

HGO 4301: The Social Dimensions of Climate Change

This course focuses on the society-climate nexus with particular attention to how the climate problem is framed among different communities of scholars. Different conceptual approaches to the climate problem are introduced, and linked to concerns over how to know and govern rapid rate environmental change. The lectures and readings highlight social scientific approaches, particularly how different framings of the problem influence the solutions that are pursued or ignored. We will probe the possibilities and limitations of concepts such as vulnerability, adaptation, resilience and uncertainty with emphasis on contributions from geographers. Examination is a term paper using themes presented in the course.

Learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding

- Distinguish between major approaches to the climate-society nexus.
- Identify the assumptions upon which major approaches to climate change are based.
- Understand how the social sciences can contribute to a broader and deeper understanding of climate change and adaptation.
- Clarify how the framing of climate change can influence the solutions that are prioritized or ignored.

Skills and abilities

- Appraise how climate change adaptation programs are developed and implemented across scales.
- Apply theories of climate change to specific examples and their implications for society and environmental change.
- Develop skills for oral and written communication of knowledge and competencies.

Judgement and approach

- Evaluate the implications for the society-climate nexus of using certain governance techniques in different contexts and at different scales.
- Operationalise abstract concepts about climate change to understand current global challenges.

Competences

- Ability to explain linkages between social and environmental problems.
- Capacity to understand the social dimensions of climate change from multiple perspectives.
- Critical engagement with climate change research and its implications for policy and practice.

Teaching

The teaching consists of lectures that aim at a dialogue between lecturer and student. At each lecture, a relevant case will be presented and discussed based on the reading materials and/or media items. Students are expected to participate actively in discussions, both in plenum and small groups.

All teaching will be given in English.

Course Outline:

1. **Course Introduction: the climate-society nexus**
(Beck 2012) (Folke et.al. 2011) (Lövbrand et.al. 2015) (Swyngedouw 2010)
2. **Climate change as a technical problem: vulnerability and adaptation research**
(Bassett and Fogelman 2013) (Berrang et.al. 2011) (Head 2010) (O'Brien et.al. 2007) (Pelling 2011) (Smit and Wandel 2006)
3. **Adaptation at the grassroots: practices and maladaptation**
(Bee 2016) (Dannevig and Hovelsrud 2015) (Forsyth 2013) (Hamilton et al. 2016) (Magnan et.al. 2016)
4. **The politics of climate change**
(Eriksen et al. 2015) (Featherstone 2013) (Head and Gibson 2012) (O'Brien 2012) (Taylor 2013)
5. **Development, conflict and climate change**
(Arora-Jonsson et.al. 2016) (Bee et.al. 2015) (Cameron 2009) (Nightingale 2017)
6. **Climate and resilience**
(Cote and Nightingale 2013) (Cretney 2014) (Fazey et.al. 2007) (Welsh 2014)
7. **Knowing climate**
(Goldman et.al. 2018) (Hulme 2010) (Klenk et.al. 2017) (Mahoney 2014) (Nielsen and Sejersen 2012) (Nightingale 2016)
8. **Evaluating the Climate-society nexus: topic development**
(O'Brien 2013) (Klenk and Meehan 2015)
9. **Climate Justice**
(Atteridge and Remling 2018) (Ensor et.al. 2015) (Forsyth 2014) (Norgaard 2006)
10. **Anticipatory science and uncertainty**
(Ghosh 2013) (Hulme 2018) (Stirling 2015) (Tsing et.al. 2017) (Zegwaard et.al. 2015)

Examination:

The exam for HGO4301 is a term paper.

- The topic for the term paper is decided by each student and must be within the thematic focus of the course.
- The term paper must draw from three of the nine themes of the course.

- The term paper must use the readings assigned for the course as well as materials from outside the set syllabus.
- The topic and focus of the term paper will be assessed and approved by the course coordinator within a set deadline.
- The length of the paper will be maximum 4000 words plus references due in week 48.

During the course we will have a session on topic development to help you formulate a strong paper research question.