

POLITICAL SCIENCE 3GC3 /GEOGRAPHY 3GE3
GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE
Autumn 2019

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Course Description

Climate change threatens the health of the planet and the future of our species. This course provides students with an introduction to the domestic and international politics of climate change. The topic will be pursued by considering contributions from climate science, economics, geography, literature, philosophy, political economy, political science and international relations. It will use lectures, readings, films, class discussions and simulations to develop student understanding of the large scale climate challenges facing humanity over the rest of this century. The final weeks of the term will be devoted to engaging in a simulation on international climate negotiations. The simulation is designed to give students hands on experience in dealing with the difficulty of finding climate solutions.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to convincingly answer the following questions:

1. What causes climate change and what are the likely impacts on the natural environment?
2. What implications does climate change have for human society?
3. What options are available in response to the threats posed by climate change?
4. What are the politics of addressing climate change?
5. What are the significant climate issues and options for a particular country or region of the world?
6. What are the complexities involved behind negotiating an international climate agreement?

Required Materials and Texts

- Barbara Kingsolver, *Flight Behavior* (Harper Collins 2012).
- Michael E. Mann and Tom Toles *The Madhouse Effect: How Climate Change Denial is Threatening Our Planet, Destroying our Politics and Driving Us Crazy* (New York: Columbia University Press 2016).

Class Format

Students will be expected to attend weekly classes (3 hours), do assigned class readings, write a book and film review, take an in class test based on the lectures and readings, participate in simulations, complete a group research project and submit a self-evaluation of the experience. **There is no final exam in the course.** This course moves quickly and requires your *active participation*. ***If you are unable to participate or not willing to put in the work, consider transferring to another course.***

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Film review	10%
2. Book review	10%
3. Written Test	25%
4. Participation	20%
5. Group Research Project	25%
6. Self-evaluation of group work	10%

Course Evaluation – Details

Assignment 1 Film Review (10 %), due 23 September

Write a 1500 word (maximum) review of the two films viewed in this class. Make sure you address the following questions:

- What is the primary message of each film?
- In what ways are they similar?
- In what ways are they different?
- Did you find one more compelling than the other?

Assignment 2 Book review (10%), due 30 September

Write a 1500 word (maximum) critical review of *Flight Behaviour*. Make sure you address the following questions:

- How does climate change reveal itself in the novel?
- What are people's reactions to climate change?
- What does the novel tell us about climate change?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using a novel to understand climate change?

Assignment/test 3 written Test (25%), due 28 October

An in class test based on the Mann book and lectures is worth 25% of your mark. The test will be composed of three short essay questions.

Assignment/test 4 Participation (20%), Throughout the term.

Covers class attendance and participation in discussions and the simulations.

Assignment/test 5 Group Research Project (25%), due 25 November

Students are required to participate in written group research project. Each group will have approximately 7-8 people. You will be asked to write a 22-24 page report on the climate issues facing a particular country or region. You will be expected to draw upon academic books and journals, as well as **reliable** internet sources such as reports and

position papers from key actors and NGOs. The research report is due on the day of the world climate simulation. Make sure you keep notes on your contributions for your self-evaluation, make maximum use of allotted class time, and leave sufficient time for editing and writing. The group research report serves as the basis for your simulation activity.

Assignment/test 6 self-evaluation (10%), due 4 December

This evaluation should be a maximum of 6 double spaced pages. It should your contribution to, and evaluation of, the group research project and simulation. The evaluation should have three parts:

- I. Describe your intellectual and practical contributions to group discussion, report writing and simulation. Did you raise any key issues or concepts? Did you do too much work or not enough?
- II. Critically evaluate your group research project and participation in the negotiation. Were you pleased with the results, what were its strengths or weaknesses, what were the major problems in the project and the negotiations?
- III. Explain what you would have done differently if you were the only one researching and writing the report and participating in the simulation. How would an individual study been different? Do you think it would have been stronger or weaker than the group report? Why?

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 Introduction

Wed. 4 September – Course Introduction / How bad is it?

In class readings:

David Wallace Wells '[The Uninhabitable Earth](#)' July 10, 2017, *New York* magazine

[Scientist explain what the New York Magazine article on 'The Unpredictable Earth' gets wrong](#). Climate Feedback.Org, 13 July 2017

Week 2 Science

Mon. 9 September – Film 1

Readings: *Flight Behavior*

Wed. 11 September – Reviewing the Science

Readings: *Flight Behavior*

Week 3 Psychology

Mon. 16 September – Film 2

Readings: *Flight Behavior*

Wed. 18 September – Climate Change Psychology

Readings: *Flight Behavior*

Week 4 History

Monday 23 September – Medieval Warming / Fossil Fuel Capitalism

Readings: *Flight Behavior*

Note: **Film Review Due**

Wed. 25 September – Flight Behavior Discussion

Week 5 Ethics

Mon. 30 September – Intergenerational Storms & Moral Corruption

Note: *Flight Behavior* **Book Review Due**

Wed. 2 October – Discounting the Future (Ethics vs. Economics)

Readings: *Mad House Effect*

Week 6 Politicization of Science

Mon. October 7– Politicization of Science;

Debate, Denial, Skepticism Discussion

Readings: *Madhouse Effect*

Wed. October 9 – US Climate Politics

Readings: *Madhouse Effect*

Week 7 Reading Week

14-18 October

Readings: *Madhouse Effect*

Week 8 Climate Change Politics

Mon. 21 October – Canadian Climate Change Politics, North South Politics

Readings: *Madhouse Effect*

Wed. 23 October – Climate change and organized violence

Readings: *Madhouse Effect*

Week 9 Test and Energy Simulation Intro

Mon. 28 October – In class test on Weeks 3-8.

Wed. 30 October – Energy Simulation Intro

Week 10 Energy Simulation

Mon. 4 November – Energy Simulation

Wed. 6 November – World Climate Simulation Intro

Week 11 Group Project Work

Mon. 11 November

Wed. 13 November

Week 12 Group Project Work

Mon. 18 November

Wed. 20 November

Week 13 World Climate Simulation

Mon. 25 November – World Climate Simulation

Note: Hand in Report in Class

Wed. 27 November – World Climate Simulation

Week 14 Wrap up

2 December – World Climate Simulation

4 December – Self Evaluation Hand in

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

Assignments are to be handed in during class in hard copy.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Late Assignments

Late papers and other marked assignments will be penalised at the rate of one grade point per day (a grade point is the interval between A+ and A, A and A-, etc.), including weekend days, except in the most extenuating of circumstances. It is your responsibility to make contingency plans for unforeseen problems such as computer and car failures.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a RISO accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty

- Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- Improper collaboration in group work.
- Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable

notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Group Research Project Guideline

You have been tasked by the leader of your country to put together a team to negotiate an international climate change agreement. This will require you to prepare a climate change report for your country. Your group must write a report that sets out your positions and then engage in the international climate change negotiations. The report requires the following sections:

- i. *Carbon footprint:* What is its past, present and likely future carbon emissions trajectory, what sectors are most responsible for emissions?
- ii. *Political context:* Who stands to gain or lose from climate change action, what is the balance of forces in favour and against action in your country or region? Can political opposition be overcome or bought off?
- iii. *Past positions:* What were the country's previous international bargaining positions with regard to climate change negotiations?
- iv. *Desired outcome:* What kind of agreement would be the most desirable for the country?
- v. *Negotiation position:* what is your negotiating strategy and what offers you are willing to make? What are your fall back positions or second best strategies? What type of arguments are you willing to make in the negotiations?
- vi. Initial World Climate offer

Write up:

- the report in the form of a briefing paper for the head negotiator of your country or region.
- 24 pages double spaced maximum (28 for Developed or Developing Country Other), excluding bibliography and INDC

Country reports needed for:

- China
- European Union
- India
- United States
- Developed Country Other (Australia, Canada, Japan, Russia, South Korea)
- Developing Country Other (South Africa, Brazil, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Indonesia)

Getting started:

For initial climate change data for your country start with the [World Climate Data Explorer created by the World Resources Institute](#).

For the political part of the negotiations you can prepare by running some equity scenarios with the [Equity Explorer also created by the World Resources Institute](#).