

Soci 495B: An Introduction to the Sociology of Climate Change.

Pre-requisites: None.

(If you have trouble registering, contact the instructor for assistance.)

January – April 2016
Tuesdays and Thursday 9:30am–11:00am
Room: Geog 201

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Anthropogenic climate change is arguably the greatest crisis facing humanity in the early part of the 21st Century. There is an overwhelming scientific consensus that the average temperature on the earth's surface is increasing, and that this increase is primarily a result of human activities. This average increase in worldwide earth surface temperature is leading to global climate change. This change will manifest itself in different ways in different locations. Some places will experience more severe droughts, others will experience more severe flooding. Storms will be more severe. Glaciers are rapidly melting, resulting in rising sea levels, and other consequences. These changes will have devastating effects on human societies, and will also have dramatic negative effects on the "natural world" (including massive extinction of various flora and fauna species – some have dubbed as the "Anthropocene").

While climate change is often seen as a "natural science issue", its ultimate causes, consequences, and potential remedies are largely social. Thus, sociology should be considered to be a core discipline in understanding and responding to climate change. This course will introduce students to sociological insights about contemporary climate change. It will do so by considering the global nature of climate change, and its implications. *No prior training in sociology is assumed.*

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Provide an introductory overview to the science of climate change, and some of the key issues in climate change mitigation and adaptation. (A prelude to the main course material).
- Provide an overview of key sociological topics related to climate change such as inequality, the social construction of environmental issues, political economy, socialization and the formation of public opinion, social movements, community resilience.
- Students will learn to describe and apply key theoretical perspectives (e.g. social constructionism, ecological modernization, the treadmill of production) to climate change topics.
- Upon completion of the course, students will be able to identify and describe at least six key substantive sociological issues related to climate change (e.g., what drives public opinion about climate change issues, what explains patterns of media reporting on climate change issues, what are the opportunities and constraints for social movements who mobilize around climate change issues), and will be able to reflect upon these issues in a comparative context. They will also be encouraged to link these insights to policy issues.
- During the course, students will engage in comparative analysis by choosing a term paper topic that requires them to compare and contrast two different country cases on a climate change topic (e.g. how does the political economy of Canada and France differ, and how might this be related to different outcomes in climate change policies).