

COLORADO WOMEN'S COLLEGE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

ASEM 2735: Perspectives on Climate Change

Summer Quarter 2014

INSTRUCTOR: Hilary Simons Morland, Ph.D.

Email: hilarymorland@me.com

I will respond to email messages within 24 hours. I will be available to meet with you by appointment before or after each class.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Global warming. Melting polar ice caps. Greenhouse gases. Mitigation. How do you react when you hear these terms? Do you become worried? Bored? Confused? Climate change is one of the most important, complex, and controversial issues of our time. Changes in climate and extreme weather events are having an impact on human health, livelihood, and economic development at local, national, and international levels. The majority of climate scientists agree that observed climate-warming trends are caused by human activity. Yet, politicians and business leaders do not agree on this issue, and there is no clear public consensus on what to do. How can the average person know what to think? How do we wade through the rhetoric of the different sides of this issue and become informed citizens?

In this class, we will explore multiple perspectives and use multiple sources to examine how our society copes with controversial issues. We will acquire basic familiarity with the scientific literature on climate change, review popular media depictions of climate disasters, and explore the sustainability movement to decide what changes we should make, if any, in our personal lifestyle choices. One of the goals of the class is to help students develop an informed perspective on this issue and be able to advocate for that perspective. This class will not focus primarily on the science of global climate change. The material will be accessible to everyone. We will consult scientific articles, newspapers, magazines, websites, media excerpts (radio and television), film, discussion, and guest speakers to learn about this topic from multiple perspectives. Students will be expected to participate fully in class discussions, and to write at least 20 pages during the class, including short weekly assignments, an op-ed piece, a film review, and a personal position statement.

To become familiar with the issue, we will begin with a general overview of the scientific evidence for trends in global climate change. We will look at how climate change impacts people differently in rich and poor countries. Who are the “winners” and “losers”? Students will read and analyze case studies from Africa, Asia, and the United States to understand how climate changes impacts these regions differently.

Next we will explore the controversy over the causes and consequences of global climate change and what to do about it. Who are the major voices in the debate? Why is this

issue so polarized? What are the different perspectives of scientists, business leaders, politicians, and policy-makers?

Then we will look at popular media interpretations of climate change and how the media contributes to the controversy over climate change. Students will watch a documentary film about climate change (e.g., “An Inconvenient Truth”) and a Hollywood “eco-disaster” movie (e.g., “The Day After Tomorrow”), and analyze the factual basis of the films as well as their potential impacts on public opinion.

Finally, we will study different views about strategies of mitigation and adaptation as well as options for what we can do on a personal level. We will learn about the sustainable living movement and discuss what kinds of changes we should make, if any, in our lifestyle choices in the United States or in our daily lives in Denver. The class will culminate in exploring our visions for the future, and each student will write a personal position paper based on the information learned in the course.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will demonstrate a basic understanding of multiple perspectives in the global climate change controversy and be able to identify geographical differences in the causes and consequences of trends in global climate change.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to evaluate the validity of popular interpretations of scientific data portrayed in the media and in public policy debates.
- Students will be able to articulate why the average citizen should be concerned and knowledgeable about this issue.
- Students will develop an informed perspective about global climate change and demonstrate the ability to advocate for that perspective.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The Women’s College fully endorses the University of Denver’s Honor Code and the procedures put forth by the Office of Citizenship and Community Standards. Academic dishonesty—including plagiarism, cheating, and falsification of data and research—is in violation of the code and will result in a failing grade for the assignment or for the course.

As student members of a community committed to academic integrity and honesty, it is your responsibility to become familiar with the DU Honor Code and its procedures (www.du.edu/honorcode).

REQUIRED COURSE TEXT

McKibben, Bill, ed. *The Global Warming Reader: A Century of Writing about Climate Change*. New York, NY: Penguin, 2012.

Edited and with an introduction by Bill McKibben, a widely respected environmentalist, author, and journalist, this volume is an annotated collection of short articles about the

science, history and politics of climate change. The selections represent multiple voices and viewpoints.

Additional required readings will be posted on blackboard each week.

RECOMMENDED

Maslin, Mark. *Global Warming. A Very Short Introduction*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009.

This volume provides basic information about the science underlying global climate change.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Blackboard discussion board postings (15% of final grade)

Class attendance and participation (15% of final grade)

Op-Ed piece (20% of final grade)

Film review (20% of final grade)

Envisioning the Future paper (30% of final grade)

Completing the above requirements will require each student to complete all required readings *before* the class dates listed on the schedule.

Percentage	Grade
95-100	A
90-94	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
67-69	D+
64-66	D
60-63	D-

0-59	F
------	---

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance is mandatory in all class sessions. Active participation in class and online discussions is required and will count toward the final grade. If an emergency arises, it is the student's responsibility to contact her instructor.

A grade of incomplete will not be granted under any circumstances.

<http://www.du.edu/registrar/records/incompletepolicy.html>

TECHNOLOGY USE IN THE CLASSROOM

In order to create and maintain an optimal learning environment in the classroom, students should use technology appropriately as directed by the instructor for the purposes of the course. Work done on laptops, cell phones, and other devices that is not relevant to the class can hinder the process of communication and shared discussion of ideas that require full engagement by all participants.

ADA ACCOMMODATIONS

Students who require accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act must contact the instructor to discuss their needs. Failure to notify the instructor immediately may hinder the college's ability to accommodate accordingly. Students with learning disabilities should also contact the University Disability Services Program at <http://www.du.edu/studentlife/disability/> <http://www.du.edu/disability>. University Disability Services houses the Learning Effectiveness Program (LEP) and the Disability Services Program (DSP).

OBSERVATION OF RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Students wishing to observe a religious holiday not celebrated on the academic calendar may do so provided advanced written notice is given the instructor during the first two weeks of the quarter. With advanced written notice, the absence will be considered an excused absence. For additional information, contact DU's Center for Religious Services (<http://www.du.edu/crs/>)

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. **Blackboard Discussion Board Postings (500 words each).** Each student will be responsible for posting responses to questions posed by the instructor about the weekly reading. Students will be expected to read and comment on at least one other student post. Students will share their posts in class, and these posts will provide the basis for weekly class discussion.

DUE DATES: June 26th, July 3rd, July 24th, August 7th

2. **Op-Ed Piece (1000 words).** Students will write an opinion piece for a newspaper or online web site of their choice expressing their opinions about the issue of global climate change. The perspective expressed must be based on valid information and evidence

about the issue. Each student also will write a 1-page rebuttal to another student's piece. Time will be spent in class on peer-review and discussion of each piece.

DUE DATE: July 10th (via email)

3. Film Review (1000 words). Students will watch a documentary (e.g., “An Inconvenient Truth” or “Chasing Ice”) and a Hollywood film (e.g., “The Day After Tomorrow”) that relates to the issue of climate change. These films will be selected from a list provided by the instructor. Students will analyze the Hollywood films from the point of view of what they have learned about climate change and discuss how documentaries and Hollywood movies might impact public opinion on this issue. Students will present their film review verbally to the class (15-20 min) and also submit a written film review.

DUE DATE: July 17th (via email)

4. Envisioning the Future paper (2000 words). Students will write a personal position paper based on their readings, discussions, thinking, and other work on the multiple perspectives and controversies surrounding global climate change. This paper will expand upon the opinions expressed in the Op-Ed Piece and also create a scenario about what the future might look like based on what we have learned in the course. Time will be devoted in class to this assignment. Students will be required to turn in a rough draft of this paper and revise it before final submission based on feedback from the professor. Instructional time will be devoted to writing and revising.

ROUGH DRAFT DUE DATE: July 31st (via email)

FINAL PAPER DUE DATE: August 14th (via email)

COURSE SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

Class 1 (6/19): The basic science of global climate change.

Readings:

McKibben. Introduction and Part 1: Science (Pages 9-93).

Oreskes, Naomi, 2007, “The scientific consensus on climate change: How do we know we’re not wrong?” *Climate Change: What It Means for Us, Our Children, and Our Grandchildren*, edited by Joseph F. C. DiMento and Pamela Doughman, MIT Press, pp. 65-99.

Class 2 (6/26): Taking a global perspective on climate change.

DUE: Blackboard discussion post.

Readings:

Oliver-Smith, Anthony. "Climate Change and Population Displacement: Disasters and Diasporas in the Twenty-first Century." In *Anthropology and Climate Change: From Encounters to Actions*. Susan A Crate and Mark Nuttall, eds. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast, 2009. Pp. 116-136.

Hitchcock, Robert. "From Local to Global: Perceptions and Realities of Environmental Change Among Kalahari San." In *Anthropology and Climate Change: From Encounters to Actions*. Susan A Crate and Mark Nuttall, eds. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast, 2009. Pp. 250-261.

Green, Donna. "Opal Waters, Rising Seas: How Sociocultural Inequality Reduces Resiliency to Climate Change among Indigenous Australians." In *Anthropology and Climate Change: From Encounters to Actions*. Susan A Crate and Mark Nuttall, eds. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast, 2009. Pp. 218-227.

Folger, Tim. "Rising Seas." *National Geographic*. September 2013. Vol. 224 (3): 30-59.

Class 3 (7/3): Who is responsible? Case studies from developed countries.

DUE: Blackboard discussion post.

Readings:

McKibben. Part II: Politics (Pages 97-210) and (Pages 400-403).

Bohren, Lenora. "Car Culture and Decision Making: Choice and Climate Change." In *Anthropology and Climate Change: From Encounters to Actions*. Susan A Crate and Mark Nuttall, eds. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast, 2009. Pp. 370-379.

Adler, Jerry. "Hot Enough for You?" *Smithsonian*. May 2014. Pp. 53-59.

Class 4 (7/10): The influence of Hollywood, popular culture, and the media on public perceptions of global warming. Documentaries and eco-disaster movies

DUE: Op-Ed Piece due.

Readings:

McKibben. Part II: Politics (Pages 211-288).

Additional readings to be posted in Blackboard.

Class 5 (7/17): Why do we disagree? Politics and climate change.

DUE: Film Review and in-class presentations.

Readings:

McKibben. Part III: Impact (Pages 293-350).

Somerville, Richard C.J. and Susan Joy Hassol. "Communicating the Science of Climate Change." *Physics Today*. October 2011. Pp. 48-53.

Additional resources to be posted in Blackboard.

Class 6 (7/24): Do international agreements work?

DUE: Blackboard discussion post.

Readings:

To be posted in blackboard

Class 7 (7/31): Forming an informed personal opinion.

DUE: Rough draft of Envisioning the Future paper

Readings:

McKibben. Part II: Impact (Pages 351-398).

Additional readings to be posted in Blackboard

Class 8 (8/7): What should we do about it? A look at the sustainable living movement.

DUE: Blackboard discussion post.

Readings:

To be posted in Blackboard.

Class 9 (8/14): What will the Future look like?

DUE: Envisioning the Future paper.

LIST OF DOCUMENTARIES AND FILMS (Preliminary)

Carbon Nation

Chasing Ice

Climate Refugees

Facing Climate Change

The Great Global Warming Swindle

An Inconvenient Truth

The Years of Living Dangerously

The Age of Stupid

The 11th Hour

Everything's Cool

Facing Climate Change: Plateau Tribes

Are you Listening!

The Day After Tomorrow

The Day the Earth Stood Still

2012
Soylent Green
Waterworld
Category 7