernobyl Disaster." The Ukrainian Quarterly 42(1-2):5-21.

Erik P. Hoffman. 1986. "Nuclear Deception: Soviet Information Policy." Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, August/September 1986, pp. 32-37.

Anthony Tucker, 1996. "Chernobyl: Confusion & Deceit." Index on Censorship 1, pp. 86-93.

Alla Yaroshinskaya, 1995. Chapters 1-5 in Chernobyl: The Forbidden Truth. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

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

Mary Mycio, 2005. Wormwood Forest: A Natural History of Chernobyl. Washington, D.C.: Joseph Henry Press.

Liubov Sirota, "At the Crossing."

http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/chernobyl_poems/chernobyl_poems.html

Mary Jo Salter, 1995. "Chernobyl." Atomic Ghost (ed. John Bradley), pp. 100-101.

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

Debora MacKenzie, "The Rad-dosed Reindeer," New Scientist, 18 December 1986, pp. 37-40.

Sharon Stephens, "The 'Cultural Fallout' of Chernobyl Radiation in Norwegian Sami Regions: Implications for Children," Children and the Politics of Culture, ed. Sharon Stephens (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995):292-318.

Sharon Stephens, "Physical and Cultural Reproduction in a Post-Chernobyl Norwegian Sami Community," Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction, ed. Faye Ginsberg and Rayna Rapp (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

Hugh Beach, "Perceptions of Risk, Dilemmas of Policy: Nuclear Fallout in Swedish Lapland." Social Science & Medicine 30(6):729-738.

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

Chernobyl Forum Summary Report (2003-2005), "Chernobyl's Legacy: Health, Environmental, and Socio-economic Impacts"

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

Greenpeace, "The Chernobyl Catastrophe: Consequences on Human Health" (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

Adrianna Petryna, Life Exposed: Biological Citizenship after Chernobyl (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

Oksana Zabuzhko, "Love."

Liubov Sirota, "Your glance will trip on my shadow."

http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/chernobyl_poems/chernobyl_poems.html
(last poem)

Liubov Sirota, "Burden," and "Fate (Triptych)."

http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/chernobyl_poems/chernobyl_poems.html

Sujata Bhatt, "Wine from Bordeaux," in Shifting Borders, pp. 102-104.

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

Iurii Shcherbak, Chs. 8 ("Before the Evacuation"), 9 ("The Evacuation"), and 10 ("One From 'The Little Football Team'") in Chernobyl: A Documentary Story (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), pp. 55-88.

Larissa Remennick, "Immigrants from Chernobyl-Affected Areas in Israel: The Link Between Health and Social Adjustment," Social Science and Medicine 54(2):309-317.

Ivan Drach, "Mother's Eternal Elegy," in Shifting Borders: East European Poetries of the Eighties, pp. 379-380.

Ivan Drach, "The Madonna of Chernobyl: A Poem."

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

Oksana Pakhliovska, "Forests Near Prypyat," and "Chornobyl's Villages," in Shifting Borders, pp. 396-397.

Liubov Sirota, "They Did Not Register Us."

http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/chernobyl_poems/chernobyl_poems.html

(2nd poem)

David Marples, "The Economic and Political Repercussions," in Marples, The Social Impact of the Chernobyl Disaster (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988):89-124.

David Marples, "Nuclear Power, Ecology and the Patriotic Opposition in the Ukrainian SSR: An Analysis of a Post-Chornobyl Trend." Echoes of Glasnost in Soviet Ukraine (ed. Romana M. Bahry), pp. 18-27.

David Marples, "Ecology: The Green World." Ukraine Under Perestroika: Ecology, Economics, and the Worker's Revolt.

(On E-res as "Ukraine under Perestroika")

Transcript of 2004 class interview with environmental activist Nataliya Preobrazhenska

Roman Solchanyk, 1986. "Chernobyl: The Political Fallout in Ukraine." Journal of Ukrainian Studies 11(1):20-34.

David Marples, "Perestroika and Independence," in Belarus: From Soviet Rule to Nuclear Catastrophe (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996):115-138.

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

Sarah D. Phillips, 2004. "Chernobyl's Sixth Sense: Symbols of an Ever-Present Awareness." Anthropology and Humanism 29(2):159-185.

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

Michael Palij and William C. Fletcher, "Chornobyl': An Etymology," The Ukrainian Quarterly 42(1-2):22-24.

David Marples, "Images of Chernobyl: Arts and the Public," The Social Impact of the Chernobyl Disaster (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988):125-159.

Larissa M.L. Zaleska Onyshkevych, "Echoes of Glasnost: Chornobyl in Soviet Ukrainian Literature." In Roman Bahry, ed., Echoes of Glasnost in Soviet Ukraine (York, Ontario: Captus University Publications, 1989), pp. 151-170.

Laszlo Kurti. 1988. "The Politics of Joking: Popular Response to Chernobyl." Journal of American Folklore 101(401):324-334.

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.

Sarah D. Phillips, 2002. "Half-Lives and Healthy Bodies: Discourses on 'Contaminated' Foods and Healing in Post-Chernobyl Ukraine." Food and Foodways 10(1-2):27-53.

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