

Geography 4002/IAFS4500
Spring 2024

Climate Change: Social and Political Consequences

Professor John O'Loughlin

Office Hours: 2:30-3:30pm Mon & Wed or by appt
Guggenheim 201h

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Zoom link for office hours:

<https://cuboulder.zoom.us/j/99887435623>

Background and course goals:

This class is a senior seminar on the political, economic and social developments that are consequent on the massive dangers of global climate change. We will devote a couple of weeks at the beginning to the science and evidence of climate change, and then move onto the consequences in the US and around the world. We will also examine the political debates surrounding the topic in the global arena, especially concerning the Paris climate treaty of 2015 as well as the partisan divide in the US, the media representation of the threat, the outcomes for some of the world's poorest people in sub-Saharan Africa and south Asia, and the possible geopolitical confrontations that might develop over the next 30 years. The Arctic is one region where warming has been most evident (more than twice the global average) and where there is a lot of speculation about disputes over maritime limits and associated resource control.

The class is structured as a seminar. That means that all students are expected to come to class prepared for discussion by completing the weekly readings and by being prepared to answer and debate the materials. Unlike most classes, there will be a heavier emphasis on discussion, short responses to the readings, and writing a research report with a final exam, though the instructor reserves the right to set short quizzes if it's evident that students are not engaging with the readings.

Classes will generally begin with a Powerpoint presentation by the instructor on the weekly topic which the weekly readings elaborate. More than half of each class will be discussion of the lecture material and the readings. The slides will be uploaded to the Canvas site a day or two before each class. Please pay attention to news items from reliable sources – e.g. BBC, Washington Post, New York Times, Economist, etc. Students will be called upon to share key relevant information.

Format and Readings:

The format will be the seminar-discussion style which means that the reading preparation is completed before the class. Its success depends on student preparation through completion of the readings, being prepared to give responses in class, and engagement in the class discussions.

Text book: There is one required short book, David Wallace-Wells. **The Uninhabitable Earth: A Story of the Future.** New York: Tim Duggan Books (also Penguin), 2019. It is available for download as an E-book from the Norlin library. We will read this whole book. This book should be started on week one of the class and completed by week 4 as indicated on the weekly schedule. There will be two short quizzes about this book and other readings, as well as class lecture material.

Additional required readings: Other readings on the syllabus are scanned from the source materials and PDFs of the articles/chapter will be uploaded to the class folder on Canvas

How to do the readings – what is expected: Generally, the materials for the class are not suitable for quick scanning but require a close reading. As is usual for this expectation, there are **three key questions** by the reader: A) What is the key argument of the authors? B) What is the evidence that the authors present? Is it believable and how might it be challenged? C) What contribution to the topic(s) does the reading make? Is it a major or minor contribution? Is it replicable (scientifically sound) or more polemical?

Course Requirements and Grading:

The course is organized as mostly discussion/debate, where the acquisition of new material is partly the responsibility of the student outside the meeting time; this process relies on the student coming to class having read the text materials and prepared to discuss them. The instructor will present materials for the first 35-40 minutes or so, and after a very short break (a few minutes), we will have about 30 minutes discussion that the instructor will introduce but will call on all students to participate. This format is often referred to as a 'flipped classroom'.

I teach the course from the perspective of human, especially political, geography but it is truly an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the consequences of contemporary climate change. My own research on the subject is focused on the relationship of climate change to conflict outcomes with a focus on subSaharan Africa, especially Kenya. This is a deeply-controversial subject with many academics on both sides of the argument (climate change causes conflict – or not). It obviously has important policy considerations too in the arena of what is often called "climate security".

While we will generally review the readings and discuss them in the second half of each class,, the format is free flowing, lecture-discussion. Class presentations and discussions follow/match the weekly readings closely

Class Schedule: (readings are indicated by the author's last name and found in the readings folder)

Jan. 17 - Course Introduction

Readings:

Wallace-Wells pp. 1-36

Economist "Global warming 101"

Jan. 22 - Science of Climate Change I

Jan. 24 – Science of Climate Change II

Readings:

Wallace- Wells pp. 37-131

Economist "Hot and bothered"

Jan. 29 – Science of Climate Change III

Jan. 31 - Science of Climate Change IV

Readings:

Wallace-Wells PP. 141-238

Feb. 5 - IPCC protocols and assessments

Feb. 7 – Why the 1.5 degrees Centigrade Paris target is key **QUIZ 1**

Readings:

IPCC, 2023: Summary for Policymakers

Mach et al “Role of key risks in IPCC AR5”

New York Times “Why half a degree of warming is a big deal”

Feb.12 – Pre-Paris climate treaties.

Feb. 14 - Paris climate treaty 2015 and follow-on

Readings:

Hallegatte et al “Mapping the climate change challenge”

UNFCCC “what is the Paris agreement” and video

UNFCCC “The Glasgow climate pact” COP26

UNFCCC “Nationally determined contributions”

Feb. 19 – Media reporting on climate change

Feb. 21 - The science and the politics

Readings:

Busby 2018 “why climate change matters most”

Widdicombe :How should the media talk about climate change”

Carleton and Hsiang “social and economic impacts of climate change”

Feb. 26 – Public understanding of climate change

Feb. 28 – Partisan divide on climate change in the US

Readings:

Egan and Mullin 2017 “Climate change and US public opinion”

Prakash and Dolsak “Americans worried about climate change”

Motta et al “Climate change is complicated”

Mar. 4–**MIDTERM. (in-class)**

Mar. 6 – Climate change and migration

Readings:

New York Times “How climate migration will reshape America”

Balsari et al “Climate change, migration and civil strife”

Mar. 11 - Climate change and conflict – the debate and the evidence

Mar. 13 - Was the Syrian civil war the first ‘climate war’?

Readings:

Bordoff "everything you know is wrong about the geopolitics of climate change"
Colgan "Grand strategy and climate change"
Selby and Hulme "climate change and the Syrian civil war"
Fountain "Drought, Syrian civil war, climate change"
Mach et al "Climate as a risk factor for armed conflict"

Mar. 18 – Climate change and conflict in sub-Saharan Africa

Mar. 20 – The Kenyan context

Readings:

Mach et al "Directions for research on climate and conflict"
Parenti chapter from *Tropic of Chaos*
ReliefWeb "How is climate change driving conflict in Africa"

SPRING BREAK

Mar. 28 – US government responses to climate change – Pentagon

Mar. 30 – US government responses to climate change – other Federal agencies

Readings:

Allen and Jones "Climate change, US security and geopolitics"
The National Intelligence Council. Global Trends 2040.
Busby "Emergent practice of climate security"

Apr. 1 – Adaptation to climate change

Apr. 3 – NO CLASS – instructor at conference Mitigating climate change

Readings:

IPCC 2014 "Climate change: Impacts, Adaptation, Vulnerability"
Filho et al "Climate resilient trajectories for the poor"

Apr. 11 - Mitigating climate change – any hope? **QUIZ 2**

Apr. 13 - Climate change and environmental justice – global.

Readings:

Schlossberg and Collins "From environmental to climate justice"
Okereke and Coventry "Climate justice and international regime"
Klinsky "Equity and climate change policy"

Apr. 18 – Climate change and environmental justice – United States

Apr. 20 -- Arctic climate change

Readings:

Coggins et al "Indigenous peoples and climate justice in the Arctic"
Littwak "Geostrategic competition and climate change"
New York Times "How Russia wins the climate crisis"
Kaplan "Climate change destabilized earth's poles"
NSIDC 2021 Arctic report card

Apr. 25– Resource access in the Arctic in the era of climate change
Apr. 27 – Wrap-up and preparation for final in-class essay

Readings:

NONE

Assignments and Grading:

Midterm Exam (75 minutes in the March 4 class) = 15%

Quizzes (in class) = 20%

In class participation 10% / attendance=15% (Attendance taken frequently via sign-in sheet)

Paper proposal = 5%

Final exam = 25%

Final paper= 10%

Total = 100%

FINAL EXAM MAY 6th 7:30-10pm

In class participation: Obviously class attendance is expected and you should let the instructor know if you cannot attend class for an excused absence. The usual expectations for excused absences apply. Discussion should be free-ranging and open. Again the usual expectations of proper decorum, speech (please no slang), and respect apply. The instructor will call on all students to respond and in some case, informal debates will be organized with the class divided into 2 to 3 groups for this purpose.

See the Canvas page for accommodations and expectations mandated by CU Boulder

During the class, all phones and laptop computers must be turned off and put away.