

GEOG 406: WINTER 2015

THE HUMAN DIMENSIONS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Instructor: Dr. James D. Ford, Dept. of Geography, Room 311 Burnside Hall, james.ford@mcgill.ca

Time and Location: Tuesday and Thursday, Burnside Hall Room 306, 2.35-3.55

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine the human dimensions of climate change focusing on the vulnerability of human systems, climate change adaptation and mitigation, key policy debates, and current and future challenges. Case studies will be utilized to provide context and help investigate and understand key concepts, trends, and challenges.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course you will be able to:

- Identify how the risks of climate change are perceived and what influences this perception
- Describe how multiple factors interact to create vulnerable and resilient populations
- Characterize how the problem of climate change is being addressed in policy at local to international scales, and how climate policy has evolved over time
- Critically analyze and justify policy options available to tackle climate change for different geographical locations / regions, economic sectors, vulnerable populations etc.
- Develop confidence and competence in written and oral communication

INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD

There are two 1½ hour classes per week. The course will involve a mixture of instructor led lectures, seminar discussions, student presentations, and small group work.

LECTURE SCHEDULE

The schedule of lectures and readings may shift during the course.

Date	Lecture	Readings
6 th Jan	Introduction to the course	None
8 th	DVD: The great global warming swindle	Gleick et al (2010), IPCC (2013), Kerr (2013)
13 th	DVD: The great global warming swindle <i>Assignment 1 handed out: term paper</i>	Ding et al (2011)
15 th	The 3 stages of climate change denial and DVD discussion <i>Assignment 2 handed out</i>	Boykoff and Boykoff (2004), Boykoff (2013)
20 th	Group work in class: Develop a climate change communication plan for sector of interest	Moser (2010), Patt and Weber (2014)
22 nd	Group work continued	None
27 th	Landmarks in climate change: The IPCC	Group readings – see reading list

29 th	Landmarks in climate change: the UNFCCC	Group readings – see reading list
Feb 3rd	Vulnerability: Conceptual evolution	Smit & Wandel (2006), Ribot (2011)
5 th	Vulnerability: Assessment frameworks	O’Brien et al (2007), Ford and Pearce (2012), Malone and Engle (2011)
10 th	Vulnerability: Group work focusing on vulnerability assessment <i>Assignment 2 due</i>	Group readings – see reading list
12 th	Vulnerability: Group work focusing on vulnerability assessment (continued from last class)	None
17 th	Mitigation: What is mitigation? <i>Assignment 1 draft due</i> <i>Assignment 3 handed out: simulated UN conference involving group presentations</i>	Raupach et al (2014), Jakob et al (2014)
19 th	Mitigation: Is the global political architecture upto the task?	Group readings – see reading list
24 th	Mitigation: Post-2013 policy dilemmas	Group readings
26 th	Free lecture to discuss the group assignment	None
3rd March	Study break: No lecture	None
5 th	Study break: No lecture	None
10 th	Adaptation: What is adaptation?	Group readings – see reading list
12 th	Are we adapting to climate change?	Adger and Barnett (2009); Berrang-Ford et al (2011)
17 th	Simulated UN Conference: student presentations	None
19 th	Simulated UN Conference: student presentations	None
24 th	Simulated UN Conference: student presentations	None
26 th	Simulated UN Conference: group negotiations to create draft text	None
31 st	Simulated UN Conference: free class for finalizing draft text	None
April 2nd	Simulated UN Conference: signing the Montreal Protocol or the Montreal Accord	None
7 th	Adaptation: Adaptation planning & group work in class <i>Assignment 1 – term paper due</i>	Ebi and Semenza (2008); de Bruin et al (2009); Fazey et al (2010), Tryhorn & De Gaetano (2011)
9 th	Course summary	

READINGS, ASSIGNMENTS & EVALUATION:

Readings

Most classes have readings assigned. For some classes students are expected to read all assigned readings, for other classes readings will be assigned to groups. Consult the reading list on mycourses for a complete list of and links to the readings. Students are expected to complete the readings and at the start of each class I will randomly select students to provide a brief overview of one of the readings. Where group readings are assigned, half of the group will be expected to do readings on one topic area and the other half the second topic area. In class group members will then be expected to share their insights from the readings they did with group members who did other readings.

Assignments

Assignment 1: At the beginning of the term, students will select a case-study topic to pursue for their term paper and will be given the whole semester to complete the assignment. The term paper will consist of a first Draft (5%), and a Final paper (25%).

Assignment 2: The public obtains the majority of their information on climate change from the media. The portrayal of climate change science in feature films including “The Day After Tomorrow” and popular documentaries including Al Gore’s “An Inconvenient Truth” has been important in raising awareness of climate change among the public and policy makers. Other films like “The Great Global Warming Swindle” and media debates surrounding “Climategate” and “Himalaygate” have also affected how the public perceives climate change, in some instances undermining public confidence in the science. In no more than 2000 words, examine how the portrayal of climate change in the media has affected the climate change debate. For the purposes of this essay, the media can be news outlets (e.g. papers, TV, magazines etc), websites, social media, or films.

Assignment 3: Each year the world’s nations gather at the UN’S Conference of the Parties meeting to review global progress in addressing climate change. At these meetings targets for climate policy are set and countries negotiate what their responsibilities should be and what others should be doing. In this assignment students will be split up into groups and assigned a country to represent. Groups will then have to prepare a statement to present to the class which outlines their country’s negotiating position on climate change. Time will be allocated for negotiations where other countries question the presenting group.

Participation: Participation is a requirement of the course. Quality of contribution is as important as regularity of participation. The participation grade will be based on class participation, group work, evidence that students have completed assigned readings, and group peer review.

Evaluation

Assignment 1: 30% (term paper)

Assignment 2: 20% (individual assignment)

Assignment 3: 30% (group work)

Participation in class: 20%

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct

and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity/ for more information).

COURSE COMMUNICATIONS

On January 1, 2004, McGill University instituted a policy that e-mail will be the official channel of communication (see <http://www.mcgill.ca/email-policy/>). Each student is assigned a unique e-mail address on registration and the instructors will use this address to periodically communicate important information to students. If you do not use the McGill e-mail either arrange to have your messages forwarded to the address you use or inform the instructors of an alternative e-mail address.

CLASS ETIQUETTE

Out of common courtesy, your professors request a few things of you. While students are in class, they are expected to give their full attention to the professor or the videotape, if one is being shown. Reading, talking, sleeping, and leaving before the end of class are impolite. If you know before class that you will have to leave early sit towards the back near the door so as not to disrupt the class. Likewise, if you arrive late, please enter from the back of the class.

OTHER

If you have a disability please contact the instructor to arrange a time to discuss your situation. It would be helpful if you contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at 514-398-6009 before you do this. Additional policies governing academic issues which affect students can be found in the McGill Charter of Students' Rights (Chapter One of the Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook available as a PDF on www.mcgill.ca/files/secretariat/Student-Handbook-2008-English.pdf).

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.