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**University of Stellenbosch – Stellenbosch, South Africa**

**POSTGRADUATE MODULE IN DISASTER RISK STUDIES  
(Part of Department of Geography's Bachelor of Arts Honours  
Programme)**

While South Africa specifically, and southern Africa in general, are not internationally viewed as disaster-prone, rapid population growth, widespread socioeconomic vulnerability and environmental pressures have significantly increased disaster risk. This is reflected in severe drought impacts and flash flooding – along with growing rates of 'small disasters' in peri-urban and informal settlements, which inflict devastating losses on poor households.

These trends suggest that in addition to improving early warning for, preparedness and response to disaster events, there is an equally pressing imperative to reduce the probability and severity of disaster occurrences through risk-sensitive development interventions.

**Educational objectives:**

This course provides students with an integrated understanding of disaster risk and its implications for sustainable development in southern Africa, with a specific focus on South Africa. The course contextualises disaster risk as an outcome of the interplay between human and natural factors. It adopts an interdisciplinary perspective on disasters, taking into consideration both biophysical elements (hazards) and the social and economic forces that influence disaster vulnerability and resilience. Specific learning outcomes include:

- A clear understanding of the theoretical and applied disciplines that define disaster, vulnerability and risk (including hazard science and the applied disciplines of disaster management, disaster loss and humanitarian assistance)

- An understanding of the nature, impact and underlying socioeconomic, political, environmental and infrastructural risk factors driving frequently occurring disasters in southern Africa, including the roles of HIV/AIDS and climate variability
- A clear understanding of the patterns of urban and rural disaster risk in southern Africa
- Demonstrated capacity to integrate and synthesise different and complementary disaster risk perspectives

### **Specific admission requirements:**

Applicants should have a BA or BSc degree in the environmental or geographic sciences.

### **Programme structure:**

The course comprises one 8-week module over one semester, and forms part of a full years' Honours degree in Geography and Environmental Science.. The course is divided into three main components:

- Introduction to Disaster Risk, including a conceptual, theoretical and historical overview of disaster risk science
- A focus on urban risk, examining at-risk areas, communities and households. Including a field excursion into at risk settlements to conduct a community risk assessment.
- Contemporary risks

### **Assessment & examination:**

Assessment is by portfolio and examination.

### **Contact Details:**

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