

GEO/HST 752

Climate Change: History, Geography, and Politics

Eggers 155
Monday, 2:15-5:00pm

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Office Hours: Fridays, 12:30-1:45pm *or* by appointment

This course will examine scholarship from the environmental humanities and social sciences about climate change. The environmental humanities is a broad area of inquiry that includes perspectives from the humanities (history, philosophy, and English) and qualitative social sciences (cultural-historical geography, sociology, etc.)

While there are many undergraduate and graduate courses on climate, and climate change more generally, at Syracuse University and SUNY-ESF, most of them focus on climatology or on the economics and politics of global warming, especially ways to mitigate and adapt to current and future climates. In contrast, in this course we will investigate the interplay of environment and society over various time scales (decades to centuries) and spatial scales (regional to global). Also, we will explore climate change and society employing perspectives from history, geography, and the qualitative social sciences.

Some questions we'll ask in this course: What has been the role of climate change in human history? How has our scientific understanding of climate change evolved? How has climate change exacerbated class, racial, and gender inequalities and how have ordinary people sought climate justice? How are creative writers and filmmakers reckoning with climate change? More broadly, how have geographers and historians studied the relationship between climate and society?

Learning Outcomes

After taking this course, students will be able to:

- Employ methods and concepts from environmental geography, history-historical geography, and the environmental humanities to understand how past climate change affected society.
- Describe the history of climate science and climate-change denial.
- Describe the main actors involved in the climate justice movement and the movement's principal tactics and goals.
- Produce a research paper and a final presentation that examines some aspect of climate change and society employing methods from the environmental humanities learned in this course or one that analyzes and critically evaluates a body of scholarship about climate and society.

Evaluation

30% Class participation

- Includes attendance and leading class discussions one or two times.
- 20% Book Review/Analysis
- Choices: *Behind the Curve*, *Merchants of Doubt*, or *Living in Denial*.
- 10% In-class presentation based on final seminar paper
- 40% Final seminar paper

Class Attendance and Participation:

Students must attend all classes and come ready to participate in class discussions. I expect students to read the course texts critically, to develop questions and comments based on those readings, and to be willing to listen to and grapple with other students' views.

You will also lead/foster one or two class discussions. You'll be responsible for the readings this week and facilitating discussion. I'll give you guidance on how to do this later in the course.

Book Reviews:

You will also write a five- to six-page book review on one of the texts from the first half of the course. If you like, you may also choose another monograph on climate change by a geographer or a historian that I did not assign, but you *must* clear it with me first. However, if you choose this option you are still expected to do all the required course readings.

A book review is not a summary. Certainly, you will want to discuss the book's structure and the key points in the essay. But in a review, you must also carefully evaluate the weaknesses and strengths of the author's argument and the utility of the text. It might help to develop some familiarity with the other related works on the topic so you can better situate the book within the relevant literature.

Seminar Paper

The major requirement for the course is a 15-20-page seminar paper on a topic of your choosing. You might select a particular facet of the history or geography of climate change to examine in more detail or produce a short research paper using primary sources. If you choose the first option, you must develop an argument and critically evaluate the sources you use. I do not want a cursory literature review.

You will also give a 10--minute presentation to the class based on this topic. Since the presentations are scheduled before the final paper is due, this will be an opportunity to 'test run' your ideas and solicit feedback from myself and the rest of the class.

Course Texts

The following texts are available for free as ebooks via the SU Library. They are not available for purchase in the SU Bookstore. However, if you're a Luddite like me, you may prefer to purchase a hard copy on your own:

Howe, Joshua P. *Behind the Curve: Science and the Politics of Global Warming*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014. (ebook)

Norgaard, Kari M. *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2011. (ebook)

These texts are available for purchase in the SU Bookstore. Of course, you may be able to find cheaper copies via Amazon or another online retailer. The SU Library or Onondaga Public Library may have copies for check-out, too:

Ghosh, Amitav. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Lanchester, John. *The Wall*. New York: Faber & Faber, 2019.

Oreskes, Naomi, and Erik M Conway. *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010.

Course Schedule

January 13th - Introduction – Climate Change: History, Geography, and Politics

January 20th – No Class. MLK Day

January 27th – The Little Ice Age in World History: Climate Change Disaster or Climate Change Adaptation?

Degroot, Dagomar. “Climate Change and Society in the 15th to 18th Centuries.” *WIREs: Climate Change*, 2018, 1–20.

Parker, Geoffrey. “Crisis and Catastrophe: The Global Crisis of the Seventeenth Century.” *American Historical Review* 113, no. 4 (2008): 1053–79.

White, Sam. *A Cold Welcome: The Little Ice Age and Europe’s Encounter with North America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017. (Selections. BB)

Society, the Little Ice Age, and Lessons for Today

Parker, Geoffrey. “Lessons from the Little Ice Age.” *The New York Times*, March 22, 2014. (BB)

Degroot, Dagomar. “Little Ice Age Lessons.” *Aeon*, November 11, 2019. (BB)

February 3rd – History of Climate Science | Climate Scientists and Politics

Howe, Joshua P. *Behind the Curve: Science and the Politics of Global Warming*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014 (ebook).

- Foreword by William Cronon, Introduction: Telling Stories about CO₂, 3. Making of the Global Environment, 4. Climate, the Environment, and Scientific Activism, 6. The IPCC and the Primacy of Science, and Epilogue: Climbing Out Behind the Curve.

Oreskes, Naomi. *Why Trust Science?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019 (BB)

- p. 1-68

February 10th – The Practice of History in the Era of Climate Change | Climate Reductionism

- Sabin, Paul. “‘The Ultimate Environmental Dilemma’: Making a Place for Historians in the Climate Change and Energy Debates.” *Environmental History* 15, no. 1 (2010): 76–93. (BB)
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. “The Climate of History: Four Theses.” *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 (2013): 197–222. (BB)
- Hulme, Mike. “Reducing the Future to Climate: A Story of Climate Determinism and Reductionism.” *Osiris* 26, no. 1 (2011): 245–66. (BB)
- Livingstone, David N. “The Climate of War: Violence, Warfare, and Climatic Reductionism.” *WIREs: Climate Change* 6, no. October (2015): 437–44. (BB)
- Selby, Jan, Omar S. Dahi, Chistine Fröhlich, and Mike Hulme. “Climate Change and the Syrian Civil War Reconsidered.” *Political Geography* 60 (2017): 232–44. (BB)

February 17th – Orchestrated Climate Change Denial

- Oreskes, Naomi, and Erik M Conway. *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010. (ebook)
- “Introduction,” “1. Doubt is Our Product,” “6. Denial of Global Warming,” “Conclusion: Of Free Speech and Free Markets,” and “Epilogue: A New View of Science.”
- Banerjee, Neela, Lisa Song, and David Hasemyer. “Exxon’s Own Research Confirmed Fossil Fuels’ Role in Global Warming Decades Ago.” *Inside Climate News*, September 16, 2015. (BB)

February 24th – Emotions, Ecogrief, and Passive Climate Change Denial

- Norgaard, Kari M. *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2011 (ebook).
- Prologue, Introduction, 1. Boundaries and Moral Order, 3. People Want to Protect Themselves a Little Bit, 6. Climate Change as Background Noise in the United States, Conclusion.
- Vince, Gaia. “Reef Grief.” *Nature Climate Change*, no. 1, October (2011): 339-340. (BB)
- Cunsolo, Ashlee, and Neville R Ellis. “Ecological Grief as a Mental Health Response to Climate Change-Related Loss.” *Nature Climate Change* 8, April (2018): 275–82. (BB)

March 2nd – Climate Communication

- Mccright, Aaron M, and Riley E Dunlap. “Cool Dudes: The Denial of Climate Change Among Conservative White Males in the United States.” *Global Environmental Change* 21, no. 4 (2011): 1163–72. (BB)

- Bolsen, Toby, Risa Palm, and Justin T Kingsland. "The Impact of Message Source on the Effectiveness of Communications About Climate Change." *Science Communication* 41, no. 4 (2019): 464–87. (BB)
- Hayhoe, Katherine. "[The Most Important Thing You Can Do to Fight Climate Change: Talk about It.](#)" TED, 2018. (BB)
- Chapman, Daniel A., Brian Lickel, and Ezra M. Markowitz. "Reassessing Emotion in Climate Change Communication." *Nature Climate Change* 7, no. December (2017): 848–52. (BB)
- Wilson, Robert M. "Will the End of the World Be on the Final Exam? Emotions, Climate Change, and Teaching an Introductory Environmental Studies Course." In *Teaching Climate Change in the Humanities*, edited by Stephanie LeMenager, Stephen Siperstein, Shane Hall, 53–58. New York: Routledge, 2016. (BB)

March 9th – Climate Movement | Climate Justice

- Klein, Naomi. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism v. the Climate*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014. (Selections. BB)
- Wilson, Robert M. "Faces of the Climate Movement." *Environmental History* 22, no. 1 (2017): 128–39. (BB)
- Wilson, Robert M. "Forging the Climate Movement: The Keystone XL Pipeline and American Environmental Reform During the Obama Era" (BB)
- Stephenson, Wen. *What We're Fighting for Now Is Each Other: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Climate Justice*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2015. (Selections. BB)
- Thunberg, Greta. *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference*. New York: Penguin, 2020. (Selections. BB)

March 16th – Spring Break. No Class.

March 23rd – Climate Governance

- Beeson, Mark. "The Coming of Environmental Authoritarianism." *Environmental Politics* 19, no. 2 (2010): 276–94. (BB)
- Povitkina, Marina. "The Limits of Democracy in Tackling Climate Change." *Environmental Politics* 27, no. 3 (2018): 411–32. (BB)
- Wainwright, Joel, and Geoff Mann. "Climate Leviathan." *Antipode* 45, no. 1 (2013): 1–22. BB

Article about the Green New Deal (to be announced).

March 30th – The "Cenes" (Anthropocene, Capitalcene, Carbocene, Pyrocene) |

The End of Civilization

- Steffen, Will, Paul J Crutzen, and John R McNeill. "The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature?" *Ambio* 36, no. 8 (2007). (BB)
- LeCain, Timothy James. "Against the Anthropocene. A Neo-Materialist Perspective." *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity* 3, no. 1 (2015): 1–28. (BB)

Moore, Jason W. “7. Anthropocene or Capitalocene? On the Nature and Origins of Our Ecological Crisis.” In *Capitalism in the Web of Life*, 169–92. New York: Verso, 2015. (BB)

Pyne, Steve. “Winter Isn’t Coming. Prepare for the Pyrocene.” *History News Network*. August 29, 2019. (BB)

Oreskes, Naomi, and Erik M. Conway. “The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future.” *Daedalus* 142, no. 1 (January 2013): 40–58. (BB)

Scranton, Roy. *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene: Reflections on the End of a Civilization*. City Lights Publishers, 2015. (Selection. BB)

April 6th – No class. Away at AAG conference.

April 13th – Storytelling and Climate Change

Ghosh, Amitav. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017.

First Reformed. Directed by Paul Schrader. A24, 2018.

- Watch on Kanopy.

April 20th – Cli-Fi (Climate Fiction)

Lanchester, John. *The Wall*. New York: Faber & Faber, 2019.

Schneider-Mayerson, Matthew. “Climate Change Fiction.” In *American Literature in Transition, 2000-2010*, edited by Rachel Greenwald Smith, 309–21. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Ramuglia, River. “Cli-Fi, Petroculture, and the Environmental Humanities: An Interview with Stephanie LeMenager.” *Studies in the Novel* 50, no. 1 (2018): 154–64. (BB)

April 27th – Final Presentations

University Attendance Policy

Attendance in classes is expected in all courses at Syracuse University. Students are expected to arrive on campus in time to attend the first meeting of all classes for which they are registered. Students who do not attend classes starting with the first scheduled meeting may be academically withdrawn as not making progress toward degree by failure to attend.

Academic Integrity Policy

Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy defines our expectations for academic honesty and holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit. Students should understand that it is their responsibility to learn about course-specific expectations, as well as about university-wide academic integrity expectations. The policy governs appropriate citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities.

Under the policy, students found in violation are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and nongrade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered as described in the Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric. SU students are required to read an online summary of the University's academic integrity expectations and provide an electronic signature agreeing to abide by them twice a year during pre-term check-in on MySlice.

For more information, see the student section of the university's web site about academic integrity (<http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/>).

Disability-Related Accommodations

Syracuse University values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. There may be aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion and full participation in this course. I invite any student to meet with me to discuss strategies and/or accommodations (academic adjustments) that may be essential to your success and to collaborate with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in this process. If you would like to discuss disability-accommodations or register with ODS, please visit their website at <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>. Please call (315) 443-4498 or email disabilityservices@syr.edu for more detailed information. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related academic accommodations and will work with the student to develop an access plan. Since academic accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible to begin this process

Religious Observances

Students must notify instructors by the end of the second week of classes if, and when, they will be observing their religious holiday(s). You may fill this out online via MySlice. When you log-on to MySlice, you (should) see a link for religious observances. Click on that and fill-out the requested material.

