

**The Human Dimensions of Global Climate Change:  
From Encounters to Actions  
EVPP 436-001 and 505 - 009  
Spring 2020**

**Instructor:** Vivek Prasad, PhD

**Course Meets:** Friday, 4:30 – 7:10 pm, Planetary Hall 126

**To Contact Instructor**

Office: DK 3026

Office hours: Friday: 3:45-4:15 pm or by appointment

E-Mail: [vprasad1@gmu.edu](mailto:vprasad1@gmu.edu) (preferred) **similarly, you use your GMU email to communicate with me**

GMU Environmental Science and Policy Department: DK 3005 Telephone: 703-993-1043

### INTRODUCTION

Increasingly field researchers, and most notably social scientists, are confronting the issues of global climate change with their field consultants. Although versed in the frames of adaptive capacity and resilience, there remains doubt that these coping mechanisms are sufficient and that perhaps environmental and cultural damage, far beyond the reach of restoration, is occurring. We are in an emergency state now as field researchers. We are confronted with an ethical and moral issue. And we are left with a flurry of questions, directly related to our age-old struggle as academics to reconcile our applied, public and activist roots. What is our proper response and what is our responsibility to our consultants in these revelations? How do we translate, advocate, educate, and mediate? What are the theoretical frames that inform our queries? What insights can we gain and use from the work being done where communities are the hardest hit--where global climate change is already having profound effects (for example, the Arctic, Africa, and South Asia)? What are the challenges faced by the current scientific models in trying to bring their research to bear in a meaningful way? How can we link knowledge to action, vulnerability to learning to cope and to be responsible? How do we link our expertise to this arena in such a way we are not part of the problem but part of the solution? How do we negotiate and communicate research findings effectively to influential policy makers? Given the increasing effect that global climate change is having on local populations across the globe and the highly charged geopolitical arena in which action must be taken, understanding the academy's role as we witness, communicate, and act in response to global climate change is paramount.

### GOALS OF THIS COURSE

In this course we will investigate academia's role(s) in global climate change issues, with a focus on the social sciences. You will gain an in-depth knowledge of the diverse ecological, cultural and policy issues of global climate change. As an emerging scholar/practitioner yourself, you will understand the need to develop and participate in interdisciplinary, collaborative projects to address the complexity of issues that global climate change implies. You will be fluent in the current science of global climate change, including causes and necessary responses, global climate change's human rights and social justice issues, the vulnerability to global climate change of place-based/ marginalized populations at home and abroad, relevant issues associated with communication and behavior change, the place of policy, and the multiple existing and potential roles of academic action. You will also gain some practical experience in the above issues and approaches through in-class large and small group exercises exploring global climate change issues and via a semester-long research paper specific to your interests in the field of climate change.

**Content Goals:**

- Develop an appreciation of the ecological, cultural, communication and policy issues of global climate change;
- Describe the various ways that climate and culture interact and affect each other and provide examples based on the past and present;
- Identify the human rights and social justice issues of global climate change;
- Explain how place-based and marginalized communities around the world are affected by global climate change and how anthropologists and other social scientists can effectively work with them using collaborative, action and community-based research;
- Discuss the various roles of practitioners in working on global climate change issues and of policy interventions;
- Understand the extent to which communities in your region are affected by global climate change;

**Skill Goals:**

- Research, analyze, and critique supplemental literature on class themes;
- Present materials and participate classroom discussion;
- Develop an interdisciplinary collaborative research design for global climate change issues.
- Develop an adaptation project for global climate change issues.

**CLASS STRUCTURE**

We will spend class time discussing the assigned readings in mini-lecture, peer-teaching and small group formats. We will also supplement readings with films and perhaps guest lectures. Since learning to collaborate is such a needed and fruitful endeavor, we will also spend some time in class working in partner or trios to develop collaborative research/adaptation projects. To the extent possible, we will match undergrads with grads to create a mentoring environment. Your partner(s) will be familiar with your work and you theirs. You will act as sounding boards for each other's work over the course of your projects and for your final presentations.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING****ASSIGNMENTS**

There are three kinds of written assignments and a simulated UN conference:

1. An abstract, an outline and preliminary bibliography for your term research project (double-spaced, approximately 2,500+ words).
2. Adaptation/Mitigation Project Concept Note with a logical/result framework (2-3 pages).
3. A cumulative final exam (take home, open book).

Your point total is defined in the following paragraphs,

20%	<b>Participation</b>
20%	<b>Final Research Project (EVPP 505 students' will write 20% extra )</b>
20%	<b>Adaptation/Mitigation Project Concept Note</b>
20%	<b>Simulated UN conference</b>
20%	<b>Take Home Final(EVPP 505 students' will have an additional question)</b>

**Attendance & Participation\*:** This class is a student-based learning experience. Discussions of readings and themes, and student presentations, make up most of the sessions. You will be graded on your informed participation, and that requires careful, timely preparation and regular attendance. 'Participation' is two-fold: 1) Attendance is required. Because this is a *seminar*, you and your classmates' success depends on regular attendance, thorough preparation for and active participation in each class. Since you have registered for this class, I assume you will be able to attend every class. You forfeit 2 points for every unexcused absence. If you have an emergency, involving life and death circumstances beyond your control that prevent your attendance, please contact me immediately to discuss your situation and work needed to proceed in the course. 2) Preparation is required. This course requires a substantial

amount of reading. Before coming to class, complete and think critically about that class's readings. Please come to class prepared to discuss the week's readings according to the important concept questions. Sessions will include mini-lectures, general discussions, films and other audio-visuallys.

\*It is the student's responsibility to speak to the instructor in advance in the event that their religious observances will impact their participation in class activities and assignments.

### **Final research paper**

This assignment is geared towards enhancing your research, critical thinking, and analytical writing skill. You will write a review paper on a topic related to human dimensions of global climate change. The topic should be suitably ambitious and should provide an innovative and insightful analysis of a significant question. Please make the paper an interdisciplinary and expansive survey of the literature relevant to your inquiry. To research these topics you are expected to use a combination of web and library sources. You may begin with a web search and supplement what you find with several book / journal references. For example, you would first search the web to find information, and then search the library holdings for books and journal articles on your topic with keywords from your web search. Based on this research, you are to write a review paper, 2,500+ words (double-spaced) in length PLUS a bibliography including at least 10 hard and web sources (minimum 5 should be peer reviewed articles).

### **Simulated UN conference**

This assignment is geared towards enhancing your negotiation skill and expose to the highest level of policy discussions related to global climate change. Each year the world's nations gather at the UN'S Conference of the Parties meeting to review global progress in addressing climate change. At these meetings targets for climate policy are set and countries negotiate what their responsibilities should be and what others should be doing. In this assignment students will/may split up into groups and assigned a country to represent (instructor may decide group composition). Groups will then have to prepare a statement to present to the class which outlines their country's negotiating position on climate change. Time will be allocated for negotiations where other countries question the presenting group.

### **Adaptation Project Concept Note**

This assignment is geared towards enhancing your operational and planning skill. You are expected to develop a concept note for an adaptation projects and that includes developing a logical/result framework. Instructor will provide you enough background, rubric and examples to complete this assignment.

### **Academic Integrity (Plagiarism)**

All written and presented work submitted for this class must be original; i.e., it must be your work and your work alone. You must not simply cut-and-paste the work of others into your work, nor should you simply paraphrase existing work. You must use quotations and proper cite the source of the text. Be warned: Plagiarism (defined below) will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is a GMU Honor Code violation that will have a serious impact on your academic record. See more information on GMU's Honor System and Code regarding plagiarism at <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/Plagiarism> includes the following:

Presenting as one's own the words, work, or opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgment.

Borrowing the sequence of ideas, arrangement of material, or pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgment.

Please Contact your instructor if you have any uncertainty regarding the use of other sources before you submit any written assignment.

### **Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the GMU Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. Few important resources:

Links to the University Catalog and the University Policies website for all other University academic and non-academic policies:

University Catalog: <http://catalog.gmu.edu>

University Policies: <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu>

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): <http://caps.gmu.edu/>

Writing center: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>

Readings are available in the Blackboard.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Date	EVPP 436 001: Topics & Reading Assignments	Due
Jan 24	<b>Course Overview</b>	
Jan 31	<b>The Basic Science of Climate Change</b> <b>The Human Dimensions</b> Readings: IPCC Summary for Policy Makers WG 1 Climate Change Evidence & Causes NAS	
Feb 7	<b>Debates around climate change</b>  Watch: The great global warming Swindle Boykoff and Boykoff (2004, 2007)	Submit preliminary research topic
Feb 14	<b>Climate Change: Human History and Culture</b> Readings: IPCC Summary for Policy Makers WG 2 Crute and Nuttall (2010) Zhang et al (2011)	
Feb 21	<b>Vulnerability: Concept and Practice</b> Smit and Wandel (2006) Brodnig and Prasad (2010) O'Brien, K. L., and R. M. Leichenko. (2000)	
Feb 28	<b>Vulnerability worksheet</b>	
March 6	<b>Vulnerable regions and people (emerging issues)</b> Case studies: Arctic, Mountain, Island, and Floodplain areas <b>Vulnerable regions and people (emerging issues)</b> Case studies: Arctic, Mountain, Island, and Floodplain areas	Abstract, outline, preliminary bibliography for term projects
	Spring recess Monday 9 <sup>th</sup> - Sunday March 22 <sup>nd</sup>	
March 27	UN Conference preparation and Logical Framework.	
April 3 <sup>rd</sup>	<b>Adaptation and Resilience: Concept and Practice</b> Adger et al. (2012), Tanner and Prasad (2015) Prasad et al (2009)	

Date	EVPP 436 001: Topics & Reading Assignments	Due
April 10 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Mitigation: Concept and Practice</b> Bulkeley, H. (2010) Optional: IUCN (2002): Carbon, Forest and People	Concept note and Logical Framework due
April 17	<b>Simulated UN Conference</b>	Students submit main argument for Simulated UN conference
April 24	<b>Students' Presentations ( schedule based on the situation due to COVID 2019)</b>	((EVPP 505 students' will do an elaborate presentation, will be allocated double time than undergraduate students)
May 1	<b>Students' Presentations</b>	Take home release
May 8	Final research paper due	Final research paper due
May 14	Take home released submission (via Blackboard)	Take home submission

**Important: Instructor has right to change and modify this syllabus if need arises.**