

School of Global Studies
SOS 494
Social Dimensions of Climate Change
Summer 2011



Instructor:
Dr. Pamela McElwee
Assistant Professor,
School of Global Studies and School of Sustainability
pamela.mcelwee@asu.edu
skype: pammcelwee

Online “Office Hours”:
Thurs 12-2 AZ time
Yahoo Messenger to: sos494mcelwee or
skype: pammcelwee

Course Description

This is an advanced seminar that will explore advanced topics in social and political aspects of climate change. We will look at the science of climate change and how the scientific process works and why it has been so contested in some quarters; the existing and predicted physical, economic and societal impacts of climate change; how vulnerability to climate change is measured and whether societies will be able to adapt to forecasted changes; the ethical and social justice dimensions of acting or not acting on climate change; the international relations strategies for climate change mitigation that have been tried to date, as well as country and subnational strategies; and the economic costs of action and inaction.

Course Objectives

1. To understand basic concepts in the field of climate change and the relationships these have with social issues.
2. To identify and be familiar with ongoing debates concerning issues such as impacts, vulnerability and adaptation.
3. To critically analyze solutions and responses to climate change.

Format of Course and Online Learning Environment

Important Notes:

1. **This class is delivered and conducted entirely online.** Students will receive reading assignments, participate in discussions, submit assignments, and take exams all online through myASU (<http://my.asu.edu>). This requires a computer with a **reliable** Internet connection, access to the myASU/Blackboard site, and an active ASU email account. If students prefer to have ASU email delivered to an account used more frequently, please access ASUInteractive and select *Update Your E-mail Address*

Information from the Main Menu (<http://www.asu.edu/interactive>). Note that some email providers do not accept this type of forwarded mail, and some students may not receive emails; it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that all emails are received.

2. **All times on this syllabus are Arizona time (MST).** If taking this course from a different time zone, note that Arizona does not participate in Daylight Savings Time, so during summer months times are equivalent to Pacific Standard Time. Please make the necessary adjustments to meet all deadlines contained in this syllabus. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that all assignments and exams are received by the time due.
3. **The primary method of communicating with the Instructor is via email.** Please use my ASU email for all communication. I also have Skype and Yahoo Messenger accounts as noted in the contact info above but those are for use during designated office hours. Outside of office hours, use my ASU email first and foremost.

A normal semester is around 15 weeks; an online summer semester is 5 weeks. That means we have to put 3 weeks of regular semester work into each week of online summer work. In a non-online 3 credit semester class you are in the classroom approximately 2.5 hours a week for lectures/classroom work in addition to your outside reading and homework for the class. A comparable amount of time for our online course is that you will likely be spending around 7.5 hours a week to fulfill requirements of listening to the online lectures, participating in online discussions, taking online quizzes, etc. Then you will need additional time (as much as twice your 'online' time) each week on top of this to complete readings and homework, so please budget your time accordingly. **If you can't devote 10 to 20 hours each week for the next five weeks for this class, don't take it.** Online courses are not easier than semester long courses; due to the tight timeline, they can be even harder, especially if you fall behind.

We will work by weeks. Each week you will be responsible for completing all the assigned work for the week and the major written assignment due for that week by the end of the week (Friday at midnight, with the exception of Week One, for which I will give you until Sunday, June 5, at midnight). When you complete the work throughout the week is up to you – you can work at your own pace, as long as you finish the work by the end of each week. You will find it impossible to complete the required written assignment for each week if you have not done the assigned reading first, so please spread the work throughout the week and do not try to cram it all in at the end of the week.

Required Reading

We will make use of one book in the course, along with online readings. The book is available for purchase at the ASU bookstore, online at Amazon.com, and one copy is on reserve at Hayden library.

* Schneider, S et al (2010). *Climate Change Science and Policy*. Island Press. ISBN-12: 978-1-59726-567-6
http://www.amazon.com/Climate-Change-Science-Stephen-Schneider/dp/1597265675/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1274737630&sr=8-1

There will also be a few supplemental readings that will be available on the class Blackboard site and located in the Course Documents tab in the week's folder they are associated with. Students are responsible for accessing and reading these supplemental articles.

Requirements & Grading

Written work and their points are listed in the table below. Dates and details of assignments will be finalized throughout the course. Please discuss with me if any assignment or due date is unclear.

Grades

There are 100 points that are possible to achieve in the work in this class. I will grade according to the following scale. (According to university policy, C- and D+ are not available.) Cutoffs are firm, especially given the use of pluses and minuses

Grading Scale

A	90 - 100
A-	89
B+	88
B	80 - 87
B-	79
C+	78
C	70 - 77
D	60 - 69
E	- 59

Assignments

The points you will be graded on in the class include the following assignments:

Assignment	Points (100 total)	Due Date
Midterm	10	Middle of of week 3 (take test by 11:59pm, June 15)
Final	20	End of week 5 (take test by 11:59pm July 1)
5 weekly blog posts	50 pts total	Each week; 10 points each, due 11:59 pm MST each Friday
Participation in discussion board and blog commenting	20	Each week (4 pts a week), due no later than Sunday each week at midnight

Weekly Work:

Each week has a theme, and we will do readings, watch online video, and engage in writing and discussion on that theme for the week. Students must participate in weekly activities related to the scheduled topic for the week by the deadlines laid out in this syllabus. Each week, look under the Course Documents tab on Blackboard to view the activities/resources which are organized in folders for each of our five weeks of class. Each week will require students to:

- 1) Carefully read through the assigned readings, both in the textbook and online.
- 2) Watch an online video on the week's theme.
- 3) Once you have read the readings and listened to the video, please use the weekly discussion forum to post any questions you have on the week's work, and post responses to other student's questions. You will be graded for the week on how active you are in the discussion forum. Your minimum work in the discussion board is to post at least one question/comment of your own per week in our discussion board, and to provide an answer to any question that I as moderator post to the forum and/or at least one other student question if I have not posed a particular question myself.
- 4) Write a 'blog briefing' that tries to answer one of the suggested questions for the week's theme. Your blog posting will go in each week's blog forum (accessible from the blog tab). The blog posting must provide evidence of learning the week's material by documenting sources read and engaging in a discussion of the

related week's study materials. Your blog posting is an essay; please write it in formal style as you would any other academic assignment. Your blog summary needs to at the very minimum include: the main points on the topic you chose, compiled from the readings; types of key evidence from the readings with specific citations; the implications of the arguments from the readings; your take on the key points of the readings; raise at least one substantive question (an important question of understanding, not simple information) regarding the reading; and explore any additional materials you found related to your question (including hyperlinks if possible). On paper, each blog briefing would be equivalent to a 2-3 page essay, and when it is posted on our blog, you may wish to use additional graphics to make your key points to enliven your entry. I will provide private feedback to each student on their blogs along with grades each week through the assignments page.

- 5) Students will receive up to 4 discussion points each week for participating in **both** the discussion board and commenting on each others' blog posts. Please regularly check each separate area, and stay actively involved in both. The best responses to blog posts will be those that respond to another student's post with a contrary opinion or supportive opinion that has relevance, makes specific reference to the class material, and adds to the depth of understanding of the topic. All weekly participation activities are due Monday of the following week by midnight, with the exception of the last week of class, for which all discussions must be wrapped up by Saturday, July 2 at midnight. Your comments should be active throughout the course and will count for 20 points of your grade. You must be active in BOTH the general discussion board AND be commenting on at least half or more of other student's blogs each week for maximum discussion points. Lack of active engagement with your fellow students will hurt your grade considerably.
- 6) Any work for the week not completed by the designated due date (Fridays at midnight for blog postings) begins to be considered late immediately. Late blog postings will be penalized 5 points per day late. Late tests will not be accepted; finish them by the designated time or you will get a zero for that assignment.

Exams:

There will be a midterm and a final. Each will be online and consist of short answer and other types of questions. The midterm will be worth 10 points, and must be taken by Wed at midnight on June 15. The test will be available starting 3 days before this deadline in the Assignments tab of the BB site. The final will be worth 20 points, and must be taken by Friday at midnight on July 1. The test will be available 4 days before this deadline.

Withdrawals and Incompletes

Please see me if you feel you will need to withdraw from the class. You will need to follow ASU and SOS rules on dates for withdrawal. I will not give incompletes for this course, except for extreme and ongoing situations such as family problems or illnesses that you or an immediate family member suffer that would make it impossible for you to finish the class. Documentation is required. For more information, please see: <http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/usi/usi203-09.html>

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is not tolerated in any shape or form. If you are unclear on what constitutes dishonesty, please see <http://clas.asu.edu/files/AI%20Flier.pdf> Dishonesty includes any forms of plagiarism, cheating on tests, turning in the same work for more than one class, and other things. **I have a zero tolerance policy on academic dishonesty: An initial incident will result in the student receiving no credit for the assignment. A second incident will result in a failure in the class, and a grade of XE is an option for cases in which I feel there has been serious misconduct. *It is your responsibility to be aware of what plagiarism is, and not to do it in any shape or form.*** There may be additional university consequences, including expulsion.

Other Policies

1. There is no extra credit work.
2. Announcements and instructions throughout the course on Blackboard will amplify, supplement, and possibly change the syllabus. The student is responsible for keeping up-to-date on these announcements and for understanding any changes.
3. Email is a medium for communication with the instructor that should be used sparingly, and with respect. Please do not email me expecting an immediate answer, or email with a question 2 hours before an assignment is due. Use the instructor's online office hours to discuss projects and class questions in depth, rather than email, which is not very interactive as a medium. During online office hours you may use Yahoo messenger or Skype with me to discuss projects that require more detailed discussion than email allows. I do not usually answer email on weekends or evenings so please plan ahead accordingly.
4. If you have any disability or need any special consideration, please email me so that we can make appropriate arrangements. You may contact the Disability Resource Center at (480) 965-1234 or www.asu.edu/drc for more information.

Outline and Schedule of Class Periods and Readings

Week 1 – Impacts of Climate Change Written postings Due June 5

Readings for the Week: Textbook: Introduction, Ch 1, Ch 5, Ch 6, Ch 10, Ch 11, Ch 12 plus online readings in this week's folder

Online video viewing: Release of US Climate Change Research Program study:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y88sgDM9HmA>

Questions to choose from for blog posting & discussion:

What are the basic scientific theories underpinning climate change?

What are the major drivers of climate change?

What impacts are we seeing now?

What impacts are predicted by 2050 and beyond?

What have been the 'controversies' regarding the IPCC and the 'Climategate' emails in the past year?

Week 2 – Policy Analysis Written postings Due June 10 Midterm taken by June 15

Readings for the Week: Ch 13, Ch 15, Ch 16, Ch 17, Ch 18, Ch 19, Ch 20 plus online reading in this week's folder

Online Video viewing: Professor Naomi Oreskes presentation:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXyTpYONCp0>

Questions to choose from for blog posting & discussion:

How was the scientific consensus that humans are responsible for climate change reached?

Why do some people still deny it's happening?

How is climate risk communicated and understood?

What are the economic costs of acting or not acting?

What is the most politically feasible approach to policy action?

What are the relative merits of carbon taxes and carbon trading systems?

WEEK 3 – International Considerations
Written postings due June 17

Readings for the Week: Ch 9, Ch 21, Ch 23, Ch 24, Ch 25, Ch 26, Ch 29, Ch 30, Ch 31

Online video viewing: Davos 2010 discussion on the future of international action
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4i-jZJpLjk>

What have been the global policy actions so far?

Who bears the most responsibility to act?

What are the ethical reasons for acting or not acting?

Who and what is/are most vulnerable globally to climate change impacts?

Has the Kyoto Protocol failed?

Will developing countries agree to act?

Is a global solution possible without China and/or India?

WEEK 4 – United States Action
Written postings due June 24

Readings for the Week: Ch 33, Ch 34, Ch 36, Ch 37, Ch 38, Ch 39, Ch 40, Ch 41

Online video viewing: A debate on the Kerry Lieberman Climate Bill
http://www.democracynow.org/2010/5/13/greenpeace_v_center_for_american_progress

Questions to choose from for blog posting & discussion:

Why has the US been slow to act at the federal/national level?

What major actions have taken place at the state and local level and how significant are these actions?

How does the media report on and influence discussions of climate change?

Should and will corporations take action? What's in it for them?

Week 5 – Mitigation Options
Written postings due July 1
Final Completed by July 1
All discussion and commenting wrapped up by July 2

Readings for the Week: Ch 42, Ch 43, Ch 44, Ch 46, Ch 47, Ch 48, Ch 49 plus online reading in this week's folder

Online video viewing: Secretary Chu and the 'Sputnik Moment,' lecture by Secretary of Energy Steven Chu

<http://www.youtube.com/usdepartmentofenergy#p/u/60/DNrOxRpP1PM>

Questions to choose from for blog posting & discussion:

What are the types of mitigation options on the table, and their relative costs and benefits?

Is a rapid shift to carbon-free energy sources realistic? What would it take to get there?

What are the major technological barriers to acting? Are these greater or less than political barriers?

Can people just adapt to climate changes?

Is geoengineering a realistic solution to the problem? What are the downsides?