1. COURSE BACKGROUND

Every major scientific body in the world now accept that climate change is happening, that humans are largely responsible for it and that it is a threat to human and the natural world. Yet, this urgency is failing to bring any tangible outcomes that will protect climate from further change. The resistance to change is fierce in some quarters even in the face of recent experiences of extreme events. So is this resistance partly because we are asking the wrong questions or looking for the wrong solutions? Is it partly because the discourse around this debate has been divisive and not inclusive? For many, it is as much a social and cultural issue as it is a physical phenomenon and that is what is reshaping the way we think about values and our place on earth. What would it take to limit the impacts of climate change in society?

This class explores the idea of climate change from vantage point of social, cultural, historical and scientific analyses. In doing so this class also illuminates the numerous ways through which response to climate change can be deployed. Over the course of the semester, through discussions and deliberation, this class will create an opportunity for all of us to engage in the social and human dimensions of climate change and inform individual research from a different vantage point. This class is NOT about physical dimensions of climate change, although that will remain in the background.

The course will proceed in seminar format. Each class session will emphasize open discussions of the readings in question. While I will facilitate the discussion, including my own thoughts, the focus will be on engaging you through your own insights. I am not here to lecture in any significant degree, beyond synthesizing and preparing you a bit for upcoming week’s readings. I prefer to discuss the concepts, insights, and limitations of the class materials together. You are expected to bring your own ideas, understanding of the class materials, intellectual interests, and research orientations to bear on the discussion every week. While I welcome disagreements emerging from different worldviews, I also want to see constructive ways to approach how we tackle differences and reflect on some of the social implications of this phenomenon. Even as you argue for your own point of view, come ready to learn from your peer. I would prefer a critical tone in the class: appreciative of what an author does well and how it offers partial insight into societal dynamics, critical of what an author does poorly and how it obscures other important findings, and critical of how we inform ourselves and construct own views about climate change.

After a little more than an hour of discussion, we will take a short break. When we reconvene, we’ll step back and assess what we have cover (or not) in our discussion: major themes, important concepts, particular insights, major holes, etc. During the second half of the course, the student, especially responsible for that week’s readings will initiate this discussion with her/his insights into things that matters the most). I will moderate some further discussion (including major points that I want to get on the table).
2. **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

By expanding the discussion of climate change beyond natural and physical phenomenon students in this cross-disciplinary class will:

- a. Explore the complexity, plurality and opportunities in tackling impending challenge of climate change from a vantage point of social sciences;
- b. Understand how knowledge of climate change is constructed and reinforced;
- c. Extend students’ understanding of discussion topics through higher order learning activities that can be done alone (commentaries) and in group (in class participation);
- d. Explore intersection of values, ethics, justice, and social norms that might have implication for action on climate change;
- e. Understand that solutions to the problem of climate change must include measures to address issues of poverty, equity, education, and justice;
- f. Understand what climate adaptation actually entails – both from spatial and temporal perspectives.
- g. Understand what does innovative and futuristic adaptation look like;
- h. Debate why we welcome novelty in many areas of our life yet are wary about change in climate;
- i. Learn how relatively independent activities of research planning, monitoring, assessments and decision support can be more integrated so that society can navigate a transition towards new climate;
- j. Debate the appropriate role for science in guiding climate policy and response strategies;
- k. Understand the meaning of risk, how it is perceived, and how it can be amplified within different social networks and groups;
- l. Understand current international efforts to respond to climate change;
- m. Discuss how institutes encourage sustainable response to climate change; and
- n. Discuss the geopolitical environment that shapes the global climate debate.

3. **ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

a. **Attendance and participation (15% of course grade):** This class emphasizes participatory learning and relies on your ability to understand the assigned readings and engagement in discussion of those readings in class. Only one absence will be excused. Should you miss more than one class (due to personal and unforeseen reasons), you will be required to write a short (≈300 words) analysis of EACH reading assigned that week. You are expected to attend the class ready to actively engage. Obviously this means you will be assessed based on the quality and the depth of your discussion in class. That is: a) how much insightful your class discussion is? Do you help provoke fruitful disagreement and/or identify areas of emerging clarity in discussion? Are you respectful to others’ views? How constructively you disagree with your peers? Does your class participation reflect having done the readings and prepared thoughtfully for class? Do you help highlight particular strengths/weaknesses of the readings? Quality of your participation is very important for this class. It is hard to call that high quality participation if you almost never participate.

b. **Weekly précis (40% of course grade):** In order to facilitate productive discussion, starting WEEK THREE, each student must write brief précis as a reaction to the week’s readings. You are expected to write 400-500 words (no more!) each week by carefully reading the assigned readings and email to me by 10:00 AM the morning of each class. The précis is both
a summary and a reaction; that is, it begins with a brief overview of the core ideas presented in
the reading, followed by the common thread running across the readings, critically evaluate them
in relation to overall theme of the class, and pose thought provoking questions to stimulates
discussion in class. As you read try “connecting” abstract ideas from the readings to the real
world; it will help focus on reading and improve class discussion. I expect you to come to class
with fully prepared, one of the ways to prepare is to read quickly, skim some, and return to
important sections.

Take time to think through the reading before writing your précis and when writing, think
beyond the readings of the week. Your larger purpose is to show that in spite of all this
wonderful research, no one has addressed the problem in the way that you have envisioned. To
give your commentaries a purpose think of making connection to previously covered materials or
your experience of the real-world situations. Following each class, you should quickly revisit
your précis and update it with new insights; these updated notes should be emailed to me no later
than Friday evening of the week, which I will use for grading. This means your attendance and
participation in class is crucial.

e. Moderating a session (15% of course grade): After first few weeks in to the semester
you will be asked to moderate a class discussion (randomly assigned). Think of yourself as an
“expert” of that week’s theme and act like one. Here is what you are required to do: Saturday
evening the weekend before we discuss the readings for which you are responsible, you should:
a) suggest the common thread/themes worth paying attention to in the readings, b) suggest 3-5
generative questions for everybody in class to thinking while they do the reading, c) discuss
these questions verbally at the beginning of week’s class session, along with why you think they
are important. You should have innate sense of pacing yourself such as how long you should
dedicate to each discussion thread before moving to another. You also have the authority to
politely cut off or redirect the speaker if they stray. This will require a greater level of
preparation of the readings, including going beyond the readings that are assigned for the week
(several days ahead) and writing some generative questions & themes that will help deepen the
discussion. Your creativity and enthusiasm will be noted. Some tips:

- What is the crosscutting issues in the readings in question;
- How does the authors’ analytic perspectives compare and contrast;
- Are the reading(s) pulling your attention towards your research?
- What implication does the readings may have on your own research interest?

d. Case study (30% of course grade): This class relies on case studies to illustrate the
record of good practices (failure) or innovation to range of challenges related to climate change.
The goal is to provide the examples of how to gain a better understanding of the risks posed by
cclimate change while identifying lessons and best practices (or failure) from past responses to
such occurrences. There are four parts to this project: identification of case study, extended
abstract (approximately 400 words), presentation of case study in class, and final paper. They are
due at different times of the semester.

- Identification of case study (due September 16) –choose a case study that interests you
or is within the area of your research interest. If you have problem identifying one –
please discuss with me.
- Extended abstract (due October 14) - This should include the title (self explanatory and
expressed as a normative question that encapsulates the climate change dilemma), short
introduction of the case study, justification, methods of inquiry and if possible data source(s).

- Presentation of case study (due December 2) – you are required to share your semester long research to rest of the class.
- Final paper (5000 words, 12-point font plus figures, notes and references, (due December 6) should be written in such as way that it; a) captures the complexity of climate response, b) appeals to a broad audience; and c) provides lessons for possible response to climate change dilemma.
- It is important that you do a thorough proofreading of your final paper (more than once). Relying solely on spelling and grammar check on your word processor may not be a wise idea. Also, make sure to properly cite all the reference – inappropriate citation may cost your grade. With regard to style and grammar, your writing should, above all, be clear and correct.

4.  READINGS
The reading load will be significant, and students will be expected to come to class with the readings fully digested and having put real thought into their comments and questions. All the readings are available through the Blackboard (or some other means). Part of the aim of the course is to help students learn to read a wide range of materials. Periodically short newspaper articles will also be posted under this folder. I also encourage you to surf materials from the popular media (newspaper articles, magazine pieces, grey literature on the theme relevant to the materials of class) to share with the rest of class.

5.  EVALUATION
Course evaluation helps us understand student’s learning experience. Without your important feedback, it would be difficult to assess and improve teaching performance and student learning. Please be honest, fair and constructive in your evaluation of the class. Most importantly remember to complete on-line evaluation at the end of the semester. Additionally, your feedback during the semester helps us understand strengths and weaknesses. Pease feel free to share or email your suggestions.
6. WEEKLY SCHEDULE

WK 1 (8/26): Introduction, expectation and setting stage

WK 2 (9/2): Science of climate change: What do we know and how do we know?

WK 3 (9/9): Why are we so confused about climate change?
Hollin GJS and W. Pearce (2015). Tension between scientific certainty and meaning complicates communication of IPCC reports, Nature Climate change 5, 753-756.
Walsh, E.M. and BK Tsurusaki (2014), Social controversy belongs in the climate science classroom, Nature Climate change 4, 259-263.

WK 4 (9/16): Does science really matters?

WK 5 (9/23): Why is generation “X” so indifferent to climate change?

WK 8, (9/30): Climate justice a moral argument or commitment towards injustice?

**WK 9, (10/07): Discourse of vulnerability and climate change**
McSweeney, K. and Oliver T.C., (2011), Climate related disaster opens a window of opportunity for rural poor in northeastern Honduras, *PNAS*, 108(13):5203-5208,

**WK 6, (10/14): How long do we have to wait for politics and science to settle?**

**WK 10 (10/21): Climate adaptation: What do we talk?**

**WK 11 (10/28): What are the opportunities and constraints in climate adaptation?**

**WK 12 (11/04): Can climate adaptation be taken as opportunity to transform society?**

**WK 13 (11/11): Adaptation as innovation and innovation as adaptation - technological and institutional perspectives.**

**WK 13 (11/18): Adaptive capacity: Is knowledge a powerful determinant and indicator of adaptive capacity?**
Naess, L.O., (2013), The role of local knowledge in adaptation to climate change, WIREs Climate Change, 4:99-106.
Williams et al., (2015), Knowledge and adaptive capacity, Nature Climate Change, 5: 82-83.

**WK 14 (11/25): Climate change and sustainability: Can they go together?**
Griggs, D. et al. (2014), An integrated framework for sustainable development goals, Ecology and Society (19: 49-
High-Energy Adaptation – a closing remark (white paper from Climate Pragmatism)

**WK 15 (12/02): Presentation of Case Studies (15 minutes per presentation)**