GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE
Spring Semester 2010
Watershed School
Instructor: Janet McMahon
Course Scope and Expectations

Climate change is a complex global issue that cuts across many disciplines. In this course we will build upon historical research skills learned in the fall to help us understand the science of past and present climate change, how human societies could be affected by future changes, and how governments are responding to what is known. In addition we will consider the role morality and ethics play in addressing this issue. We will spend the final weeks of the course working with the Rockland Ad Hoc Energy Committee on an energy use reduction project for city.

Course Objectives

1. Students will analyze instrumental, proxy, and anecdotal climate data to understand past and current climate trends and patterns.

2. Using primary and secondary data sources, students will analyze the relationship between population growth, economic well-being (GDP, Human Development Index), and energy use.

3. Using maps, data, and government proposals currently on the table, students will analyze future climate change scenarios and research potential impacts and mitigation costs for different parts of the world.

4. Students will have a deeper understanding of climate science and will be able to critically analyze the relationship between scientific knowledge, media coverage and the public's understanding of global climate change.

5. Students will be introduced to some of the ethical issues surrounding the climate change debate.

6. Using maps, GIS, and on-the-ground field work, students will work with the Rockland Ad Hoc Energy Committee to research city energy use, inventory the city's lighting, and make recommendations for reducing energy demand.

Course Expectations

I am here to help you get as much as you can out of this course. If you have any questions on content, assignments, or any other issues, please let me know. The best way to reach me is by e-mail: jmcmahon@midcoast.com. You can also reach me by phone: 832-6067. Try to contact me before 9:00 pm if you'd like an answer to a question that same day.

Students are expected to be in class on time, to have notebooks, relevant readings and homework assignments in hand, and to be well prepared to engage in discussions.

Class participation is a very important. Students are expected to engage meaningfully and respectfully in discussions. Each student is expected to both listen and speak in a way that makes other students comfortable. Many of the topics we will study are controversial and many problems will not have clear solutions. Students should feel comfortable expressing their opinions and are encouraged to let me know if they are not.

Students will need a three ring binder for handouts and notes. Students are expected to take notes during class. If you miss a class, you are responsible for getting notes, handouts, and other class materials from a classmate. Please date all handouts and notes, save all of your work, and organize well. I will collect binders periodically during the first half of the course to make sure the material I present is being clearly understood and documented. If there are any problems please let me know as soon as possible.

Homework assignments and due dates will be given in class and summarized on Google Calendar. Assignments must be turned in on time to receive credit, unless special arrangements have been made in advance. Missed assignments need to be turned in at the beginning of the next class.

There is no need to bring a computer (unless you need one to take notes), cell phone (or other electronics) to class, so please don't.

We are tentatively planning to take two or three field trips over the course of the semester. We may need to leave during the lunch hour (~12:30 pm) to ensure enough time to complete field work and one trip may be in the evening.

Finally, I encourage you to pay attention to the world around you. A day doesn't go by without news about climate change or energy use. Stay informed of current events through newspapers, radio, the Internet, or television and bring what you learn to class.

Assessment

Students will be assessed based on the following:

Class participation as defined by attendance, punctuality, engagement in discussion and class activities, and overall commitment to high quality work.

Written homework assignments – Written assignments will be evaluated based on content, synthesis of the material, caliber of writing (grammar, spelling, and organization), format, general interest, and overall care. If your handwriting is difficult to read, you may want to type your work.

Graphs - These are expected to be neat, easily legible, well organized, and should be a concise representation of the presented data.

Quizzes – We will have two to three quizzes over the semester as determined by the syllabus. Quizzes will consist of short answers, definitions, analyses of graphs, diagrams, and opinion, and may cover materials from readings that were not discussed in lectures. I may give one take home exam.

To receive course credit, you are expected to participate regularly and constructively in class discussions, class activities and group projects, complete all assignments on time, and to generally receive a √ or 80% on graded assignments and quizzes.

To receive honors credit, you are expected to participate regularly and constructively in class discussions, class activities and group projects, complete all assignments on time, and to generally receive a √+ or 90% on assignments.