

Check out our [Interactive Visual Syllabus](#) on our course website

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Office Hours: online via Zoom, by appointment

Contacting your instructor: Post any question you would raise your hand in class to ask to the corresponding discussion forum in Canvas. Asking questions on our forums can benefit all students in that everyone will see the discussions and answers regarding class questions. For questions which are more personal in nature, please contact me through the course e-mail system in Canvas.

NOTE: I'll check email, discussion forums, submission comments, etc. at least once per day during the work week (Monday through Friday) and as time permits on weekends. In other words, even if you plan to do the bulk of your work over the weekend, it is prudent you submit questions to me by Friday to ensure I'm able to respond with enough time for you to utilize my answers to your questions for on-time submissions by Sunday night. If you've reached out to me in any of these ways and don't hear back within 24 hours (during the week), that's not normal for me – reach out again via brobinson@psu.edu.

Course Overview

Description: Human dimensions of global environmental change: human causes; human adaptations; and policy implications of global warming

Prerequisites: EARTH 2, GEOG 10 or METEO 3; GEOG 30N

Writing-intensive course that concentrates on the human-environment interactions involved in contemporary and future global warming



Geography 438W is a writing-intensive course that concentrates on the human-environment interactions involved in contemporary and future global warming. The course is divided into three units which approach the human-centered challenges of a changing climate from the following perspectives:

- Unit 1 is all about **where we are** with climate change currently. We'll take a close look at how we got here and how we might change course as well.
- Unit 2 will show us **where it's going** and how that changing climate is manifesting in ways that have **impacts**. Climate change isn't about polar bears drifting sadly on little chunks of ice. (Of course, it CAN be about the bears if you want it to be.) Instead, climate change is about impacts on our health, our ability to grow food, our access to clean and plentiful drinking water, our weather, our ecosystems. But we'll also look at how we can become more resilient and adapt to the changes we're facing.
- Unit 3 will give us the chance to imagine **where we want to be**. We'll look at climate futures and what it means to be sustainable. We'll think about the role of our own thoughts, opinions, and actions in addressing this planetary challenge.

What I Expect of You

On average, most students spend eight to ten hours per week working on course assignments. Your workload may be more or less depending on your study habits. If you stick to our schedule and stay connected and engaged, you're going to be successful in this class.

Here is a short (about 10 minutes) [video](#) introducing you to the class, my approach to the writing we'll be doing, and what I expect of you this semester (and what you can expect from me!).



Course Goals and Outcomes

At the successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- **explain** the human causes of climate change and the potential mitigation alternatives for these causes;
- **examine** human vulnerability to and adaptation to climate change impacts and how these vary across space, populations, and other variables;
- **write** well-organized, thoroughly supported, and critical discussions of complex issues related to the human dimensions of climate change.

By the end of the semester, students will have broad understanding of the human dimensions of global warming, better writing ability, and improved critical reading skill.

Above all else, I want May You to be a more confident writer and science communicator than January You.

Specific learning objectives for each lesson and project are detailed within each lesson. The class schedule is published on the Canvas Calendar. Assigned readings are included in the Canvas modules.

Required Course Materials

All materials needed for this course are presented online through our Course website and in Canvas. In order to access all materials, you need to have an active Penn State Access Account user ID and password (used to access the online course resources). If you have any questions about obtaining or activating your Penn State Access Account and are a World Campus student, please contact the [Outreach Helpdesk](#). If you are a resident education student, please contact the [ITS Help Desk](#).

Assignments and Grading

The course has 3 units with a total of 12 lessons. We will spend one week on each lesson. At the end of each unit, you'll submit a portion of the semester-long Climate Change in My Community project as well as a self-assessment of your writing progress. You'll have a work week to devote exclusively to this project at the end of each unit.

Climate Change in My Community Writing Project – 45%

Three unit-based components of the written project. Each unit is worth a bit more than the last, recognizing that your writing skills are developing over the course of the semester. Unit 1 (10%), Unit 2 (15%), and Unit 3 (20%).

Writing Self-Assessments – 5%

At the end of each unit, students will complete a self-assessment and grading rubric for your performance on the unit's project submission. This is an opportunity to reflect on the areas in your writing (both mechanics and process) with which you struggle and those you feel you're improving through continued practice in the course.

Lesson Content Quizzes – 35%

Writing is not the only way we'll assess your understanding of the course material. Each lesson contains a timed content quiz in Canvas which will ask questions related to the course content and assigned readings. You are welcome to utilize your own notes, the course website, and our assigned readings as you work through these time quizzes. Please be cautioned against interpreting this as a free pass not to read the material in advance. You will not be successful at synthesizing complex themes you've not yet reviewed in the allotted time. There are 12 weekly quizzes.

Write to Learn Discussions – 10%

This course goes beyond just establishing good writing mechanics, though. We'll also be writing to learn, not just learning to write. Each week, you'll have a short prompt to respond to informally. These brief write-ups will **not** be graded for writing quality, but instead represent an opportunity for you to get your thoughts out about the topics we're discussing without feeling the pressure of creating a masterful piece of writing. These prompts are intended to help you personally connect to the material and engage with your classmates. There are 12 weekly discussions.

Our Climate Future – 10%

At the end of the semester, we'll take a step back to imagine (and write about) what our climate future might look like based on what you learn throughout the semester.

Grading Scale

A	93 – 100
A-	90 – 92.9
B+	87 – 89.9
B	83 – 86.9
B-	80 – 82.9
C+	77 – 79.9
C	70 – 76.9
D	60 – 69.9
F	0 – 59.9

Letter grades will be based on the following percentages (percentages refer to the proportion of all possible points earned by the student).

- **No rounding**
- **No extra credit**
- **C or better required to count toward ESP degree requirements**

Try your best on all assigned work!

Course Schedule

You should refer to the Canvas calendar for all due dates, also described below. If you notice any inconsistencies or conflicting information, let me know and I'll clarify. Lessons open each week on Monday morning, and associated work and deliverables are due **Sunday nights at 11:59 pm**.

Unit 1: Where We Are

Jan 19 - 24	Orientation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review syllabus, Resources, and all orientation materials in Canvas • Orientation Quiz • Introductions • Academic Integrity training
	1: The Science of Climate Change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All assigned readings (course content on website and external readings) • Lesson 1 Content Quiz • Write to Learn
Jan 25 - 31	2: Emissions by Sector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All assigned readings (course content on website and external readings) • Lesson 2 Content Quiz • Write to Learn
Feb 1 - 7	3: Planetary Impacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All assigned readings (course content on website and external readings) • Lesson 3 Content Quiz • Write to Learn
Feb 8 - 14	4: Mitigation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All assigned readings (course content on website and external readings) • Lesson 4 Content Quiz • Write to Learn

Feb 15 - 21	<p>Climate Change in My Community - Project Work Week: Unit 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit 1 Project Submission • Unit 1 Self-Assessment (including edited draft and grading rubric)
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Unit 2: Where We're Going

Feb 22 - 28	<p>5: Vulnerability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All assigned readings (course content on website and external readings) • Lesson 5 Content Quiz • Write to Learn
Mar 1 - 7	<p>6: Impacts on People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All assigned readings (course content on website and external readings) • Lesson 6 Content Quiz • Write to Learn
Mar 8 - 14	<p>7: Impacts on Places</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All assigned readings (course content on website and external readings) • Lesson 7 Content Quiz • Write to Learn
Mar 15 - 21	<p>8: Adaptation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All assigned readings (course content on website and external readings) • Lesson 8 Content Quiz • Write to Learn
Mar 22 - 28	<p>Climate Change in My Community - Project Work Week: Unit 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit 2 Project Submission (including revised Unit 1 submission) • Unit 2 Self-Assessment (including edited Unit 2 submission draft and grading rubric)

Unit 3: Where We Want to Be

Mar 29 – Apr 4	<p>9: Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All assigned readings (course content on website and external readings) • Lesson 9 Content Quiz • Write to Learn
Apr 5 - 11	<p>10: Public Opinion on Climate Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All assigned readings (course content on website and external readings) • Lesson 10 Content Quiz • Write to Learn
Apr 12 - 18	<p>11: Individual Behavior or Collective Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All assigned readings (course content on website and external readings) • Lesson 11 Content Quiz • Write to Learn

Apr 19 - 25	<p>12: Storytelling and Climate Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All assigned readings (course content on website and external readings) • Lesson 12 Content Quiz • Write to Learn
Apr 26 – May 2	<p>Climate Change in My Community – Project Work Week: Unit 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit 3 Project Submission (including revised Units 1 and 2 submissions) • Unit 3 Self-Assessment (including edited Unit 3 submission draft and grading rubric)
May 3 - 9	<p>Finals Week</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit 3 writing assignment due on Monday, May 3^h.

Course Policies

Don't Tempt Fate!

Technology only fails you when you need it most. Waiting until the very last minute to submit something invites technical issues that cost you a late penalty. Part of your responsibility in this class is to ensure that your work is *received* by the prescribed deadline (not simply that it's done by then).

Late Policy

You are expected to submit your work on time, as scheduled; however, late completions are possible if arranged beforehand in the case of illness or emergency. **If you find yourself falling behind, talk to the instructor *before* you miss a deadline, not after.** Instructors are people too, and we understand that life happens, particularly this semester. Late submissions of any kind incur 10% per day penalty unless approved by the instructor.

Technical Requirements

For this course, we recommend the minimum technical requirements outlined on the [World Campus Technical Requirements](#) page, including the requirements listed for same-time, synchronous communications. If you need technical assistance at any point during the course, please contact [World Campus Technical Support](#) (for World Campus students) or the [ITS Help Desk](#) (for students at all other campus locations).

Internet Connection

Access to a reliable broadband Internet connection is required for this course. A problem with your Internet access may not be used as an excuse for late, missing, or incomplete coursework. If you experience problems with your Internet connection while working on this course, it is your responsibility to find an alternative Internet access point, such as a public library or wireless hotspot.

Mixed Content

This site is considered a secure website, which means that your connection is encrypted. We do, however, link to content that isn't necessarily encrypted. This is called mixed content. By default, mixed content is blocked in Internet Explorer, Firefox and Chrome. This may result in a blank page or a message saying that only secure content is displayed. Follow the directions on our technical requirements page of the course orientation to view the mixed content.

Penn State Email Accounts

All official communications from the Penn State World Campus are sent to students' Penn State email accounts. Be sure to check your Penn State account regularly so you don't miss any important information. Or, [Forward Your Penn State Email](#).

Academic Integrity – this is a big one!

This course follows the [guidelines for academic integrity of Penn State's College of Earth and Mineral Sciences](#). Penn State defines academic integrity as "the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner." Academic integrity includes "a commitment not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation, or deception." In particular, the University defines plagiarism as "the fabrication of information and citations; submitting others' work from professional journals, books, articles, and papers; submission of other students' papers, lab results or project reports and representing the work as one's own." Penalties for violations of academic integrity may include course failure. To learn more, see Penn State's [Plagiarism Tutorial for Students](#).

In this course, you are provided multiple resources from the outset to understand how to properly cite your work, incorporate sources into your own writing, and attribute accordingly. There is no tolerance for disregard for these conventions. For example, you can't copy someone's words directly and just put a citation after it. That's not enough. First offenses carry a zero on the assignment sanction if found responsible, and it goes up from there. Saying you didn't know it was wrong is not a viable excuse, I just told you it was wrong.

Course Copyright

All course materials students receive or to which students have online access are protected by copyright laws. Students may use course materials and make copies for their own use as needed, but unauthorized distribution and/or uploading of materials without the instructor's express permission is strictly prohibited. University Policy AD 40, the University Policy for the Recording of Classroom Activities and Note Taking Services addresses this issue. Students who engage in the unauthorized distribution of copyrighted materials may be held in violation of the University's Code of Conduct, and/or liable under Federal and State laws.

- **What does this mean?** If I find someone has uploaded materials to any sort of 'study site', I will issue a takedown notice and I will pursue an Academic Integrity violation for facilitating dishonesty by others.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. Every Penn State campus has an office for students with disabilities. The Student Disability Resources (SDR) website provides contact information for every Penn State campus: [Contacts for Disability Services at all Penn State Campuses](#). For further information, please visit the [Student Disability Resources \(SDR\) website](#).

In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, [participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation](#). If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, [your campus's disability services office](#) will provide you with an accommodation letter. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. You must follow this process for every semester that you request accommodations.

Military Personnel

Veterans and currently serving military personnel and/or spouses with unique circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployments, drill/duty requirements, disabilities, VA appointments, etc.) are welcome and encouraged to communicate these, in advance if possible, to the instructor in the case that special arrangements need to be made.

Inclement Weather

In case of weather-related delays at the University, this online course will proceed as planned. Your instructor will inform you if there are any extenuating circumstances regarding content or activity due dates in the course due to weather delays. If you are affected by a weather-related emergency, please contact your instructor at the earliest possible time to make special arrangements.

Connect Online with Caution

Penn State is committed to educational access for all. Our students come from all walks of life and have diverse life experiences. As with any other online community, the lack of physical interaction in an online classroom can create a false sense of anonymity and security. While one can make new friends online, digital relationships can also be misleading. Good judgment and decision making are critical when choosing to disclose personal information with others whom you do not know.

Reporting Bias-Motivated Incidents

Penn State takes great pride to foster a diverse and inclusive environment for students, faculty, and staff. Acts of intolerance, discrimination, or harassment due to age, ancestry, color, disability, gender, gender identity, national origin, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, or veteran status are not tolerated ([see the University's AD29 Statement on Intolerance](#)) and can be reported through Educational Equity via the Report Bias webpage.

Counseling and Psychological Services

Many students at Penn State face personal challenges or have psychological needs that may interfere with their academic progress, social development, or emotional wellbeing. The university offers a variety of confidential services to help you through difficult times, including individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, consultations, online chats, and mental health screenings. These services are provided by staff who welcome all students and embrace a philosophy respectful of clients' cultural and religious backgrounds, and sensitive to differences in race, ability, gender identity and sexual orientation. Services include the following:

Counseling and Psychological Services at University Park (CAPS): 814-863-0395

Counseling and Psychological Services at Commonwealth Campuses

Penn State Crisis Line (24 hours/7 days/week): 877-229-6400

Crisis Text Line (24 hours/7 days/week): Text LIONS to 741741

Attendance

This course will be conducted entirely online. There will be no set class meeting times, but you will be required to complete assignments with specific due dates. Many of the assignments are open for multiple days. It is your responsibility to complete the work on time, which may require you to complete the work early if you plan to travel or participate in national holidays, religious observances, or University-approved activities.

If you need to request an exception due to a personal or medical emergency, contact the instructor directly as soon as you are able. The instructor's ability to accommodate you is dependent on the earliest possible notification. Such requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Netiquette

The term "Netiquette" refers to the etiquette guidelines for electronic communications, such as e-mail and bulletin board postings. Netiquette covers not only rules to maintain civility in discussions, but also special guidelines unique to the electronic nature of forum messages. Please review some [general Netiquette guidelines](#) that should be followed when communicating in this course.

Mandated Reporting Statement

Penn State's policies require me, as a faculty member, to share information about incidents of sex-based discrimination and harassment (discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and retaliation) with Penn State's Title IX coordinator or deputy coordinators, regardless of whether the incidents are stated to me in person or shared by students as part of their coursework. For more information regarding the University's policies and procedures for responding to

reports of sexual or gender-based harassment or misconduct, please visit Penn State's [Office of Sexual Misconduct Prevention & Response](#) website.

Additionally, I am required to make a report on any reasonable suspicion of child abuse in accordance with the [Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law](#).

Diversity, Inclusion, and Respect

Penn State is “committed to creating an educational environment which is free from intolerance directed toward individuals or groups and strives to create and maintain an environment that fosters respect for others” as stated in Policy AD29 Statement on Intolerance. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment and to interact with civility.

For additional information, see:

- [Penn State Affirmative Action non-discrimination statement](#)
- [Policy AD 85 Sexual and gender-based harassment and misconduct, Title IX](#)
- [Policy AD91 Discrimination and Harassment, and Related inappropriate Conduct](#)
- [Penn State Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive Excellence](#)
- [Penn State Values](#)
- [Penn State Principles](#)
- [All In at Penn State: A Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion](#)

Disclaimer

Please note that the specifics of this Course Syllabus can be changed at any time, and you will be responsible for abiding by any such changes. All changes will be communicated with you via email, course announcement and/or course discussion forum.