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NRSM 349E.01: Climate Change Ethics and Policy

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SYLLABUS

Climate Change Ethics and Policy

NRSM 349E

Autumn 2021

Course Information:

- **In-person**, Mondays & Wednesdays, 12:00-12:50
- **On-line**, Fridays, asynchronous
- RM: LA 204
- Instructor: Dane Scott
- Office: TBA
- Phone: 243-6632
- Email: dane.scott@mso.umt.edu
- Office hours: By appointment
- TA: Christopher MacKay
- Office: TBA
- Email: christopher.mackay@umconnect.umt.edu
- Office hours: By appointment

Course Objectives:

Students will:

- Identify, define and evaluate basic concepts and forms of reasoning associated with influential ethical theories.
- Identify, describe and evaluate basic scientific, ethical and policy issues and concepts associated with various climate change policies
- Write concise, clear, well research and carefully organized assignments, and essay

Readings and Resources:

- Michael Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?*
- Kim Stanley Robinson, *The Ministry of the Future*
- All additional required readings, videos and podcasts will be posted or linked on the course Moodle page

Requirements and Grading

- Exams: 40%
- Questions & discussion forums: 40%
- Essay: 20%

Expectations

The course will meet in-person on Mondays and Wednesdays, and online on Fridays. Students are expected to attend class and keep up to date on the course materials and assignments. Plan for weekly, graded assignments in the form of questions and/or discussion forums, or exams. These will be posted on the course's Moodle page on Fridays. The three exams will be taken online. There is one essay assignment.

Grading Scale: 93-100 = A; 90-92 = A-; 88-89 = B+; 83-87 = B; 80-82 = B-; 78 - 79 = C+; 73 - 77 = C; 70 - 72 = C-; 69 -68 = D+; 67 - 62 = D; 61-60 = D-; Below 59 = F

Course Outline & Schedule

Part I: How to think about climate change?

Week 1

- 8/30: Course Introduction
- 9/1: Stephen Gardiner, “Why climate change is an ethical problem” & Sandel, Chapter 1, “Do the right thing”
- 9/3: Online, questions and discussion forum
 - Sandel, “The lost art of democratic debate” (video)

Week 2

- 9/6: Labor Day
- 9/8: Mann, “How to talk about climate change so people will listen”
- 9/10: Online, questions and discussion forum
 - Robinson, *The Ministry of the Future*, Chapters, 1-6 & PBS, NOVA, “Can we cool the planet?” (video)

Week 3

- 9/13: Steffen, et al. “Trajectories of the Earth System in the Anthropocene”
- 9/15: Spat & Dunlop, “Existential climate-related security risks: A scenario approach” & Global Priorities Project 2017, “Existential risk: Diplomacy and governance”
- 9/17: Online, questions and discussion forum
 - Intelligence-Squared Debates, “Engineering Solar Radiation is a Crazy Idea” (video)

Week 4:

- 9/20: The UNFCCC & The Paris Agreement
- 9/22: Berdinesen, “On Hans Jonas’ “The Imperative of Responsibility”
- 9/24: Online, questions and discussion forum
 - Robinson, *The Ministry of the Future*, Chapters, 7-28

Week 5

- 9/27: Klein, “Capitalism vs. the Climate”
- 9/29: McKibben, “*Honey and Oil*” & podcast, On Being: “Interview, Bill McKibben, The Moral Math of Climate Change”
- 10/1: **Online, Exam #1**

Week 6

- 10/4: Pascal Bruckner, “Against environmental panic”
- 10/6: Dyson, “The question of global warming” & Yale 360, “Interview with Freeman Dyson, reluctant global warming skeptic”
- 10/8: Online, discussion forum, Robinson, *The Ministry of the Future*, Chapters, 61-80

Week 7

- 10/11: Dyson, “Our biotech Future”
- 10/13: Gates, “We need an energy miracle”
- 10/15: Online, discussion forum
 - Robinson, *The Ministry of the Future*, Chapters, 81-91

Week 8

- 10/18: Nordhaus, “Climate change, our ultimate challenge” (video)
- 10/20: Krugman, “Gambling with civilization”

- 10/22: Online, discussion forum, Robinson, *The Ministry of the Future*, Chapters, 92-106
Essay assigned, due 5PM, 11/5

Part II: Political philosophy and climate change policy

Week 9

- 10/25: Sandel, Chapter 2, “The Greatest Happiness Principle /Utilitarianism”
- 10/27: Sandel, Chapter 2, “The Greatest Happiness Principle /Utilitarianism”
- 10/29: **Online, Exam #2**

Week 10

- 11/1: Singer, “One atmosphere” & Singer, “The Ethics of Climate Change” (video)
- 11/3: Sandel, Chapter 3, “Do We Own Ourselves /Libertarianism”
- 11/5: Online, questions and discussion forum
 - LeGuin, “The One’s Who Walk Away from Omelas”
 - Brooks, “The Child in the Basement”

Essay due by 5PM

Week 11

- 11/8: Sandel, Chapter 4, “Markets and Morals” & Adler, “A conservative’s approach to combating climate change”
- 11/10: Climate Leadership Council, “The conservative case for carbon dividends”
- 11/12: Online, questions discussion forum
 - Halstead, “A climate solution where all sides win” (video)

Week 12

- 11/15: Sandel, Chapter 5, “What Matters is Motive/Immanuel Kant”
- 11/17: Sandel, Chapter 6, “The Case for Equity / John Rawls
- 11/19: Online, questions and discussion forum
 - Vonnegut, “Harrison Bergeron”

Week 13

- 11/22: Caney, “Climate change, Human Rights and moral thresholds” & Robinson, “Why climate change is a threat to Human Rights” (video)
- 11/24: No class
- 11/26: No class

Week 14

- 11/29: Sandel, Chapter 8, "Who Deserves What? / Aristotle"
- 12/1: Mike Hulme, “Climate change and virtue: An apologetic”
- 12/3: Online, questions & discussion forum

Week 15

- 12/6: Nussbaum, “Women’s Capabilities and social justice”
- 12/8: Holland, “Justice and the Environment in Nussbaum’s Capabilities Approach”
- 12/10: **Online, Exam #4**

UM Safety Measures for Classrooms

- Mask use is required within the classroom.
- If you feel sick and/or are exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, please don't come to class and contact the Curry Health Center at (406) 243-4330.
- If you are required to isolate or quarantine, you will receive support in the class to ensure continued academic progress.
- UM recommends students get the COVID-19 vaccine. Please direct your questions or concerns about vaccines to Curry Health Center.
- Where social distancing (maintaining consistent 6 feet between individuals) is not possible, specific seating arrangements will be used to support contact tracing efforts.
- Class attendance and seating will be recorded to support contact tracing efforts.
- Drinking liquids and eating food is discouraged within the classroom.
- Please be advised that the guidance provided in these updates may change or appear to be contradictory from week to week; we'll always base the information we provide on the most current guidance from the Missoula City-County Health Department (MCCHD) and CDC. In addition to these email updates, please visit the [UM Coronavirus website](#) for updated information. For the official guidance on instruction, please visit the [Deliver Quality Instruction](#) portion of the [COVID Operations Plan for 2021](#).

UM Policies

Students with disabilities may request reasonable modifications by contacting me. The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction for students with disabilities in collaboration with instructors and Disability Services for Students, which is located in Lommasson Center 154. The University does not permit fundamental alterations of academic standards or retroactive modifications.

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the [Student Conduct Code](#)