

Study guide

UT-410

Understanding Crisis – a Conceptual Approach

Study Guide 2023

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Welcome to UT-410 Understanding Crisis – A Conceptual Approach!

This course invites students to an advanced conceptual discussion about crisis. By building a strong theoretical foundation, the course prepares students to critically assess how contemporary crises affect groups and societies, how they are interconnected, and how they can be addressed. The course considers how crises can be conceptualised across time and space and invites the students to develop a deeper understanding of the multifaceted crises unfolding presently: rising socio-economic inequalities, crisis of the economy, democracy and civic society, displacement and migration, the COVID-19 pandemic, conflict and wars, climate change and environmental degradation.

Discussing how different groups perceive and respond to crisis, as well as how sustainable development is challenged by crisis in different contexts, will be a key aspect of the course. Through readings exploring empirical examples from different contexts and of different scales, the course prepares the students to recognise and analyse how crises can both exacerbate inequalities produced by social and economic processes and give rise to struggles with the potential to reconfigure such inequalities. The theoretical and empirical foundation developed through engagement with the readings and peer-to-peer reflections also prepares students to critically assess how communication about crises reflects the politics and realities of critical situations.

Learning outcomes

On completion of the course, the students should be able to:

- Provide an overview of how crisis is theorised in interdisciplinary fields, and discuss how crisis is understood, problematised and analysed across time and space
- Identify and outline key features of contemporary crises to global development, such as rising socio-economic inequalities, crisis of the economy, democracy and civic society, displacement and migration, pandemic events and climate change and environmental degradation
- Identify and discuss interconnections between different types and scales of crises
- Recognise and analyse how social and economic inequalities informed by gender, ethnicity, race and class can be affected by crises
- Critically assess the politics, communication, and reality of crisis across different locations
- Critically assess concepts and policies of sustainability, development and crisis

- Use case-studies to explain how crises across global, regional, national and local scales have contextually specific consequences and responses.

Teaching and learning methods

This course is part of the Master in Global Development, Crisis and Change with web-based teaching through Canvas. The estimated workload of the course is 270 hours.

This course is built on a pedagogical approach emphasising co-creation of knowledge in community with fellow students and educators. We consider you, as students, as holders of knowledge and experiences that will enrich and contribute to the learning outcomes of the collective student group. Teamwork is therefore at the core of this course. Group discussion and tasks are combined with individual work, through which you are expected to develop and demonstrate independent and critical thinking in connecting theoretical perspectives to empirical realities.

The course instructors provide readings, tasks, questions for reflection and relevant links through this study guide and in Canvas. Short videos presenting theoretical concepts and/or case studies will also be provided to facilitate the learning process. To allow for face-to-face dialogue, questions, and discussions, we have scheduled for a live zoom session in each module.

Contact information and roles

Contact your tutor for any questions you may have. This course has three other instructors, and you will find the division of themes and responsibilities below, under each module.

- Tutor and course instructor Sherry Adomah Bempah: sherrybempah@gmail.com and sherry.bempah@uia.no
Course coordinator and course instructor Margit Ystanes: margit.ystanes@uia.no
- Course instructor Astrid B. Stensrud: astrid.b.stensrud@uia.no
- Course instructor Arnhild Leer-Helgesen: arnhild.leer-helgesen@uia.no

Examination

Examination is done as portfolio assessment, graded A-F. The portfolio includes the assignments and tasks presented below. The assignments will be provided in Canvas at the start of the semester.

Assignment schedule UT-410 Understanding Crisis

Activity	Assignment	Due date	Total of final grade
Module 1			
1.1	Participation in group discussion 1	15 September	1/3 of 10 %
1.2	Group essay	6 October	40 %
Module 2			
2.1	Participation in group discussion 2	20 October	1/3 of 10 %
2.2	Individual written submission, peer review and participation	30 October-3 November	10 %
Module 3			
3.1	Participation in group discussion 3	17 November	1/3 of 10 %
3.2	Individual essay	27 November	40 %
Total			100 %

Participation grade is computed based on the 4Cs principle thus contribution, collaboration, creation and critique. Each of these elements requires the need for the students to show personal reflection on the assigned readings, collaborate with peers and tutor in co-knowledge creation, critique the material when necessary and show divergent viewpoints and provide context specific scenarios.

Organisation of the course

This course is organised in three modules with sub-themes. Below you will find a description of each module and theme, with the corresponding readings. Each module has one group discussion and one submission.

Please note that except for most of Module 1, this study guide is not finalised. You will receive the completed version by the start of the course. The rest of the readings will be added, and changes may occur. These changes will be clearly communicated to you well in advance through Canvas. Be sure to read the messages regularly.

Module 1: Introducing crisis and intersectionality. Weeks 35-40

Learning outcomes

After completion of the module, the students should have an overview over different concepts and approaches for thinking about crisis.

Week 35 Why do we talk about crisis? (Instructor: Astrid Stensrud)

The reading and reflection activities in this module explore different approaches for using the concept of crisis to think about presently unfolding global challenges.

Activity A. Panel conversation on Introduction Seminar

Please see the programme for the introduction seminar for the time and venue of this activity.

Activity B. Read the following texts:

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 2016 Overheating: the world since 1991. *History and anthropology*, Vol.27 (5), p.469-487 (18 pages)

Henig, David and Daniel M. Knight. 2023. Polycrisis: Prompts for an emerging worldview. *Anthropology today*, Volume 39, Issue 2, pp 3-6 (4 pages)

Ibrahim, Habiba, and Badia Ahad. 2022. 'Introduction. Black Temporality in Times of Crisis'. *South Atlantic Quarterly* 121 (1): 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-9561489>. (10 pages)

Activity C. Questions for reflection:

1. How does analysing contemporary situations and challenges through the lens of crisis influence how we think about them and the kinds of responses we are able to imagine?
2. The articles discuss crises of different scale – consider the way they use the term crisis (or polycrisis) as a specific way of thinking about presently unfolding situations. What are the issues they suggest we think about as crises, and does this bring out something new in our understanding of them?

Week 36 – 37: What is crisis? (Instructor: Astrid Stensrud and Margit Ystanes)

The reading, reflection and participation activities during these two weeks will explore how different scholars understand crisis, and how narratives about crises reflect power relations of local and global scales. This will help you build a theoretical foundation for thinking about the different crises you will study throughout this course. These activities will also introduce an idea you will be working with from different perspectives throughout the course; that how we define and discuss different crises have consequences for the kinds of responses we are able to imagine.

Activity A. Watch video in Canvas

Activity B. Read the following texts:

Masco, Joseph. 2017. 'The Crisis in Crisis'. *Current Anthropology* 58 (S15): S65–76. <https://doi.org/10.1086/688695>. (12 pages)

Arriola Vega, Luis Alfredo and Enrique Coraza de los Santos. 2022. Introduction: At the Crisis Migration Crossroads: Scope and Limits, in Coraza de los Santos and Arriola Vega, eds. *Crisis and Migration: Critical Perspectives from Latin America*. Springer, pp.1-21 (22 pages)

Henrik Vigh. 2008. Crisis and Chronicity: Anthropological Perspectives on Continuous Conflict and Decline. *Ethnos*, vol. 73:1, pp. 5–24 (20 pages)

Roitman, Janet. 2016. The Stakes of Crisis, in P. Kjaer and N. Olsen (eds.) *Critical theories of crisis in Europe: From Weimar to the euro*. Rowman and Littlefield International, pp. 17-34 (18 pages)

Activity C. Questions for individual reflection and/or informal discussion in groups:

1. Describe the different understandings of the word 'crisis': how can crisis be defined and used as an analytical concept in social sciences and development studies?
2. Reflect upon 'crisis' considering power and discourse: How can the 'crisis' concept be used politically? What do stories about 'crisis' enable us to see or not see? What are the blind spots? Can you think of any examples (from the news, or your own experience)?
3. What is the relationship between time (or 'temporality') how we conceptualise crisis and possible responses?

Try to activate all the texts you have read so far in the module as you reflect upon the questions.

Activity D. Task 1.1. Participation: contribute to Canvas discussion by 15 September

Assignment for the discussion:

Discuss some of the ways that 'crisis' reflect unequal power relations, both as a theoretical concept and as empirical reality. Use examples from the readings as well as from your experience or current events.

Week 38-39: Intersectionality, inequality and crisis (Instructor Arnhild Leer-Helgesen)

The readings and reflections these weeks will provide you with a theoretical insight into key concepts such as power and inequality and introduce you to intersectional perspectives. Throughout the course you will be expected to reflect critically on relations between inequality and crisis and how people are affected by and perceive crisis situated in particular contexts and bodies.

Activity A. Read the following texts:

Collins, P. H. and Bilge, S. 2020. *Intersectionality*. Cambridge: Polity Press. Pp. 1-36.

Benza, G. and Kessler, G. 2022. "The impact of the Pandemic on Latin America: Social Setbacks and Rising Inequalities", in Vommaro, P. and Baisotti, P. (Eds), *Persistence and Emergencies of Inequalities in Latin America*. Springer. Pp. 33-49 (

Kabeer, N. 2017. "Poverty Analysis Trough a Gender Lens", in Veltmeyer and Bowles (Eds.) *The Essential Guide to Critical Development Studies*. Abingdon/New York: Routledge, pp. 179-188.

Take individual notes on key concepts and perspectives, to bring with you into the upcoming group discussions and tasks.

Activity B. Questions for reflexion:

1. Intersectionality and inequality are key concepts in this course. How are these related to power?
2. What does it do to the understanding of crisis when an intersectional approach is used? What is gained and/or lost?
3. How is crisis understood in the texts you read? How can you use earlier texts to distinguish understandings and perspectives on crisis?

Activity C. Q & A session/office hours on Zoom 19 September at 13:00 – 14:00.

Week 40: Crisis and technology (Instructor Sherry Adomah Bempah)

We live in a world that is rapidly evolving, crises and emergencies can occur unexpectedly posing significant challenges to individuals, organisations and societies globally, regionally and nationally. To help society to navigate successfully during emergency situations, there is the need to leverage on the potential of emerging technologies rooted in Artificial Intelligence. This section of the course will focus on the impact of the Covid –19 pandemic on education across different perspectives and explore practical examples that highlight the effective utilization of technology in crisis management. By the end of this course, students will gain a deep appreciation for the opportunities and challenges presented by technology in crisis management and develop a comprehensive toolkit for leveraging on technology to enhance preparedness, response, and resilience in the face these global emergencies.

Activity A. Watch the videos provided in Canvas.

Activity B. Read the following texts:

Stanistreet, P., Elfert, M., & Atchoarena, D. (2020). Education in the age of COVID-19: Understanding the consequences. *International Review of Education*, 66, 627-633.

Owusu-Fordjour, C., Koomson, C. K., & Hanson, D. (2020). The impact of Covid-19 on learning-the perspective of the Ghanaian student. *European Journal of Education Studies*.

Nigam, Aditya, Rhitvik Pasricha, Tarishi Singh, and Prathamesh Churi. "A systematic review on ai-based proctoring systems: Past, present and future." *Education and Information Technologies* 26, no. 5 (2021): 6421-6445.

[Education and Technology Overview \(worldbank.org\)](https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/overview)

Activity C. Questions for reflection.

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Activity D. Task 1.2: Group essay

1. Working in groups, identify one recent or ongoing crisis that you are familiar with, and that you want to address in the essay.

2. Discuss and reflect upon how the different group members are affected by and perceptions the crisis.
3. Use theoretical insights from the module to analyse your experiences and understandings of the crisis. Explain why you consider this to be a crisis and apply an intersectional approach to discuss how inequality relates to the crisis.
4. The group weaver/moderator facilitates the process of incorporating everybody's reflections into a coherent and theory-based essay of 2000 words.

Submission deadline: 6 October. This task will account for 40% of the total portfolio.

Module 2: Intersecting contemporary crises. Weeks 41-44

Learning outcomes: about different cases and themes

The reading and reflection activities in this module explore different types of crises through various case studies, while also exploring how they are interconnected.

Week 41: Climate change and ecological crisis. (Astrid B. Stensrud and Margit Ystanes)

The readings and reflections this week will explore different approaches towards environmental and climate change seen through the lenses of development and crisis. You will be able to reflect upon ecological crisis on a global scale, related to ideas of economic development and limits to growth, and through case studies you will learn how climate change effects are perceived by different groups.

Activity A. Read the following texts:

Bull, Benedicte and Mariel Aguilar-Støen. 2023. Introduction to Handbook on International Development and the Environment: from limits to growth to a transformation for the Anthropocene

Nuttall, Mark. 2020. Water, ice, and climate change in northwest Greenland. Wiley interdisciplinary reviews. Water, Vol.7 (3), p.e1433-n/a

Stensrud, Astrid B. 2019. The dark side of 'progress': the intersections of climate change, neoliberalism, and modernity in Peru, in Stensrud and Eriksen, eds, *Climate, Capitalism and Communities: An Anthropology of Environmental Overheating*, Pluto Press, pp. 96-114 (19 pages)

Activity B. Questions for reflection:

1. How are the effects of environmental change perceived by different groups and in different contexts?
2. How do the effects of climate/environmental change intersect with other changes in the economy and society?

(NB: there might be minor changes in readings and questions before the course starts)

Week 42: Economic crisis. (Instructor: Astrid Stensrud)

The readings and reflections this week will provide insight into how economic and financial crisis are perceived and experienced through different scales (macro-micro, global-local) and by different actors in various contexts. The global financial crisis in 2008 had repercussions all over the world that were still not overcome when the economic crisis caused by Covid-19 hit globally in 2020. The readings explore how these global crises exacerbate already existing tendencies in the global economy (macro scale) and how the effects of the crises are experienced by people in different places (micro scale).

Activity A. Read the following texts:

Dow, Matt and Tim Di Muzio. (2023). «Introduction: The Covid-19 Pandemic, International Political Economy, and Social Reproduction” in T. Di Muzio and M. Dow, eds., *Covid-19 and the Global Political Economy: Crises in the 21st Century*. New York: Routledge, pp. 1-20 (20 pages)

Daskalaki, Maria, Marianna Fotaki and Maria Simosi. (2021). The gendered impact of the financial crisis: Struggles over social reproduction in Greece. *EPA: Economy and Space* 53(4): 741-762 (22 pages)

Song, Daniel and Karl Radnitzer. (2022). South Korea’s Household Debt Crisis and Its Impact on Korean Society. *Journal of Student Research* 11(4): 1-11 (11 pages)

Sorg, Christoph. (2023). ‘You are not a loan’: contentious debt politics since the North Atlantic Financial Crisis, *Globalizations*, DOI: 10.1080/14747731.2023.2202110 (18 pages)

Activity B. Questions for reflection:

1. How are financial/economic crises perceived and experienced by different social groups?
2. How did the Covid-19 pandemic influence and exacerbate tendencies in the global economy?

3. In what ways can we see that “economic” issues is not purely economic, but entangled with other aspects of life and society?
4. In what ways do the readings show the connections between a macro level (‘global economy’ with a micro level (everyday household economy)?

Activity C. Task 2.1: Contribution to Canvas discussion by 20 October

Week 43 I: Displacement and migration

Activity A. Read the following texts:

Activity B. Questions for reflection:

Week 43 II: Pandemic events

Activity A. Read the following texts:

Activity B. Questions for reflection:

Activity C: Q & A session/office hours on Zoom 24 October at 13:00 – 14:00

Week 44: Democracy and politics

Activity A. Read the following texts:

Activity B. Questions for reflection:

Activity C. Task 2.2. Written submission, peer review and participation:

- Task 2.2.1 Submit a draft of 1000 words by 30 October

- Task 2.2.2 Peer review of another student's submission by 1 November
- Task 2.2.3 Oral group discussion: presentation and discussion of first draft for final submission: connect an example of crisis to inequality, identity and power. The discussion takes place on 2 November at 13:00 – 14:00.
- Task 2.2 counts for 10% of the total grade.

Module 3: Responding to crisis. Weeks 45 - 48

Week 45 I: Resilience, development and agency (Instructor: Arnhild Leer-Helgesen)

Resilience has become a “buzz-word” in policy documents and programs within a broad range of fields, such as community development and climate adaption. The following readings discuss the discourse and policies of resilience in development debates and provide examples of how communities respond to past and future crisis through actions of resilience.

Activity A. Read the following texts:

Ancey, V., Pesche, D. and Daviron, B. 2022. Resilience and Development: Complement, Substitute or Stopgap Solution?, *Revue internationale des études du développement*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/ried.1697> <https://journals.openedition.org/ried/1697#tocfrom1n2> (27 p.)

IDS (2023) Pandemic Preparedness for the Real World: Why We Must Invest in Equitable, Ethical and Effective Approaches to Help Prepare for the Next Pandemic, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, DOI: 10.19088/CC.2023.002. 40 p.

More readings and questions for reflections and the group discussion will be provided in due time.

Activity B. Watch the videos provided in Canvas.

Activity C. Questions for reflection:

Week 45 II: Care, solidarity, and collective action (Instructors: Astrid B. Stensrud and Margit Ystanes)

The readings and reflections this week will explore how we can understand responses to crisis “from below” in terms of solidarity, collection action and practices of care. You will explore the concept of “care” as a situated everyday practice, with ethical and affective implications, and as a practice that is both life-sustaining and a constraint. You will also explore “care” and solidarity in terms of ethical politics and social activism.

Activity A. Read the following texts:

Rakopoulos, Theodoros. 2014. The crisis seen from below, within, and against: from solidarity economy to food distribution cooperatives in Greece. *Dialectical Anthropology* 38:189–207

Maria Puig de la Bellacasa. 2015. Making time for soil: Technoscientific futurity and the pace of care. *Social Studies of Science*, 1–26.

Nieto Olivar et al. 2021. ‘Rio Negro, We care’. Indigenous women, cosmopolitics and public health in the COVID-19 pandemic. *Global Public Health*

Activity B. Questions for reflection:

(NB: Readings might be changed and the questions will be posted later)

Week 46 I: Alternatives to development (Instructor: Arnhild Leer-Helgesen)

Post-development scholars have argued that global development policies and practices have failed to reduce poverty and inequality and rather upheld or reinforced it on a global scale. Through this, one might argue that “development”, however conceived, has failed to prevent and handle crisis and rather can be seen as creating and/or reinforcing crisis. This week’s readings present this critique and some of the alternatives suggested to encounter crisis at different scales.

Activity A. Read the following texts:

Demaria, Federico, and Erik Gómez-Baggethun. 2023. Leaving development behind: the case for degrowth, in B. Bull and M. Aguilar Støen (eds), *Handbook on International Development and the Environment*, Elgar Handbooks in Development

Godynas, E. Postdevelopment and other critiques of development, in Veltmeyer, H. and Bowles, P. *The Essential Guide to Critical Development Studies*. Oxon: Routledge. Pp. 49-56. 7 p.

More readings and questions for reflections and the group discussion will be provided in due time.

Week 46 II: Crisis, Communication and Technology

Activity A. Read the following texts:

Activity B. Questions for reflection:

Activity C. Task 3.1 Contribute to discussion on Canvas by 17 November.

Activity D. Q & A session on Zoom 14 November at 13:00 – 14:00

Week 47: Religion and crisis (Instructor Arnhild Leer-Helgesen)

This week's texts discuss the multiple and ambiguous role religion can play in responses to crisis. The texts illustrate the importance of understanding the contexts in which a crisis occurs and critically discuss how cultural and religious resources are mobilized.

Activity A. Read the following texts:

Sibanda, F., Muyambo, T., and Chitando, E. 2022. "Introduction: religion and public health in the shadow of COVID-19 pandemic in Southern Africa", in *Religion and the Covid-19 Pandemic in Southern Africa*, Sibanda, F., Muyambo, T., and Chitando, E. (Eds.). Abingdon/New York: Routledge. Pp. 1-24. 24 pages.

Falk, M. L. 20 "Aid, Religion and Recovery in Post-tsunami Thailand", in *The Asian Tsunami and Post-Disaster Aid*, Reddy, S. (Ed). Singapore: Springer. Pp. 235-252. 17 pages.

Marshall, K. and Smith, S. 2015. "Religion and Ebola: learning from experience", *The Lancet*, Volume 386, Issue 10005, Pages e24-e25, ISSN 0140-6736, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(15\)61082-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(15)61082-0). (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0140673615610820>)

Activity B. Questions for reflection:

Questions for reflection will be announced in due time.

Week 48: Submission of final paper 27 November

Individual paper between 3000 - 3500 words: Choose one crisis and outline its main features. Discuss how different groups are affected and possible responses. Apply readings from all the three modules in the discussion.