

GEOG 1200A: The Climate Emergency

Course Outline – Fall 2023



1. Course Information

Course Instructor	Contact Information	Office hours
Dr. Tony Weis	tony.weis@uwo.ca	Mondays 1-2 pm, SSC 1403
Teaching Assistants		
Angelica Ramoutar	aramout2@uwo.ca	
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Classes Start	Reading Week	Classes End	Study day(s)	Exam Period
September 7	Oct. 30 – Nov. 5	December 8	December 9	December 10 – 22

September 15, 2023: Last day to add a first-term half course

October 9, 2023: Thanksgiving Holiday

November 13, 2023: Last day to drop a first term half course without penalty

2. 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.

3 lecture hours, 0.5 credit. No prerequisites.

3. Readings

There is no required textbook and all readings for each unit are available on OWL in the unit folders (in the Resources tab).

The PowerPoint slides also provide an abundance of additional links to encourage to dig deeper into subjects you are most interested in.

4. Format

The course content is organized into 6 units, as outlined below, which are based upon in-person lectures and readings. There are 3 lecture hours per week on most weeks, though the 2-hour session will rarely run the full 2-hours. The readings for each of the 6 units should take about 2-3 hours in total. All PowerPoints will be posted to OWL as pdfs shortly after each lecture.

You are responsible for material covered in the lectures as well as the assigned readings, and it is important to keep up with lecture material and readings on a unit-by-unit basis. The evaluation is based on 2 midterm tests, 5 on-line quizzes, and a final exam (dates in the schedule).

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).

5. 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.

6. Course Objectives and Schedule

This course centers on a series of key subjects and burning questions, each of which are the focus of a two-week unit (apart from a single one-week unit). The basic objective of the course is that you will have a good grasp of answers to these questions by the end of the term.

Unit	Dates	Theme	Burning question
	Sept. 7	Course Introduction	
1	Sept. 11	Causality	How are scientists sure that the earth is warming and that this is different from natural cycles?
	Sept. 14		
	Sept. 18		
	Sept. 21		
	Sept. 22		
2	Sept. 25	(soaring & insatiable) Growth	How did human societies become addicted to fossil energy?
	Sept. 28		
	Oct. 2		
	Oct. 5		
	Oct. 6		
	Oct. 9	Thanksgiving, no class	
	Oct. 12	TEST #1 (20%)	
3	Oct. 16	Urgency	What is a ‘safe’ level of warming and emissions? (+ how much and how fast must we change to get there?)
	Oct. 19		
	Oct. 23		
	Oct. 26		
	Oct. 27		
	Oct. 30-Nov. 5	Fall Reading Week	
4	Nov. 6	Inequality	What is climate justice (and injustice)?
	Nov. 9		
	Nov. 13		
	Nov. 16	TEST #2 (20%)	
5	Nov. 20	Inertia	If climate scientists are so confident about causation and risks, why isn’t sufficient action being taken?
	Nov. 23		
	Nov. 24		
6	Nov. 27	Action	What is to be done?
	Nov. 30		
	Dec. 4		
	Dec. 7		
	Dec. 8		
	Dec. 10-22	FINAL EXAM (40%), date TBA in exam period	

October 9: Thanksgiving holiday (no classes)

November 13: Last day to drop a first term half course without penalty

December 9: Study day

7. Communication

- you are encouraged to check the OWL site every 24 – 48 hours
- you should post general course-related queries (whether content or logistics) to the Forums tab in OWL, so that the clarifications can be seen by everyone (which will be organized by units and subjects as the term unfolds)
- queries posted in Forums and emails will get monitored daily; you can expect to receive a response in 24 – 48 hours
- some communications about the course will arrive through your university email account. It is your responsibility to ensure that email 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](#).

8. Evaluation

The evaluation breakdown for the course is as follows:

Assessment	Format	Weighting	Dates
Term tests (2)	Short answer responses	40% (20% each x 2)	October 12 & November 16
Online quizzes (5)	Found in Tests & Quizzes tab in OWL	20% (5% each x top 4)	September 22 October 6 October 27 November 24 December 8
Final exam	Short answer + paragraph responses	40%	TBA in exam period: December 10-22

Term tests (2 x 20% = 40% of course grade) and Final exam (40% of course grade)

The 2 term tests are based on short answer questions and the final exam combines short answer questions and questions that involve paragraph responses. In both, students are responsible for material covered in the lectures as well as the assigned readings. More detailed instructions will be given in advance of both the tests and the final exam.

If you fail to write the term tests or the final exam on the scheduled time you will be given zero, unless you communicate with Dr. Weis *prior* to the exam. Exam absences require a note from your physician (see note on special examination policy below).

Quizzes (4 x 5% = 20% of course grade)

On 5 Fridays (see schedule on pg. 3) you are expected complete a short quiz that will be available on OWL in the Tests & Quizzes tab that will be available between 9 am and 11.55 pm. These quizzes will review material covered in the preceding unit, and some of these will cover documentary films and short videos as indicated in class. There will be 5 quizzes, and your top 4 marks will count.

No accommodations are provided for missed quizzes since the lowest score will be dropped. Quiz answers will not be posted, and if you have questions you can speak to Dr. Weis after class or during office hours.

Notes on grading

- after a test 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

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.

9. Use of Electronic Devices

No electronic devices will be allowed during tests and examinations.

10. 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

The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet their academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Illness may be acute (short term), or it may be chronic (long term), or chronic with acute episodes. The University further recognizes that medical situations are deeply personal and respects the need for privacy and confidentiality in these matters. However, in order to ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing 10% or more of the student's overall grade in the course shall be granted only in those cases where there is documentation indicating that the student was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet their academic responsibilities.

Policy on Academic Consideration for Medical Illness - Undergraduate Students

Student Medical Certificate (SMC)

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](#).

11. Make-up midterm tests and final exam

Makeups will be granted with approved documentation only. All documentation for missed exams must be provided to the Academic Counselling Office within 48 hours of the scheduled exam, otherwise the instructor will assign a grade of zero.

The format and content of make-ups may differ substantially from the scheduled test or examination.

12. 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.

13. Continuity of Education Plan (in-person class pivoting to online learning)

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the university to direct courses move away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will **not** change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

14. Western's Commitment to Accessibility

The Department of Geography and Environment 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.

15. 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.

16. Support Services

Western's Support Services
Student Development Centre

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html.

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

17. Important Dates

September 7: Classes resume

September 15: Last day to add a first term half course

October 9: Thanksgiving Holiday – Department Office Closed

October 30 to November 5: Fall Reading Week (No classes; Department Office open)

November 13: Last day to drop a first term half course without penalty

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

December 8: Classes end

December 9: Study day

December 10-22: Examination Period