



Climate, Society and the Humanities

CAS NS 331 (4 credits)

Course Catalog Description:

Survey of climate topics across humanities and social sciences. Explores interpretive and comparative approaches to understanding human-climate interactions in oceanic contexts and identifies collaborative potential with scientists. Requires journal writing and critical application of concepts to group projects and discussions.

Instructor: Sea Education Association Humanities faculty.

Location: SEA campus in Woods Hole, MA, on shore at field sites and port stops, and aboard SEA sailing school vessel at sea.

Prerequisites: Admission to SEA Semester. Sophomore standing or consent of instructor.

Course Philosophy and Approach:

In this course, students will examine climate-driven impacts on human lives and societies from the perspective of the humanities and social sciences, with a focus on coastal communities and marine environments. The course offers a broad overview of relevant literature to assess the contributions of history, anthropology, sociology, political science, philosophy, economics, psychology, literature and the visual arts to advancing climate change research. Students will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute to our understanding of the role of human actions and ideas within the context of shifting planetary and oceanic processes. The course provides a framework for examining climate change as a novel problem that requires the interpretive and comparative approaches of the humanities and social sciences to complement scientific research and theory.

Learning Objectives:

1. Gain knowledge of emerging interpretive and comparative frameworks for understanding and communicating climate impacts on human lives and societies.
2. Test new knowledge and skills against observations of landscapes and seascapes, the built environment, and local ideas and practices.
3. Contribute to our understanding of the human-environment relationship by exploring and advancing connections between the humanities and social sciences and the natural sciences.



Evaluation:

Journal Essays (10 total entries)	50%
Story Essay and Presentation	25%
Action Plans (3 total)	15%
Class Participation	10%

Assignments:

Journal Essays

The course instructor will assign a total of 10 journal entries that track and augment class readings and discussions. The objective is to apply concepts learned from humanities approaches to climate change to real and hypothetical case studies, and to explore solutions to climate change issues. Each journal entry is worth 5% of the total course grade.

Story Essay and Presentation

Students will write stories that voice their perspectives and experiences of climate change. The course instructor will place emphasis on story structure, application of key concepts, and clarity of writing and presentation. The journal writing assignment will provide weekly practice and consideration of story content. The objective is to encourage students to identify their unique roles in providing solutions to climate change issues, and to complement skills development in the program's Environmental Communications course. The written story (1000 words) and oral presentation to the class are together worth 25% of the total course grade.

Action Plans

For each of the three onshore modules (Futures, Justice, Governance), students will work in groups of three or four to apply the course material to a relevant climate change question. The course instructor will present a problem scenario that requires a response in the form of an action plan. Students will develop and present their action plans in class. The three Action Plans will be due at the end of class on Friday of Week 2 and Week 4, and Wednesday of Week 6, respectively; each are worth 5% of the total course grade.

Expectations and Requirements:

- Punctual attendance is required at every class meeting.
- Active participation in class discussion is expected.
- Late assignment submissions are not accepted.
- The policy on academic accuracy, quoted below, will be strictly followed in this class.
The papers that you submit in this course are expected to be ***your original work***. You must take care to distinguish your own ideas and knowledge from wording or substantive information that you derive from one of your sources. The term "sources" includes not only published primary and secondary material, but also information and opinions gained directly from other people and text that you cut

and paste from any site on the Internet.

The responsibility for learning the proper forms of citation lies with you.

Quotations must be placed properly within quotation marks and must be cited fully. In addition, all paraphrased material must be acknowledged completely. Whenever ideas or facts are derived from your reading and research, the sources must be indicated. (Harvard *Handbook for Students*, 305)

- Considerations for use of internet sources:
As you browse websites, assess their usefulness very critically. Who posted the information and why? Can you trust them to be correct? Authoritative? Unbiased? Your annotation should include the name of the author or organization originating any material that you reference. If you can't identify the source, don't use it!
- *Please consult information in the SEA Student Handbook on Academic Integrity and direct any questions to SEA Semester faculty.*

Inclusivity and Classroom Culture:

Our SEA community embraces diversity of age, background, beliefs, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, and other visible and nonvisible categories. We expect each one of you (and you should expect the same from us) to contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment. If you feel that you are not being welcomed, included, or accepted here, please reach out to one of your teachers or one of the deans at SEA to share your concern.

Required Readings:

Bambridge, Tamatoa, and Stéphanie Leyronas. The Polynesian Rahui and Global Issues of Climate. In: *Tidialectics: Imagining an Ocean Worldview through Art and Science*. Stefanie Hessler, ed. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Pp. 133-141. 2018.

Beckerman, Wilfred, and Joanna Pasek. *Justice, Posterity, and the Environment*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. 2001.

Buck, Holly Jean. On the Possibilities of a Charming Anthropocene. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 105(2):369-377. 2015.

Dorsch, Marcel J., and Christian Flachslund. A Polycentric Approach to Global Climate Governance. *Global Environmental Politics* 17(2):45-64. 2017.

- Gardiner, Beth. Unequal Impact: The Deep Links Between Racism and Climate Change. *Yale Environment 360*. 2020. <https://e360.yale.edu/features/unequal-impact-the-deep-links-between-inequality-and-climate-change>
- Gomez-Echeverri, Luis. The changing geopolitics of climate change finance. *Climate Policy* 13(5):632-648. 2013.
- Grant, Sandy. How to stay hopeful in dark times. 2017. <https://qz.com/1094171/how-to-stay-hopeful-in-dark-times-according-to-a-cambridge-philosopher/>
- Hau'ofa, Epli. Our Sea of Islands. In: *We Are the Ocean: Selected Works*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. 2001.
- Held, David, and Charles Roger. Three Models of Global Climate Governance: From Kyoto to Paris and Beyond. *Global Policy* 9(4):527-537. 2018.
- Jetñil-Kijiner, Kathy, and Aka Niviâna. Rise: From One Island to Another. Video. 2019. <https://www.kathyjetnilkijiner.com/>
- Jouffray, Jean-Baptiste, Robert Blasiak, Albert V. Norström, Henrik Österblöm, and Magnus Nyström. The Blue Acceleration: The Trajectory of Human Expansion into the Ocean. *One Earth* 2:43-54. 2019.
- Kaijser, Anna, and Annica Kronsell. Climate change through the lens of intersectionality. *Environmental Politics* 23(3):417-433. 2014.
- The Lancet. Climate and COVID-19: converging crises. December 2, 2020. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)32579-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)32579-4/fulltext)
- Milkoreit, Manjana. Imaginary politics: Climate change and making the future. *Elem Sci Anth* 5(62): 18 pp. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1525/elementa.249>. 2017.
- Mintrom, Michael. So you want to be a policy entrepreneur? *Policy Design and Practice* 2(4):307-323. 2019.
- Peters, Kimberley, and Philip Steinberg. A Wet World: Rethinking Place, Territory and Time. *Society and Space*, April 27, 2015. <https://www.societyandspace.org/articles/a-wet-world-rethinking-place-territory-and-time>
- Schlosberg, David, and Lisette B Collins. From environmental to climate justice: climate justice and the discourse of environmental justice. *WIREs Climate Change*. doi: 10.1002/wcc.275. 2014.



Singh, Vandana. Entanglement. In: *Loosed Upon the World: The Saga Anthology of Climate Fiction*. John Joseph Adams, ed. Pp. 269-322. New York: Saga Press. 2015.

Thomas, Adelle, and Rueanna Haynes. Black Lives Matter: the link between climate change and racial justice. *Climate Analytics*. 22 June 2020.
<https://climateanalytics.org/blog/2020/black-lives-matter-the-link-between-climate-change-and-racial-justice/>

Course Calendar:

Topic	Readings/Assignments Due
Week 1 (4 hours) – on shore at SEA campus in Woods Hole	
<p>Course Introduction</p> <p>Lecture and Discussion - Futures 1: Uncertainty, Hope, Change</p>	<p>Readings: Grant 2017; Milkoreit 2017; Singh 2015.</p> <p>Due: Journal Entry 1</p>
Week 2 (5 hours) – on shore at SEA campus in Woods Hole	
<p>Lecture and Discussion - Futures 2: Geoengineers and Geosocieties</p> <p>Workshop - Futures 3: What do we owe future generations?</p>	<p>Readings: Buck 2015; Beckerman & Pasek 2001 (Ch. 7).</p> <p>Due: Journal Entry 2; Action Plan 1</p>
Week 3 (6 hours) – on shore at SEA campus in Woods Hole	
<p>Lecture and Discussion - Justice 1: Foundations</p> <p>Lecture and Discussion - Justice 2: Climate Change and Indigenous Self-Determination</p>	<p>Readings: Schlosberg & Collins 2014; Jetñil-Kijiner & Niviâna 2019; Region-specific (TBD).</p> <p>Due: Journal Entry 3</p>
Week 4 (6 hours) – on shore at SEA campus in Woods Hole	
<p>Lecture and Discussion - Justice 3: Overcoming Hierarchies</p> <p>Workshop - Justice 4: In This Moment: Climate, COVID, and Racial Justice</p>	<p>Readings: Kaijser & Kronsell 2014; Gardiner 2020; Thomas & Haynes 2020; The Lancet 2020.</p> <p>Due: Journal Entry 4; Action Plan 2</p>
Week 5 (6 hours) – on shore at SEA campus in Woods Hole	

<p>Lecture and Discussion - Governance 1: The Geopolitics of Climate</p> <p>Lecture and Discussion - Governance 2: From Policy to Polycentricity</p>	<p>Readings: Held & Charles 2018; Dorsch & Flachsland 2017.</p> <p>Due: Journal Entry 5; Story worksheet</p>
<p>Week 6 (7 hours) – on shore at SEA campus in Woods Hole</p>	
<p>Lecture and Discussion - Governance 3: Green Finance</p> <p>Workshop - Governance 4: Teamwork</p>	<p>Readings: Gomez-Echeverri 2013; Mintrom 2019</p> <p>Due: Journal Entry 6; Action Plan 3</p>
<p>Weeks 7 (5 hours) – at sea</p>	
<p>Begin Sea Component</p> <p>Port Stop Field Trip</p>	<p>Readings: Site-specific readings to guide field trip activities</p>
<p>Week 8 (5 hours) – at sea</p>	
<p>Port Stop Field Trip</p>	<p>Readings: Site-specific readings to guide field trip activities</p> <p>Due: Journal Entry 7</p>
<p>Week 9 (6 hours) – at sea</p>	
<p>Lecture and discussion: Oceanic Perspectives on Climate Change 1: The Blue Acceleration</p> <p>Story Workshop 1</p>	<p>Readings: Jouffray et al 2019</p> <p>Due: Journal Entry 8</p>
<p>Week 10 (4 hours) – at sea</p>	
<p>Lecture and discussion: Oceanic Perspectives on Climate Change 2: The “Oceanic Lens”</p>	<p>Readings: Peters and Steinberg 2015</p> <p>Due: Journal Entry 9</p>
<p>Week 11 (8 hours) – at sea</p>	
<p>Lecture and discussion: Oceanic Perspectives on Climate Change 3: Regional Images</p>	<p>Readings: Bambridge & Leyronas 2018; Hau’ofa 2001; Region-specific readings (TBD)</p>



<i>Port Stop Field Trip</i> <i>Story Workshop 2</i>	Due: Journal Entry 10
<i>Week 12 (8 hours) – at sea</i>	
<i>Lecture:</i> Course review	Due: Story Presentation and Essay