

## GEOG 1200A/B: The Climate Emergency

### Course Outline – Section 001 – Fall 2020



Although this academic year is different, Western University is committed to a thriving campus. We encourage you to check out the [Digital Student Experience](#) website to manage your academics and well-being. Additionally, the following link provides available resources to support students on and off campus: [www.uwo.ca/health/](http://www.uwo.ca/health/).

### 1. Technical Requirements



Stable internet connection



Laptop or computer

If you wish to arrange an appointment, you will also need:



Working microphone



Working webcam

### 2. Course Information

Delivery Mode	Time
Online	<b>Asynchronous</b> – new lecture material will be posted to OWL every Tuesday and Thursday mornings (EST)

\*Details about design and delivery of the course are listed below in Section 5

Classes Start	Reading Week	Classes End	Study day(s)	Exam Period
September 9	November 2-8	December 9	December 10	December 11 - 22

\* November 12, 2020: Last day to drop a first-term half course or a first-term full course without penalty

Course Instructor		Contact Information	Office hours
Dr. Tony Weis		tony.weis@uwo.ca	By appointment
Group	Teaching Assistants	Contact Information	Office hours
1	Mikaela Gilhooly	mgilhool@uwo.ca	By appointment
2	Veronica Reitmeier	vreitmei@uwo.ca	By appointment

The instructor and TAs are available for appointments via Zoom within OWL. Please contact us by OWL Message (not regular email) to make it easier for us to keep our course correspondence together. Groups will be specified on OWL. You can sign up on OWL for an online appointment using Zoom.

### 3. Calendar Description

An introduction to the science and politics of climate change. The course pivots on the great disjuncture between the urgency and magnitude of changes that climate scientists are imploring, and enduring 'business-as-usual' approaches. Struggles for action are considered in light of highly unequal responsibility and vulnerability.

2 lecture hours, 0.5 credit. No prerequisites.

### 4. Readings

There is no required textbook. Readings for each unit are available on OWL, along with details on how to access the documentary films.

The PowerPoint slides also provide an abundance of additional optional links that allow you to dig more deeply into subjects you are most interested in.

### 5. Documentary Films

You are expected to watch 5 documentary films over the course of the term, 1 during each of Units 2-6. Most are available through the Western Library system, and some are available for free on YouTube.

- 1) **To the ends of the earth** (2016, Green Planet Films, 81 mins), available via **Western Libraries**
- 2) **Chasing Ice** (2012, Films We Like, 76 mins) available via **Western Libraries**
- 3) **Fleeing climate change — the real environmental disaster** (2019, DW Documentary [German Public Broadcaster], 43 mins) available via **YouTube**
- 4) **Merchants of Doubt** (2014, Mongrel Media, 96 mins) available via **Western Libraries**
- 5) **This Changes Everything** (2015, Klein Lewis Productions and Louverture Films, 90 mins), available via **Western Libraries**

### 6. Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will:

- be able to understand and explain the basic physical and anthropogenic dynamics of climate change, and how climate change threatens the stability of life on earth;
- be able to understand the deep inequalities associated with climate change with respect to past and present emissions and urgent mitigation and adaptation efforts;
- be capable of critically engaging with political debates, conflicts, and policy initiatives with respect to climate change;
- have a conceptual basis for further studies in climate change and geography more broadly;
- be inspired to think about the ethical dimensions of environmental change and take action, individually and as part of wider social movements.

## 7. Course Format

This course is based upon online lectures, readings, and documentary films. The content is organized into 6 units, as outlined in the following section.

Lecture material is asynchronous, with online lectures uploaded twice-weekly in short segments in the Course Content section of OWL. There will be a total of roughly 2 lecture hours per week, and the readings for each of the 6 units should take about 2-3 hours (although there are 6-8 readings each unit, many of them are quite short). Students are responsible for material covered in the lectures as well as the assigned readings and documentary films. The key is to keep up with lectures, readings, and documentaries on a unit-by-unit basis.

You are expected to complete 4 short unit-based written assignments over the course of the term, which are due on each Tuesday at 5 pm EST after the completion of the unit (due dates in the schedule). You are also expected to participate in group discussions for each of the 5 documentary films, which will be open (Monday to Sunday) during the second week of the unit the film is assigned for.

Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox are the preferred browsers to optimally use OWL; update your browsers frequently. Students interested in evaluating their internet speed, please click [here](#). Using the right browser is important, especially when using different features integrated with OWL. If you need technical assistance, support can be found on the OWL Help page or by contacting the Western Technology Services Helpdesk (which can also be reached by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800).

## 8. Course Objectives and Schedule

This course is focused around a series of key subjects and burning questions, each of which are the focus of a two-week unit. The basic objective is that you will have a good grasp of answers to these questions by the end of the course.

Unit	Dates	Theme	Burning question	Assignment Dates
1	Sept 9-13 Sept 14-20	Causality	How are scientists sure that the earth is warming and that this is different from natural cycles?	
2	Sept. 21-27 Sept. 28-Oct. 4	(soaring & insatiable) Growth	How did human societies become addicted to fossil energy?	Unit 1 memo: Tue, Sept. 22 @ 5 pm EST 1st film discussion: Sept. 28-Oct. 4
3	Oct. 5-11 Oct. 12-18	Urgency	What is a 'safe' level of warming and emissions? (and how fast do we need to get there?)	Unit 2 memo: Tue, Oct. 6 @ 5 pm EST 2nd film discussion: Oct. 12-18
4	Oct. 19-25 Oct. 26-Nov. 1	Inequality	What is climate justice (and injustice)?	Unit 3 memo: Tue, Oct. 20 @ 5 pm EST 3rd film discussion: Oct. 26-Nov. 1
Nov. 2-8		Fall Reading Week		

5	Nov. 9-15 Nov-16-22	Inertia	If climate scientists are so confident about causation and risks, why haven't major actions been taken yet?	Unit 4 memo: Tue, Nov. 10 @ 5 pm EST 4th film discussion: Nov. 16-22
6	Nov. 23-29 Nov. 30-Dec. 6	Action	What is to be done? (or is it too late?)	Unit 5 memo: Tue, Nov. 24 @ 5 pm EST 5th film discussion: Nov. 30-Dec. 6
				Unit 6 memo: Tue, Dec. 8
Dec. 11-22		Exam Period		Take-home exam due during exam period

## 9. Online Participation and Engagement

Course participation will involve interacting in the discussion forums for each of the 5 documentary films during the second week of the unit.

## 10. Communication

- you are encouraged to check the OWL site every 24 – 48 hours
- a weekly update will be provided on OWL announcements
- students should email the instructor and teaching assistants using OWL “messages”
- any other communication will arrive through your university email account. It is your responsibility to ensure that e-mail received from the University at your UWO address is attended to in a timely manner. You can read about the privacy and security of the UWO email accounts [here](#).
- emails will be monitored daily; you can expect to receive a response in 24 – 48 hours
- this course will use the OWL forum for documentary discussions
- students should post general course-related queries on the discussion forum so that everyone can access answers to questions

## 11. Evaluation

The evaluation breakdown for the course is as follows:

Assessment	Format	Weighting	Due Date
Unit summaries & reflections	Word document • submit as .doc through OWL assignment tab	60% (15% each x 4)	Tuesdays at 5 pm EST following each unit
Online discussion of documentary films	OWL Forum	10%	Throughout the 2nd week of each unit
Final take-home exam	Word document • submit as .doc through OWL assignment tab	30%	during exam period; date to be set by registrar

### Unit summaries & reflections (4 x 15% = 60% of course grade)

For 4 of the 6 units, you are expected to prepare a short paper that:

- 1) summarizes 3 major subjects in the unit, drawing on **both** the course lectures and the assigned readings
- 2) reflects on how these subjects relate to the 'burning question' that frames the unit

You have flexibility in selecting which units you want to cover, but once the submission window has closed the papers will not be accepted for that particular unit. You cannot submit more than 4 to replace your lowest mark.

**Format:** Please use 12 pt. font, double space, and save and submit your work as a Word document. You can follow whatever formatting convention you are comfortable with (just be sure to follow it correctly and consistently)

**Length: 750 words max.** (about 3 double-spaced pages), not including references.

**Save as:** LASTNAME-FIRSTNAME-Memo#.doc

**Submit:** on OWL via Turnitin (see statement in policies below)

**Due:** Tuesdays at 5 pm EST, following the conclusion of the unit.

#### Notes:

- plagiarized or copied work will receive a grade of **zero** (see notes on academic offences below).
- after an assessment is returned, if you have concerns you should wait 24 hours to digest feedback before contacting your TA. To ensure a timely response, reach out within 7 days
- click [here](#) for a detailed and comprehensive set of policies and regulations concerning examinations and grading. The following table outlines the University-wide grade descriptors:

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	below 50	Fail

### Online discussion of documentary films (10% of course grade)

During the second week of units 2-5, you are expected to participate in an online discussion with your classmates regarding the documentary film. This can involve both general reflections about important aspects of the film's argumentation, questions that arise, or concerns you have, as well as responding to something that a classmate has written, in which case the point is not simply to agree or disagree but add something to the conversation about *why* – and do so respectfully.

Participation will be assessed over the term as a whole. Top marks will be awarded to those who make meaningful contributions to each film discussion.

### **Final take-home exam (30% of course grade)**

The format will be given in weeks leading up to the final exam period, and it will be presented to you on Tuesday, December 8. You will have 1 week to work on it.

### **Late policy**

- units 1-2: late papers will not be accepted – turn your attention to the next unit.
- units 3-6: late papers without illness self-reports subject to a penalty of 10%/day
- late take-home exam without illness self-reports will be subject to a penalty 10%/day
- late unit 6 paper or take-home exam with illness self-reports should be submitted within 24 hours of submission of the last illness self-report

**Grades will not be adjusted on the basis of need. It is important to monitor your performance in the course. Remember: You are responsible for your grades in this course.**

## **12. Professionalism, Privacy, and Online Etiquette**

Western students are expected to follow the Student Code of Conduct. Additionally, the following expectations and professional conduct apply to this course:

- students are expected to follow online etiquette expectations provided on OWL
- all course materials created by the instructor(s) are copyrighted and cannot be sold/shared
- recordings are not permitted (audio or video) without explicit permission
- keep in mind the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students in the course
- be courteous toward the instructor, your colleagues, and authors whose work you are discussing
- be professional and scholarly in all online postings: cite the ideas of others appropriately and be respectful of the diversity of viewpoints that you will encounter in the class and in your readings. The exchange of diverse ideas and opinions is part of the scholarly environment. “Flaming” is never appropriate.

## **13. Accommodation Policies**

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

### **Academic Consideration for Student Absence**

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student’s final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted on the syllabus. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- for exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g., December and April exams)
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student’s final grade,

- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are *not* met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. **All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see:

[Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#)

For the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf).

### **Religious Accommodation**

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

## **14. How to be successful in this class**

Students enrolled in this class should understand the level of autonomy and self-discipline required to be successful.

- 1) Invest in a planner or application to keep track of your courses. Populate all your deadlines at the start of the term and schedule time at the start of each week to get organized and manage your time.
- 2) Make it a daily habit to log onto OWL to ensure you have seen everything posted to help you succeed in this class.
- 3) Take notes as you go through the lesson material. Treat this course as you would a face-to-face course. Keeping handwritten notes or even notes on a regular Word document will help you learn more effectively than just reading or watching the videos.
- 4) Connect with others. Try forming an online study group and try meeting on a weekly basis for study and peer support.
- 5) Do not be afraid to ask questions. If you are struggling with a topic, check the online discussion boards or contact your instructor and/or teaching assistant.
- 6) Reward yourself for successes. It seems easier to motivate ourselves knowing that there is something waiting for us at the end of the task.

## 15. Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence.

[Include this paragraph on plagiarism-checking software only if relevant. If not relevant delete the paragraph below]

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com ([www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com)).

[Include this paragraph on computer marked multiple-choice tests if relevant. If not relevant delete the paragraph below]

## 16. Western's Commitment to Accessibility

The Department of Geography strives at all times to provide accessibility to all faculty, staff, students and visitors in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519-661-2147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website.

More information about "Accessibility at Western" is available.

## 17. Mental Health

If you or someone you know is experiencing distress, there are several resources here at Western to assist you. Please visit Western's Health and Wellness website for more information on mental health resources.

## 18. Support Services

Western's Support Services  
Student Development Centre

## 19. Important Dates

September 9: Classes resume

September 17: Last day to add a first term half course

October 12: Thanksgiving Holiday – Department Office Closed

November 2 to November 8: Fall Reading Week (No classes; Department Office open)

November 12: Last day to drop a first term half course without penalty

November 30: Last day to drop a full course without penalty

December 9: Classes end

December 10: Study day

December 11-22: Examination Period