

# Collaborative Governance: Planning For the Unthinkable

**Fall 2007: UAP 5164 CRN: 95109**

<b><u>Class times:</u></b> Monday 7:00 – 9:30 PM Location: AA 200 Office Hours: TBA	<b><u>Instructor information:</u></b> Professor Bruce Goldstein brugo@vt.edu Office location: 103 Architecture Annex
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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

*“...the ability to deal with a crisis situation is largely dependent on the structures that have been developed before chaos arrives. The event can in some ways be considered as an abrupt and brutal audit: at a moment’s notice, everything that was left unprepared becomes a complex problem, and every weakness comes rushing to the forefront.” Preventing Chaos in a Crisis, Lagadec, p. 54*

The 4-16 shootings at Virginia Tech were an unthinkable event – beyond our everyday ability to imagine, and with subtle and far-reaching implications for our sense of self and community, as well as the way we organize our lives. Indeed history is not always smooth and incremental - abrupt and unexpected events such as this are the norm, and have had a profound impact on community, society, and ecology. How do we prepare for unthinkable events like this?

Hazard planning has been traditionally oriented toward reducing vulnerability, the susceptibility of a community or population to loss from hazard impacts. However this approach is inadequate for coping with the unthinkable. By definition, the type and severity of losses associated with unthinkable events are difficult to anticipate. The concept of resilience is more appropriate than vulnerability for planning for the unthinkable. Resilience involves the capacity to withstand loss and the capacity to recover from loss if it occurs. It is defined as how far a particular relationship can be perturbed without dramatic loss of complexity, rather than the speed at which the status quo can be restored after disturbance.

Resilience is a characteristic that grows out of people and communities. It can be facilitated but not legislated. Ceding responsibility for resilience planning to credentialed experts or commissioning elaborate planning documents will always be an inadequate approach, because features of resilience are beyond the reach of governmental power, and experts and their plans abstract resilience planning from the communities who must innovate and respond. Instead, resilience planning needs to be cultivated through social interaction, within engaged communities. Governments have a critical role to play, but bureaucratic domination could actually inhibit essential activity in the

convoluted interstices of civil society. This class will consider how communities engage in resilience planning through collaborative learning. We will also consider how to organize and operate collaborative efforts, and ensure that they are accountable.

Different unthinkable events require different approaches to resilience planning. While some unthinkable events - like the 4-16 shootings - are rapid and discrete, others are insidious, incremental, potentially irreversible, have a diffusion pattern over the landscape, and possess a long life-expectancy. Planning efforts must accommodate their long duration, intergenerational implications, and need to consider adaptation in the context of changing community membership. In addition, an unthinkable event may be relative to the temporal and spatial scope of the social group effected – for example, a Category 4 hurricane may be unthinkable to a family that recently moved to a coastal area, part of historical memory within their community, and a routine occurrence within the experience of their nation. Accordingly, the cases we will examine run across this gamut of possibilities, from our own community security crisis on 4-16 to natural and technological disaster, threats to sustainability from resource scarcity or ecological collapse. In addition, we will consider how mechanisms for collaborative governance can contribute to adaptation to an unthinkable event by restoring the ecological and institutional status quo, as well as efforts to transform community or society to better accommodate unthinkable events.

## **CLASS LOGISTICS**

### ***Readings***

Readings will be available in a class reader to be available at A-1 copies during the first week of the term, or will be made available on the blackboard website ([www.learn.vt.edu](http://www.learn.vt.edu)).

### ***Journaling (20% of grade)***

Starting August 27th, students will keep a weekly (11 entries) one to two page (250-500 words) journal of their observations and reflections. The journals will be based upon the reading material, class activities, and observations. For each weekly journal entry, write two questions related to the week's readings for presentation in class.

The final journal is due on November 26th. The journal and comments on other's journals will be evaluated for grading purposes based upon application of the readings and class in the entries and creativity in observation and reflection. Please bring the journal into class with you. It is highly recommended that you keep copies of journal entries in the event that the journal is misplaced.

### ***Weekly Questions (10% of grade)***

Students must come to class with a question or observation or two that you have about each week's readings. These questions should be thoughtfully related to the readings, not general or obvious. We will use these questions to orient in-class discussion or exercises. You should be prepared to explain your questions in greater detail in class. Questions *must* be written in the journal by the beginning of class in order to receive credit.

## ***Project (40% of grade)***

The major student project for the course will be a 2-4 member team project examining how the activities of a learning network or community of practice increase resilience to the unthinkable. The teams will consult with the professor to select a network to study. Possibilities include:

The mental health community of Blacksburg after 4-16

The coastal resource learning network in the Asia-Pacific region

One of the Nature Conservancy's Learning Networks (Climate, Fire, Exotics, etc.)

The All-hazards Consortium (<http://www.ahcusa.org/>)

By the third class, the professor will develop a protocol for this team project: tentatively, key questions are:

- Why was the network organized?
- How was the network organized?
- How is social learning taking place in the network?
- How would you describe the core practice of the group?
- What challenges/problem have they encountered (noted by either analysts or participants)?
- How are learning activities enhancing resilience?

All team members will be responsible for preparing a summary presentation for the last day of class.

Team projects will be evaluated based upon completeness of the treatment, creativity in the application of the methods and strategies, inclusion of ideas and reading from the class, and quality of the written and oral presentation. Each team member is required to complete an evaluation of their own contribution to the group project, along with an evaluation of the contribution of each of their team members. These evaluations will be completed on-line on an anonymous survey website ([surveymonkey.com](http://surveymonkey.com)), and your input will remain entirely confidential.

## ***Reading provocateur (20% of grade)***

Each member of the seminar will take responsibility for introducing class readings during 2 classes. For each reading, they will provide a brief (> 5min) summary, set the readings in broader historical and conceptual context, and provide some provocative comments to stimulate discussion.

## ***In-class participation (10% of grade)***

Informed participation is central to this class. Although subjective, students can earn participation credit by never missing class and being an informed, provocative, and considerate class participant. In short, be fully engaged or at least try to pretend and act as though this is the most exciting and enlightening seminar you have ever taken, and that you never want it to end.

Class will be proactive and conversational. Thus, *all* students must not only have read the reading assignment *prior* to class, but must be ready to discuss the readings on a regular basis. I am seeking input from the entire class, not just from a few committed students. Thus, students need to know when to speak up and when to stay quiet.

## ***Disabilities and Special Needs***

If there is anyone in the class who has special circumstances that require some revision or assistance in completing the assignments or to promote better learning, see the instructor to make these arrangements *early in the semester*. This applies to both those who are formally recognized by the university as having disabilities and those who are not. The intent is to ensure everyone an environment in which they can effectively learn.

For more detailed information on your rights please refer to:

<http://www.dos.vt.edu/SSD/default.html>

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

### ***Part 1: Introduction***

#### **8/20: What Are Unthinkable Events?**

### ***Part 2: What is resilience to unthinkable events?***

#### **8/27: Resilience: From the Individual To the Social-Ecological**

- Paul Knox's article on resilient Blacksburg after 4-16
- Paton, Douglas and Johnston, David. 2006. Disaster Resilience: an Integrated Approach. Charles Thomas,, Springfield, IL. Ch. 1, 6, 12, 18
- Folke, Carl; Hahn, Thomas; Olsson, Per, and Norberg, Jon. Adaptive governance of social-ecological systems. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*. 2005; 30:441-473.
- Walker, B., Holling, C. S., Carpenter, S. R., and Kinzig, A. (2004). Resilience, adaptability and transformability in socialecological systems. *Ecology and Society* 9, no. 2: 5.

### ***Part 3: How can social learning foster resilience to unthinkable events? What are organizational networks, and how are they instruments for social learning?***

#### **9/3: Social Networks**

- Malcolm Gladwell, "Six Degrees of Lois Weisberg," in *The New Yorker*, January 11, 1999
- Cross, Rob et al. 2002. A bird's-eye view: Using social network analysis to improve knowledge creation and sharing

#### **9/10: Network Organizations**

- Podolny, Joel M. and Karen L. Page. 1998. Network Forms of Organization. *Annu. Rev. Sociol.* 24:57-76.
- Mendizabal, E. 2006. "Understanding Networks: The Functions of Research Policy Networks." Working Paper 271. Overseas Development Institute, London.
- Perkin, Emily and Julius Court. 2005. Networks and Policy Processes in International Development: a literature review. Overseas Development Institute

#### **9/17: Organizational Learning**

- Chapter 1 in: Argyris, C and D. Schon. 1996. *Organizational Learning II: Theory, Method, and Practice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Nielsen, R. P. (1993). Woolman's "I am we" triple-loop action-learning: Origin and application in organizational ethics. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 29, no. 1: 117-38.
- Crossan, Mary M.; Lane, Henry W., and White, Roderick E. An organizational learning framework: From intuition to institution. *The Academy of Management Review*. 1999; 24(3):522-537.

## **9/24: Networks and Organizational Learning**

- Beeby, Mick and Charles Booth. 2000. Networks and Inter-Organizational Learning: a Critical Review. *The Learning Organization* 7(2):75-88.
- Bottrup, P. 2005. Learning in a network: a “third way” between school learning and workplace learning? *Journal of Workplace Learning* Vol. 17 No. 8.
- Osterlund, Carsten and Paul Carlile. 2005. Relations in Practice: Sorting Through Practice Theories on Knowledge Sharing in Complex Organizations. *The Information Society* 21:91-107.

## ***Part 4: How can forms of collaborative governance foster resilience to unthinkable events through social learning?***

### **10/1: Organizational Workgroups As Communities of Practice**

- Cummings, Sarah and van Zee Arin. 2005. "Communities of Practice and Networks: Reviewing Two Perspectives on Social Learning." *KM4D Journal* 1(1):8-22.
- Wenger, Etienne and Synder, William M.. 2000. *Communities of Practice: The Organizational Frontier*. Harvard Business Review.
- Milward, B.H. and K. Provan. 2006. “A Manager’s Guide to Using and Choosing Collaborative Networks.” IBM Report on the Business of Government.
- Vaughan, Diane. 2005. System Effects: On Slippery Slopes, Repeating Negative Patterns, and Learning from Mistake, in William Starbuck and Moshe Farjoun, eds. *Organization at the Limit: NASA and the Columbia Accident*. Blackwell.

### **10/8: Fall Break, no class**

### **10/15: Interorganizational Learning Networks**

- Snyder, William M. and Wenger, Etienne. 2004 Our World as a Learning System: a Communities-of-Practice Approach. In: *Create a Learning Culture: Strategy, Practice, and Technology*. Marcia L. Conner, James G. Clawson (editors). Cambridge University Press
- *Networking For Learning: What Can Participants Do?* 2004. ICCO.
- Goldstein, Bruce E. and Butler, William. 2007. *Learning Networks to Catalyze Change In Socially-Explicit Fire Regimes: Ecological Restoration Through Storytelling*.

### **10/22: Professor out of town, no class – project groups will meet at class time**

### **10/29: Multi-stakeholder Collaborative Networks**

- Schusler, Tania M., Daniel J. Decker, and Max J. Pfeffer. 2003. "Social Learning for Collaborative Natural Resource Management." *Society and Natural Resources* 16(4):309-26.
- Keen, Meg and Mahanty, Sango. *Learning in Sustainable Natural Resource Management: Challenges and Opportunities in the Pacific*. *Society and Natural Resources*. 2006; 19(6):497-513.
- Mostert, E., C. Pahl-Wostl, Y. Rees, B. Searle, D. Tàbara, and J. Tippett. 2007. Social learning in European river-basin management: barriers and fostering mechanisms from 10 river basins. *Ecology and Society* 12 (1): 19.
- Pahl-Wostl, C. 2006. The importance of social learning in restoring the multifunctionality of

rivers and floodplains. *Ecology and Society* 11(1): 10.

### **11/5: Social Movements As Learning Networks**

- Buechler, Steven M. 1995. New social movement theories. *The Sociological Quarterly*, Volume 36, Number 3, p. 441-464.
- Larana, Enrique; Johnston, Hank, and Gusfield, Joseph R. *New Social Movements: From Ideology .To Critique*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press; 1994.
- Morgen, Sandra. *Into Our Own Hands: The Women's Health Movement In the United States, 1969-1990*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press; 2002.
- Goldstein, Bruce Evan. 2007. *Skunkworks In the Embers of the Cedar Fire: Enhancing Resilience in the Aftermath of Disaster*. *Human Ecology*.

### ***Part 5: How can these forms of collaborative governance be created, led, and maintained?***

#### **11/12: Design and Process**

- *Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge*. 2002. Etienne C. Wenger, William M. Snyder. Available as free download from the library.

#### **11/19: Thanksgiving Break, no class**

#### **11/26: Monitoring, Outcomes, and Support**

- Creech 2001 Strategic Intentions networks operating principles
- Provan, Keith G. and Milward, H. Brinton. Do networks really work? A framework for evaluating public-sector organizational networks. *Public Administration Review*. 2001; 61(4):414-423.
- Ebrahim, A. (2003). Accountability in Practice: Mechanisms for NGOs. *World Development*, 31(3), 813-829
- *McDermott, Richard*. How to Avoid a Mid-Life Crisis in Your CoPs: Uncovering six keys to sustaining communities

### ***Part 6: Group Presentations***

**12/3**