

## **SOCIAL DILEMMAS OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

SOC 459-659

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Human-nature interactions are complex and climate change is the most complicated and daunting of these interactions. Changes in the Earth's atmosphere are driving up global temperature, altering weather patterns, raising sea levels, shifting the range and prevalence of disease, destabilizing ecosystems, accelerating species extinction, and threatening availability of potable water, food, and shelter for many of the world's more than seven billion inhabitants.

Dealing with climate change is the ultimate collective action problem. Without massive changes in the world's high carbon socioeconomic systems, we will not stem the anthropogenic sources of climate change. Natural science, engineering, and technical expertise are crucial to identify human sources of climate change, clarify biospheric effects, and develop technology to mitigate climate problems. But, purely technological "fixes" will not be sufficient to either mitigate or successfully adapt to climate change. Climate change is largely a problem of culture and social organization. We must address big, complex questions about how we think and how we live.

This course offers a sociological approach to climate change dilemma focused on four major topics:

1. Production, Consumption and the Climate Problem
2. Culture, Controversy, and Climate Change
3. Societal Effects of Climate Change
4. The Future of Climate Change Society

The social dimensions of climate change occur at local, regional, national, global levels. We will employ a multi-level approach in this course that will connect the major sociological climate change topics to local circumstances in Nevada, to regional Intermountain West conditions, and to national and global processes.

Our primary learning objectives include:

- systematically employing social science perspectives to understand and explain the interrelationships between human behavior and climate change.
- analyzing and evaluating various explanations social scientists offer for human-caused climate change problems such as carbon-based production and consumption patterns, population growth, health effects, migration patterns, social conflict, and cultural practices.
- demonstrating an understanding of inequalities associated with climate change.
- understanding and communicating potential solutions associated with the social dilemmas of climate change.

### **Our Format**

We will follow a discussion/lecture format with a strong emphasis on in-class participation and dialogue. Multimedia resources will also play an important part in presenting material for the course. Readings and media resources are to supplement lectures and discussions, not replace them. Success in this course requires you to attend and closely engage the topics covered during each class.

### **What to Read -**

- Global Weirdness: Severe storms, deadly heat waves, relentless drought, rising seas, and the weather of the future, by Climate Central

- Climatopolis: How our cities will thrive in the hotter future, by Mathew Kahn.

- Selected Readings on WebCampus (unless otherwise noted)

\* Important: you must have an active UNLV student ID/acct to access these readings. All readings are in pdf format. You must have Adobe Acrobat to download and print. Any campus computer will work.

### **Expectations for Attendance & Participation**

Learning requires you to take an active role in the process. So, you must come to class prepared and ready to participate. You should drop this class immediately if you anticipate that you will often be absent. I will check attendance each class period. 4 unexcused absences = drop one letter grade 8 unexcused absences = failure for course \*\* Those who very consistently come to class and are clearly engaged may receive the benefit of the doubt on borderline final grades. In other words, if you're on the borderline of two grades, I'll likely bump you up to the higher grade if you have excellent attendance and participation.

I'm reasonable and flexible concerning absences due to official university activities or compelling personal matters. Illness, family emergencies, religious holidays, and major personal and university related conflicts are bases for excused absence from class. If you anticipate a conflict (e.g., an important university activity, religious observance, a job interview) speak to me in advance and be prepared to provide evidence. After unanticipated absences, you should inform me and provide documentation in a timely fashion when you return. Matters of illness require a brief note from a doctor or nurse confirming that you were ill or under care on the specific day(s) that you missed, on office stationary with the person's phone number (a simple appointment slip or card is not sufficient).

## What I Expect Regarding Your Reading

I expect that you will always complete assigned readings prior to lecture and discussion. I will always assume that you are prepared to discuss the readings for the week. If I see that the class is failing to prepare, we may have random “pop” quizzes at my discretion. These are no fun for you or me. My advice is to just read, think, and discuss.

## How You Can Make An “A”

You can make an “A” in this class by being engaged, participating, and by doing the following tasks very well.

## Exams

I’ll give examinations periodically throughout the semester. They will require you to write knowledgeably in essay form about the material we cover. Each essay will be about 7-12 pages and worth 100pts. Each week I will give you a list of critical reading questions (see below) on which each exam will be based. If you take these questions seriously and give your best effort to stay on course with our reading then there is no doubt that you can earn excellent grades.

Exam format:

\*Please follow these directions.\*

I’ll have a couple hundred pages to read and comment on for each exam, so formatting is crucial if I am to do it in a timely manner. I will not grade essays that are in any other format.

1) typed using 10-12 point font only.

No hand-written essays.

2) 1 inch page margins; no more, no less

3) 1 ½ or 2 spaces between lines only

4) staple the pages in the upper left corner

5) do not create a cover page; do not put the essay in a folder, binder, plastic sleeve, or any other similar item. I only want your typed pages.

6) All ideas, words, etc. that are not your own must be properly cited.

## Critical Reading Questions

Each week I will give you a series of questions about the assigned readings. The questions will 1) help you identify key points in the readings, 2) compel you to think critically about the ideas and arguments presented in the lectures and readings, and 3) facilitate class dialogue, and 4) operate as study questions for the tests.

I expect you to take notes on these questions in preparation for class discussion. I encourage you to work on these with other students (however, you must work alone on exams). Each class period will be devoted mainly to us dialoguing from the critical reading questions. Your responsibility is to prepare and shine in the full class discussions.

## Pop-quizzes

I don’t like pop quizzes, but I will give them if class discussion is weak and many of you appear unprepared.

Those absent will not be able to make them up, but there’s no penalty if the absence is excused.

## Research project

Yes, you must do a research project, but don’t be too worried or anxious, just interested. The project can be enjoyable if you let it, and you’ll expose yourself to some useful things. Start early and it won’t be painful. Take it seriously and you’ll learn a lot.

• The Global Climate Change Summit: You will independently research major climate change dilemmas of a single country. The goal is to create a final research report to be professionally presented at the end of the semester in a two-day “Global Climate Change Summit.” To develop this culminating research report, you will participate in exercises (see below) to become “experts” in climate change for your country (and region). At the end of the course, you and your fellow expert colleagues will participate in a two-day “The Global Climate Change Summit” during which you will give a brief professional presentation of your research and submit a final research report. The report will be worth 200 points and the presentation worth 120 points.

• Research in Brief (RIB): Based on a combination of course readings, web-based research, focused writing tasks, peer review and critique, video lectures and webcasts, and classroom discussion, each student will produce a policy brief. These briefs will address six climate change dilemmas: vulnerability, stratification, health, migration, social conflict, and adaptation.

I will give you a detailed set of guidelines for the project and policy briefs and we will thoroughly discuss each activity in class. The policy briefs are worth 50 points each.

## How I Calculate Grades

I’ll base your final course grades on the cumulative point total from the assignments. I calculate the grade by tallying the total points possible from all the assignments, the points you have earned, then derive your percentage of the total points possible. Where you fall in the percentage ranges below is the grade you’ll receive. Hopefully, everyone will be in the higher ranges.

100%-93% = A	89%-87% = B+
92%-90% = A-	86%-83% = B
	82%-80% = B-

79%-77% = C+	69%-67% = D+
76%-73% = C	66%-63% = D
72%-70% = C-	62%-60% = D-

59% & below = F

\* Anyone who does not take an exam or complete the Global Climate Change Summit project will fail the course. I do not give incompletes.

## Due Dates

Once we confirm due dates in class, you are responsible for getting your work in on time. I don't accept late writing assignments. In-class assignments cannot be made up. Exams may be made up before the next exam only if you have an excused absence.

## Graduate Students

In addition to the requirements above, graduate students will complete a journal-sized research paper (20+pp) (or some similar project) on a topic of your choice (subject to my approval) associated with climate change policy, planning, conflict, or solutions (preferably close to your disciplinary or sub-disciplinary interest) in the style of a journal of your choice. One to two page proposals are due by the third week of the semester. You should meet with me about the progress on your paper by the 13th week of the semester to provide time for critique and revision. The research paper will be weighted as 50% of your grade.

## Miscellaneous Things

### Office Hours

My office hours are Tuesday's 9:30-11am and by appointment. If you intend to visit, it is best to let me know in person, by phone, or by e-mail. I am very willing to see you at times other than my office hours. Just make an appointment with me, or you may simply knock on my door (except 1 ½ hours prior to our class.) I will always see you if I'm not tied up with other matters or we'll set a time for another visit. If you want to discuss material pertaining to the course or are having any problems with the material please contact me.

### Persons with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability that may require assistance, you will need to go to the Disability Resource (DRC) for coordination in your academic accommodations. The DRC is located in the Student Services Complex (SSC-A), Room 143. The DS phone number is 895-0866; the DRC website is: <http://drc.unlv.edu/>

### Religious Observances

If any class-related activities, including exams, conflict with religious observances of a generally recognized nature, and you are under obligation to participate in such religious observances, you may complete the activities including exams, at some time not in conflict with your religious obligations. In such instances, it is your responsibility to contact me during the first two weeks during the semester to arrange an alternate and mutually acceptable date for that particular assignment or exam. Students are expected to complete the work assigned for any classes missed because of religious holidays.

## UNLV Writing Center

One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 895-3908. The writing center requests that you bring your Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>

## Academic misconduct (aka, cheating)

Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution.

An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the Student Academic Misconduct Policy (approved December 9, 2005) located at: <http://studentconduct.unlv.edu/misconduct/policy.html>

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## Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Our progress through this material will depend, to a certain extent, on the amount of participation and discussion we have about the ideas and concepts that we cover. I will give you plenty of lead-time to incorporate any changes that we make to our schedule.

Week 1 – Sociology and Climate Change  
Intro to class

Week 2 – Modernity, Sociology, and Climate Change  
Required Reading  
Global Weirdness – Part I – Intro & What the Science Says – pp. 3-77

Lever-Tracy, C. Global Warming and Sociology

Brechin, S. Ostriches and Change: A Response to 'Global Warming and Sociology'.

Lever-Tracy, C. "Sociology Still Lagging on Climate Change."

Week 3 – Climate and Culture

Required Reading:

Global Weirdness – Part II and III – What's Actually Happening and What's Likely to Happen in the Future – pp. 80-161

Hulme, M. "The conquering of climate: Discourses of fear and their dissolution."

Boia, L. - The weather in the imagination.

Chapter 4 – The Changing Climate: The 20th c  
Chapter 6 - The Global Warming Dossier  
(Note: Retrieve these Boia chapters using Lied Library catalog search, then read in online e-book format)

Week 4 – Economy and Climate: Part I – How we got here...the production dilemma

Required reading  
Global Weirdness – Part IV and Epilogue – Can we Avoid the Risks of Climate Change – pp. 163-200

Clark, B. and York, R. Carbon metabolism: Global capitalism, climate change, and the biospheric rift (webcampus)

Week 5 – Economy and Climate: Part II – How we got here...the consumption dilemma

Required Reading  
Jorgenson, A. K. Consumption and Environmental Degradation: A Cross-National Analysis of the Ecological Footprint."

Week 6 –

\*\* RIB 1 due, in class \*\*  
\*\* Exam 1 distributed \*\*

Economy and Climate: Part II – continued

Required Reading  
Schor, J. Born to buy: The commercialization of childhood and the new consumer culture. Chapters 1-4

Jhally, S. – Advertising and the edge of the apocalypse:[http://www.asc.upenn.edu/courses/comm330/Vault/Comm330-Sp08/media\\_sutjhally.pdf](http://www.asc.upenn.edu/courses/comm330/Vault/Comm330-Sp08/media_sutjhally.pdf)

Shove, E. and Warde, A. Inconspicuous Consumption: The Sociology of Consumption, Lifestyles, and the Environment.

Week 7 –

Public Understanding of Climate Risks  
Required Reading  
Weart – The Idea of Anthropogenic Global Climate Change in the 20th c.

Dessai et al. – Defining and Experiencing Dangerous Climate Change

Moser, S. Communicating climate change: history, challenges, processes and future directions

Nisbet, M.C. Communicating climate change: why frames matter for public engagement. Environment  
<http://www.environmentmagazine.org/Archives/Back%20Issues/March-April%202009/Nisbet-full.html>

Perceptions of climate change worldwide

by Brechin, SR and Bhandari, M

Week 8 – Communicating about Climate Change  
Required Reading

Jones, A. Speaking Together: Applying the Principles and Practice of Dialogue  
Mar.11

Guest speaker – Elizabeth Barrie – UNLV Public Lands Institute

Mar.13  
Cont.

Week 9 –  
\*\* RIB 2 due, in class\*\*

Demographic change, migration, and health  
Required Reading Haines, A., Kovats RS, Campbell-Lendrum D, Corvalan, C. Climate change and human health: impacts, vulnerability, and mitigation.

Frumkin, H., Hess, J., Luber, G., Malilay, J., and McGeehin, M., Climate Change: The Public Health Response.

Reuveny, R. Climate change-induced migration and violent conflict.

Warner, K.; Ehrhart, C.; Sherbinin, A. de; Adamo, S.; Chai-Onn, T. In search of shelter: mapping the effects of climate change on human migration and displacement.  
<http://www.careclimatechange.org/files/reports/CAR>

Week 10 –  
Spring Break

Week 11 –  
\*\* Exam 2 distributed, \*\*

Climate Change Adaptation I – Urban Effects  
Required Reading  
Kahn – Climatopolis – Chap. 1-6, pp. 1-158

Week 12 –  
Climate Change Adaptation II – Urban Effects continued  
Required Reading  
Kahn – Climatopolis – Chap. 7-9, pp. 159-244

Week 13 – Climate Change Adaptation III – Coastal and Island Futures  
Required Reading  
O'Riordan, T., Nicholson-Cole, S.A. and Milligan, J. Designing sustainable coastal futures

• Pacific Islands  
Marks, K. "Sinking Pacific island Kiribati considers moving to a man-made alternative. The Independent - <http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/climate-change/sinking-pacific-island-kiribati-considers-moving-to-a-manmade-alternative-2350964.html>

Chapman, P. Sea Levels force Kiribati to ask Fijians for a new home.” Environment, <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/sea-levels-force-kiribati-to-ask-fijians-for-new-home-20120308-1unan.html>

Bowermaster, J. “Maldives, Ground zero for climate change impacts.” National Geographic. <http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2011/10/15/maldives-ground-zero-for-climate-change-impacts/>

O’Hehir, Andrew. “The Maldives’ ousted president on climate change and tyranny.” Salon. [http://www.salon.com/2012/03/30/the\\_maldives\\_ousted\\_president\\_on\\_climate\\_change\\_and\\_tyranney/](http://www.salon.com/2012/03/30/the_maldives_ousted_president_on_climate_change_and_tyranney/)

- U.S. Carbonell, A. and Meffert, D.J. Climate Change and the Resilience of New Orleans: the Adaptation of Deltaic Urban Form.

Week 14 –  
\*\*RIB 3 due, in class\*\*

Decarbonizing Societies  
Required Reading

Pacala, S. and Socolow, R.H. Stabilisation wedges: solving the climate problem for the next 50 years with current technologies.

Bailey, I. The EU Emissions Trading Scheme WIREs Climate Change

FERN - Designed to Fail? The concepts, practices, and controversies behind carbon trading.

Mol, Ecological Modernization: Industrial Transformations and Environmental Reform  
McDonough and Braungart, “The Cradle to Cradle Alternative.” Retrieve at: [http://www.mcdonough.com/writings/cradle\\_to\\_cradle-alt.htm](http://www.mcdonough.com/writings/cradle_to_cradle-alt.htm)

Week 15 –  
\*\*Exam 3 distributed\*\*

Decarbonizing Societies (cont)  
Required Reading

Verbruggen, A. Renewable and nuclear power: a common future?

Wang, T. and Watson, J. China’s carbon emissions and international trade: implication for post-2012 policy”

Adger, W.N., et al. Are there social limits to adaptation to climate change?

Week 16 – Global Climate Change Summit I  
Presentations – Schedule TBA

Week 17 - FINAL EXAM due

### Your Approach to the Class is Important

Reading assignments have more details than I expect you to retain. Vast memorization of dates, names, and events is not necessary and may actually deter the kind of analytical thought and conceptual learning that is the aim of this course. To capture the appropriate level of detail of your texts, a good rule of thumb is to ask yourself and highlight or make notes on what seems to be the main 1 to 3 points discussed under each chapter and subheading. Then, try to express to yourself a concise characterization of what you take to be the overall point or argument of each section and chapter and the how the author supports it. Ask yourself: What is the subject? What questions does the author try to answer? How does s/he refine the question and what answers are given? Concentrate your review on points that are explicitly emphasized in our critical reading questions.

As we study social dilemmas posed by climate change, try to see the facts about it that are brought into focus by the questions, concepts, and theories presented in class. Use concepts to compare and contrast issues with each other. Note counter-arguments and qualifications presented in the readings and in class. Be ready to ask questions each time class meets. Fruitful questions are often raised by thinking through what you don’t understand.

Liberal-arts education is about critically examining assumptions, arguments, and practices. I expect you to vigorously examine the ideas presented on the course. Rote memorization is not a good strategy of study in this class. Students who memorize seem to learn less. A better strategy is to concentrate on understanding and developing your ability to think in terms of and apply key course concepts and arguments. I will regularly encourage you to compare aspects of the movements we study. Ideas that have become familiar from use provide a superior level of understanding. This is why thoughtful analysis is a more direct path to success in this course than unselective memorization. The work I will ask of you often takes less time than memorizing details. It usually earns better grades. It develops more useful skills and secures knowledge more likely to be retained and subsequently used.

### Be Analytical

Questions about climate change social are the starting points for building knowledge. Big questions emphasized in this course include: What are the social dilemmas associated with climate change. How are societies organized and how does that organization exacerbate or mitigate climate change and its effects? What cultural meanings are associated with climate change? How might we transform culture and social organization be to deal with climate change?

Analysis seeks understanding by separating complex phenomena into aspects or parts and by attempting to see how those aspects fit together to make up the phenomena. Concepts define the aspects of the

phenomena. Arguments, often in the form of explanations, will be offered as partial answers to these questions. It almost always clarifies analysis to make questions we are asking explicit and to realize when we have shifted from one question to another. If anything seems confusing in this class, you almost always can reorient your understanding of it by referring back to the question(s) being asked.

**What I expect You To Do.**

Your work should be directed toward (1) learning the concepts and arguments discussed in our reading and in class; (2) applying them thoughtfully to address the questions emphasized in the course; and (3) to interpret, compare, and contrast specific issues regarding climate change.

Sometimes we will emphasize counterintuitive arguments – ideas that contrast with our culture’s conventional ways of thinking about social life, human nature, and social change. Note and closely examine arguments contrary to your own intuitions. They give opportunities to test your current thinking and to learn. Ideas counter to your intuitions often will be precisely the points important to prepare for class participation and discuss in your weekly reading questions.

**How Do Moral Issues Fit Into the Course?**

Some of the issues we will study are provocative. You may approve or disapprove of them, perhaps vehemently. Your value judgments are important, but I will not instruct you on what your values should be or grade your values. I do presume that any student in a liberal-arts class comes willing to examine factual and theoretical claims used by advocates of particular values and to consider effects that may come from action justified by particular values, privately held or publicly imposed.