

Dept. of Geography and Environmental Studies, Winter 2025

Climate Change: Social Science Perspectives GEOG 2500/ENST 2500

Instructor: Dr. Paul B. Williams

Email: paulwilliams@cunet.carleton.ca

Meeting day, time, and room: Wednesday, 08:35-11:25, Southam 502.

Office hours: Wednesday, 10:35-11:45 am; 1:00-2:00 pm (or by appointment).

Tutorials

A3 – M 09:35-10:25 A410 LA

A2 – M 10:35-11:25 A410 LA

A1 – M 11:35-12:25 A410 LA

TAs

Katarina Georgaras (katrinageorgaras@cmail.carleton.ca)

Rebecca Kennedy (RebeccaKennedy@cmail.carleton.ca)

Kaleigh McIntosh – marking only (KaleighMcintosh@cmail.carleton.ca)

Course description

An introduction to climate change as a political, economic and socio-cultural phenomenon, including the political-economic and world-historical causes of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions; variations in impact and vulnerability; climate justice and other political movements; global mitigation and adaptation strategies; and proposals for radical systemic change.

There is an overwhelming consensus among climate scientists and others that climate change poses a serious – and potentially existential – threat to human beings, ecosystems and other species. Climate Change is a massive subject. We are faced with the news of different impacts and concerns daily. We can often feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information that is out there. This course can't possibly cover all the issues that are raised by the discussions in the Academy, the news media, political circles, etc. It is, however, intended to provide a survey of some of the major issues associated with Climate Change from the perspective of the social sciences and, especially, geography and environmental studies. It will not be a "science" course, at least from the perspective of the natural sciences. Nevertheless, you will be introduced to the science early on. As a social science course, we will look at the history, root causes and consequences of climate change. We will attempt to address the following questions: How did we get to this point and where are we going? What are the economic and political drivers of climate change? What are the risks ahead? Who is going to be most greatly affected? How is it going to affect our own lives? Can we rely on technology to solve the crisis?

Learning outcomes

There are tough things to cover in a course like this, but it is hoped that we won't just wallow in doom and gloom. We will talk about future solutions, innovations, and adaptations. Knowledge is power. Being informed citizens when it comes to dealing with climate change and related environmental issues is important when you plan the path ahead. It will also provide you with ideas that will help you make necessary decisions and put you in a position to influence others about the need to address the existential challenges of climate change.

By the end of this course, therefore, you should be able to:

- Explain the basics of climate change, the terminology used, and the global ecological crisis.
- Better understand the risks and concerns associated with climate change
- Identify the main historical and socio-economic causes of the crisis.
- Reflect critically on the different technological, economic and political pathways to overcome the crisis.
- Participate as an informed citizen in community discussions about these topics.

Textbook

The course textbook is:

Maslin, Mark (2021). *Climate Change: A Very Short Introduction*. 4th Edition. Oxford University Press.

The book will be available from the University Bookstore but may also be found elsewhere. The cost is \$13.50. You may also buy used versions (or Kindle at \$7.99). Make sure that you buy the 4th edition.

Other short readings will include journal articles, news reports, blogs, etc. Required and additional readings will be discussed at the end of the week's lectures. These will also be posted with links attached to tutorial exercises and assignments.

Course format

This is a lecture-based course with weekly tutorials. Lectures will include video and audio content when needed. I like to engage in discussion during class so please come prepared to chat. Lectures will be delivered in person (there is no hybrid or online option), according to the schedule detailed above. This is tentative and may be subject to change for reasons of illness or other unforeseen circumstances. Please make sure to monitor your emails for any class changes or cancellations. Course material, including lectures will be posted on Brightspace. These may be subject to change.

Tutorials

Weekly tutorial discussions are designed to give you a chance to explore some of the issues raised in the lectures in a smaller, less formal and more interactive forum. Participation in these discussions is encouraged and recommended. Your level of participation will be assessed. Please prepare yourselves for the discussions and bring to each tutorial your own interests, concerns, questions, experiences and so on.

Evaluation

Students will be mainly evaluated on their knowledge and intellectual skills (although the lectures and tutorials will aim to provide cognitive strategies not necessarily evaluated). A general rubric for the course is attached at the end of this document and will be posted on Brightspace.

Grading Summary - marks in this course will be appraised on the following basis:

Tutorial Participation and Attendance	10%
Two Shorter Assignments	30% (15% X 2)
Mid Term Exam	25%
Final Exam	35%

Tutorial Attendance and Participation (10%)

Tutorial **attendance and participation represent 10% of your total grade**. Your TA will take attendance at each tutorial. Your mark will not be based solely on attendance but will also include a reflection on your active participation in the activities and discussions. **Even if you come to 100% of the tutorials but do not get engaged in the discussion or activities, you will not get full marks. Likewise, if you are active in the discussions but only come to a small number of tutorials you will also not get full marks.** [NOTE: Even if you do not intend to do the assignment for that week you are still required to do the readings].

Shorter Assignments (30% - 2 X 15%)

You are required to complete **two (2) shorter assignments (approx. 3-4 pages, double-spaced; 15 marks each)**. **PLEASE NOTE** The first of these papers is **compulsory** and will deal with issues raised in the first tutorial. The remaining **assignment** must be chosen from the four remaining tutorial topics. These will be based on discussions and readings associated with the weekly theme. You may do more than two assignments if you wish to improve a grade, but you must discuss this with your TA in advance. Readings for the week will be listed on the assignment sheet.

Midterm exam (25%)

The midterm exam will take place in the week before Spring Break. It will be worth 25% of your final grade. The exam will evaluate your gained knowledge from the first five lectures and tutorials in the term. Short (definitions of terms and concepts) and long answer (compare and contrast) questions will cover material from lectures, tutorials, and readings. **The test will take place at the regular scheduled class day and time (February 12th), according to the course calendar.**

Final exam (35%)

The final exam will take place in the final exam period and is worth 35% of your final course grade. It will include material from the last half of the course but will also require some knowledge from the whole course. It will be a combination of short-answer and short-essay questions.

Please see the Carleton University Calendar for the grading formulae used in this course. Final course grades are subject to the Dean's approval.

Please note: all assignments must be submitted on Brightspace – the shorter assignments must be in docx (word) format [no pdfs please] and the file name must include your surname and

assignment number (e.g. Williams, assign2). You must also include your name and student id at the top of the assignment.

Rubric

NOTE: Assignments will be graded on a scale from A+ to F. The evaluation will consider the content in relation to the purpose of the assignment, as well as the quality of written expression and the overall presentation. Please include a title, your name and student number, the course number and instructor's name, and the date on all your written assignments at the top of the first page. Please also retain an additional hard copy for your records.

Several criteria will be important in influencing your final mark on an assignment. In making my assessment I will be looking for these points [where applicable]:

- 1) Has answered all the question(s) in a thorough and systematic way [Has followed the instructions]
- 2) There is a good organization and flow to the discussion [it is easy to follow and understand the thought process]
- 3) Has researched the answer and understood the concepts being discussed [shows evidence that the ideas are understood and articulates this]
- 4) Includes relevant concepts, facts, quotations, and/or statistics to support the position taken
- 5) Has cited all sources in a standardized APA bibliographic format
- 6) Uses an appropriate number of high-quality sources when required
- 7) Has checked the answer(s) for spelling mistakes and grammatical errors [writes in proper sentences and paragraphs when required]
- 8) Has attempted to improve style and polish prose

Late or deferred submissions:

I am always open to discussing extensions, but late submissions of the shorter assignments must first be discussed with your TA. Failure to get prior permission may result in a penalty equivalent to 5 percent per day after the designated due date. Students who are unable to complete assignments on time because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control MUST speak to the TA or me and arrange a time for submission. Having said that, there is plenty of flexibility in terms of the choice of the shorter assignments.

Deferred grades on final examination:

Official deferrals of grades may only be sought through the Office of the Registrar. If you have been unable to write the final examination, because of illness or some other circumstance beyond your control, or if your performance has been affected by such circumstances, you will have five working days to apply to the Registrar's Office for permission to write a deferred examination.

COURSE CALENDAR

Week	Topics	Exams and Assignments
Week 1 January 8	<p>Introduction: Course Overview</p> <p><i>Reading: Maslin, Chapter 1, pp. 1-11.</i></p> <p>No Tutorials</p>	
Week 2 January 15	<p>Lecture: The Science of Climate change</p> <p>Guest: Dr. Derek Mueller</p> <p><i>Reading: Maslin, Chapter 2 & 3, pp. 12-42</i></p> <p>Tutorial 1: Welcome - Thinking about your Carbon Footprint [Intro. to assignment 1]</p>	
Week 3 January 22	<p>Lecture: What is in a name? Anthropogenic Climate Change & The Climate Change Debate!</p> <p><i>Reading: Maslin, Chapter 2 & 3, pp. 12-42</i></p> <p>Tutorial 2: Carbon Footprint Continued [Note: this will continue the work from Tutorial One and will provide data for Assignment 1]</p>	
Week 4 January 29	<p>Lecture: Getting to the Anthropocene & The Great Acceleration Industrialization and Powering the Change</p> <p>Tutorial 3: Thinking about the Oil Sands and Canada’s contribution to Emissions [Intro. to Assignment 2. NOTE: This tutorial will be held in the Physical Geography Lab.]</p>	Assignment 1 Due
Week 5 February 5	<p>Lecture: Climate Change, Society, and an Unequal World</p> <p>Tutorial 4: Thinking about the IPCC, the Kyoto Protocol, COP 29, and the Politics of Climate Change</p>	

Week 6 February 12	Midterm exam – Weeks 1-5 Tutorial 5: Midterm Assistance [Optional]	Midterm Exam
February 19	Winter break No classes	
Week 7 February 26	Lecture: Climate Change Impacts - Risks and Perception Guest Lecture: Dr. Robert Huish, Dalhousie University No Tutorials [Intro. to Assignment 3 in class]	Assignment 2 Due
Week 8 March 5	Lecture: Climate Change - Health, Disease, & Feeding the World <i>Reading: Maslin, Chapter 7, pp. 106-121.</i> Tutorial 6: Thinking about Climate Change Risk and Perceptions of Risk	
Week 9 March 12	Lecture: Climate Change: Where will they go? Tutorial 8: Thinking about Climate Change, Health & Food [Intro. to Assignment 4]	Assignment 3 Due
Week 10 March 19	Lecture: Climate Change - Future scenarios Guest Lecture, Mr. Stephen Koch, Consultant, Electricity Canada <i>Reading: Maslin, Chapter 9, pp. 148-156.</i> Tutorial 9: Thinking about Climate Migration [Intro. to Assignment 5]	
Week 11 March 26	Lecture: Climate Change - Can we fix it with technology? Guest Lecture, Prof. John Milton, Carleton University <i>Reading: Maslin, Chapter 8, pp. 122-147.</i> Tutorial 10: Thinking about Future Scenarios	Assignment 4 Due

Week12 April 2	Course Windup Tutorial 11: Optional Exam Prep	Assignment 5 Due
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Course policies

Communication and E-mail

The fundamental information for this course is contained in this syllabus. I will communicate other relevant information about the course to you via Brightspace. If you have more in-depth questions about the lectures and course material, please book an appointment for a meeting during my office hours. If you are not able to make my office hours due to a valid reason, we can arrange for an appointment at another time during the week. For any general consultation and advice, communicate with your TA to discuss them.

Extenuating circumstances

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with extenuating circumstances (i.e. out of your control). Missed classes and tutorials must be reasonably justified to your TA. In case of missed exams due to unforeseen circumstances, current university regulations will be followed.

Plagiarism

The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to: books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, art works, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else

using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment

using another’s data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgment; and

failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of “F” for the course or even suspension or expulsion from the University.

Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For accommodation regarding a formally-scheduled final exam, you must complete the [Pregnancy Accommodation Form](#).

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details [click here](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in- class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally- scheduled exam (if applicable).

Survivors of Sexual Violence: As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>.

Accommodation for Student Activities: Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

A Generalized Grading Rubric

Grade	Evaluation Basis
A range	A – Awesome. The student has pushed her/himself to do more than is being asked. Strong writing. The quality of the work indicates that the student has invested time thought and effort in the assignment. That gets rewarded.
A+	The student has answered the questions posed in the assignment outline fully. AND the student has presented a complete explanation of the ideas. It is a complete answer that is fully explored. The difference between an A and an A+ is that an A+ answer is well written as well as being complete.
A	The student has answered the questions posed in the assignment outline fully. AND the student has presented a complete explanation of the ideas. It is a complete answer that is fully explored.
A-	The student has answered the questions posed in the assignment outline fully. AND the student has presented a more complete explanation of the ideas. However, you still feel that the student could have gone further, and one is left thinking, "keep going."
B range	B = Basic. The student has basically fulfilled the task as explained. No effort has been made to go beyond the task description. The task has essentially been done fully. Well written with perhaps come grammatical and/or spelling mistakes.
B+	The student has basically answered the questions posed in the assignment outline. BUT one is left with a "can you elaborate?" feeling. The student has provided the beginning of an elaboration but doesn't fully develop the ideas.
B	The student has basically answered the questions posed in the assignment outline. BUT one is left with an "And?" question. The student has just presented the most basic answer without expanding upon the thoughts.
B-	The student has basically answered the questions posed in the assignment outline. BUT one is left with a "Yah, so what?" The student has just presented the most basic answer without any sort of explanation.
C range	C = Could have done a lot better. The student has not completed the task fully as described in the assignment. All parts of the assignment are done but there are gaps in the work, or the work is very superficial. Poor writing. Grammatical and/or spelling mistakes littered throughout the work.
C+	The student has failed to answer one or two of the questions posed in the assignment outline. One is left with a "What happened to these questions?" feeling. The student also has failed to present a complete basic answer or it is simply superficial.
C	The student has failed to answer the key the questions posed in the assignment outline. One is left with a "What's going on?" feeling. The student also has failed to present even the most basic answer, or it is simply superficial.
C-	The student has failed to answer most of the questions posed in the assignment outline. One is left thinking that "this is a rushed answer" where the student's answer has major gaps in it, or it is simply superficial.
D range	D = Didn't bother. The assignment is incomplete. Some sections not attempted. Other sections way too basic to be seen as completed. Poor writing filled with grammatical and/or spelling mistakes indicating that the student has not reviewed his/her work before submitting.
D	The student has failed to answer or address the questions posed in the assignment. The answer is not on point, or it is so superficial that it is a symbolic answer with no thought in it all.
F	The student has failed to answer the question at all.