

# HIST 008: GLOBAL WARMING



## Essential Information:

**Class time and place:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00-3:15 EST, ICC 119.

**Professor:** [Dagomar Degroot](#).

**Professor's email:** [dd865@georgetown.edu](mailto:dd865@georgetown.edu).

**Professor's Office Hours:** Thursdays, 3:15-4:45 or by appointment.

**Course Website:** [WarmingModule.weebly.com](http://WarmingModule.weebly.com)

## Course Description:

The world is warming, and it is warming fast. The culprit: carbon dioxide, methane, and other “greenhouse gases” added to our atmosphere by human industry and agriculture. Average global temperatures are now nearly one degree Celsius higher than they were midway through the twentieth century.

Around the world, weather is getting “weird.” Tropical cyclones, droughts, torrential rains, heat waves, and even cold snaps are all more severe than they used to be. In developed societies, such

weather has led to thousands of deaths and billions of dollars in lost economic productivity. In impoverished societies, it has worsened existing social inequalities and driven migration in ways that have provoked civil wars. Ever more extreme weather in our warmer future could threaten the survival of rich and poor countries alike.

This module will take you beyond the science of global warming. We will explore how scientists discovered human-caused climate change, how they communicated the threat to the public, and why they have failed to motivate the kind of political action that will save us from catastrophic “climate breakdown.” We will investigate the causes for global warming denial, analyse the possible social and political consequences of climate change, the evaluate the case for climate “determinism.” You should emerge with a better understanding of what may be seminal issue of our lives.



### **Course Goals:**

Like other courses offered by the Department of History, this course will help you:

1. Gain a deeper appreciation of the nature and practice of history as a discipline, and as the study, based on evidence, of human experiences, interactions, and relationships as they change over time.
2. Learn that history does not consist of a simple succession of self-evident facts, and that evidence-based interpretation and analysis are central to all historical work.
3. Hone reading, writing, and oral communication skills.

4. Develop your capacity to think historically: to situate events and developments in their historical context for the purpose of critical analysis.
5. Expand your ability to engage with complex causal analysis, and to articulate arguments that integrate supporting evidence and analytical commentary.
6. View the world from perspectives other than your own.

This course in particular will also help you:

1. Appreciate the significance of, and deep context for, anthropogenic global warming.
2. Understand complex relationships between climate change and humanity, in the past, present, and future.
3. Broaden your appreciation for diverse scholarly disciplines, and their distinct ways of deciphering the past.

### **Core Pathways:**

This module is part of the Core Pathways Initiative. As a part of the initiative, the course follows a 7.5-week A/B schedule that pairs with another course in the latter half of the semester. By enrolling in the module, you are also part of a larger learning community of faculty members, students, and other campus/community partners to engage with the complex factors and challenges presented by climate change.

The Core Pathway Initiative seeks to integrate differing perspectives and disciplines in a conversation around the many issues related to climate change. To foster that integration, and as part your participation in the initiative, over the course of each semester there will be required integrative moments that bring together the entire Pathway (students and faculty) to bring to bear collective experiences on facets of the broader thematic topic of climate change.

We have one integrative day during this course, on February 7<sup>th</sup>. We will convene, during our regular class time, in HFSC Social Room.

For more information on the Pathway or questions about the initiative, visit [www.corepathways.georgetown.edu](http://www.corepathways.georgetown.edu) or contact [corepathways@georgetown.edu](mailto:corepathways@georgetown.edu).

### **Breakdown:**

Participation:	20%
Exxon Papers Essay:	20%
“Tipping Points” Article:	30%
Final Test:	30%

### **Evaluation:**

You will submit all assignments and complete all quizzes on Canvas. You will be able to access additional assignment resources on our course homepage.

Participation:

You will earn half of your participation grade *just for attending class*. The other half will reflect the quantity and especially the quality of your comments. If we break into groups for debates and primary source exercises, I will evaluate your group participation. If you want top grades, I strongly encourage you to keep notes from your readings. You should aim for at around two pages of single-spaced notes per week.

Exxon Papers Essay:

Write a five-page essay that analyzes **at least three** of the Exxon Mobil primary source documents accessible through our course website. Create a thesis based on these documents that answers the following questions:

1. Since when have Exxon Mobil executives known that their industry was contributing to anthropogenic climate change?
2. When and how did they respond to this knowledge?

You may use **at most** four secondary, peer-reviewed sources to help you make your argument.

“Tipping Points” Article:

Visit [ClimateTippingPoints.com](http://ClimateTippingPoints.com). Use the tools listed on the site to write a short (roughly 750-word) article that explains the projected consequences of global warming in an American county over the coming century. Your essay will tell our readers: 1) How climate change will affect a local environment; 2) How we know; and 3) How the local environmental consequences of climate change may influence peoples’ lives.

You can bring in additional information from newspapers or scholarly articles. You should also include maps or graphs that visualize the impact of climate change on a particular place, so long as you are able to explain how they were made. With your consent, I will edit your article and publish it on our website. You may remain anonymous if you choose.

I have written a template on Washington, DC that should give you an idea of what I am looking for. We will also discuss how to write the article in class. Please submit your papers through Canvas, with maps or graphs embedded within the document.

Final Test:

This short test consists of six short essay questions, of which you must answer three. I will give you many more details in class.

**Formatting your Essays:**

Make a title page! Your title page should have your assignment title in large, centered font. Your name, your class name, my name, and the date should be in a smaller font at the bottom right of your title page. **Note that your title page is not included in your page count.**

Your papers should be written in size 12, Times New Roman font. They should be double-spaced. You should use standard margins (one inch on all sides of the document). Number your pages (at the top right).

Use formal academic writing (no contractions or colloquialisms).

Cite all sources using Chicago Style formatting, which means that you need footnotes **and** a bibliography (**note that the bibliography does not add to your page count**). Click [here](#) to find out how you do this. You should always cite at the end of a quotation. Otherwise, include all citations in a footnote at the end of a paragraph. You do not need to cite every sentence. Your footnotes should be numbered sequentially and they should be single-spaced.

### **Grading Criteria:**

*Each of these criteria will be worth approximately a third of your grade:*

#### Clarity:

Are you using words that appropriately and formally express your meaning? Are your points sourced correctly? Do your sentences precisely express your meaning, and are they grammatically correct? Is there a clear thesis that presents an argument and outlines how that argument will be defended? Is there a coherent organization that culminates in a conclusion that references the thesis?

#### Research:

Are your secondary sources serious works of scholarship, and are they relevant to your argument? Do your primary sources illuminate the issue you are investigating, and to what extent? Are those primary sources relevant to your argument, and do you present them in the context of your secondary sources?

#### Ideas:

How creative and nuanced are your arguments? Are you merely repeating the claims of other scholars, or are you evaluating them in the context of other arguments and concepts? To what extent can you develop fresh ideas?

### **Value of Letter Grades:**

A = 95-100

A- = 90-94

B+ = 87-89  
B = 83-86  
B- = 80-82  
C+ = 77-79  
C = 73-76  
C- = 70-72

## Important Notes:

### Course Resources:

There are three resources you should familiarize yourself with in this course. The first is this syllabus. Before asking me a question about the course, please consult the syllabus.

The second resource is our Canvas page. On the page, you'll be able to submit your assignments and download any readings you can't access through our library resources. You'll also be able to complete quizzes and view our Zoom sessions.

The third resource in our course website (you can find a link on the first page of this syllabus). The website will host a regularly updated version of the syllabus, alongside resources for completing your major essay.

### House Rules:

You may use your laptops or tablets to take notes or to look up information in class. However, you may **not** use your phones, and you may **not** record your professor's lectures. Please do not access social media in class; it's distracting both for you and for your classmates.

Do not show up late to class. This detracts from your learning and disturbs your classmates. If you are repeatedly late, I may lower your participation grade without informing you.

### Submitting Assignments:

Assignments are due **at midnight on the due date**. Late assignments will receive a 5%/day penalty. I will not grade assignments that are more than one week late, unless you have negotiated an extension with me (see below).

### Extensions:

You may ask me for a short extension *before an assignment is due*. I will likely grant your request if you A) give me a convincing explanation for why you're late; B) give me a roadmap that outlines how you will complete your assignment; and C) propose a new due date.

I will only grant requests for an extension on or after the assignment due date in exceptional circumstances (a death in the family, for example, or a very serious illness). Be sure to contact your deans in case of absences, difficulties meeting due dates, and other problems.

### Missing Assignments:

If you fail to hand in an assignment, you will receive a zero for that assignment. You will not necessarily receive a message from me that asks about your missing assignment. I expect you to handle your obligations yourself.

### Attending Class and Participating:

This is an asynchronous course, which means that I do not require you to attend our Zoom sessions. I will record each session and publish them for later viewing on our Canvas page. You will also not receive a grade for participating in class, because of course such a grade would undermine the asynchronous delivery of the course.

However, I ask that you make a good faith effort to attend and participate. This course will be immeasurably enriched if enough students engage with our Zoom sessions. It will benefit everyone – including those who can't attend – if those who can attend show up, ask questions, and offer answers.

### Planning for COVID:

Some of you may miss class at some point this semester because of testing positive for COVID-19. If you are asymptomatic or have mild symptoms and can continue working, please keep up with the readings and assignments and then schedule a time to meet with me in office hours to earn your participation points for the days you miss.

If you have severe symptoms and cannot work, please get some rest and appropriate medical attention and check in with me once you are feeling better—we can schedule a timeline for doing the readings and making up participation points in office hours.

For now, I am not planning on integrating Zoom into the classroom, but that may change if students are consistently sick and absent, or if there are a lot of students out at once. It will for sure change if I test positive. Unless I am too sick to teach, you will then attend class on Zoom until I test negative.

### Academic Honesty:

There is a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism in this class and **claiming ignorance is not an acceptable excuse.**

Plagiarism is not just about copying someone else's writing. *Any time* you present ideas without correctly citing them, you are committing plagiarism. This is the most serious intellectual offense you can commit in academia, so your professors – me included – take it very seriously.

It is **your** responsibility to familiarize yourself with the [Georgetown University Undergraduate Honor System](#). It is your professor's duty to refer academic misconduct – including plagiarism –

to the Georgetown Honor Council. If the Council decides that you have plagiarized on an assignment, you will fail that assignment – and you may fail the course. Be aware that I must refer all cases of plagiarism to the Council.

### Beyond the Course:

There is a zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment and misconduct in this classroom.

I am committed to supporting survivors of sexual misconduct, which includes relationship violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault. However, university policy requires faculty to report any disclosures about sexual misconduct to the Georgetown Title IX Coordinator, who directs the University's response to sexual misconduct.

Georgetown has a number of fully confidential professionals who provide support and assistance to survivors of sexual assault and other forms of sexual misconduct. To connect with those professionals – including to report an incident – and to review our university policies, you can visit: <https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu>.

### **Schedule:**

- *This schedule may be changed by your professor. You will usually have at least one week's notice.*
- *Please complete all readings by the first class of the week.*

### **Week 1: Introductions**

January 12

Readings:

1. Sam White, Christian Pfister, and Franz Mauelshagen (editors), *The Palgrave Handbook of Climate History*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. “Chapter 38: From Climatology to Climate Science in the Twentieth Century.” Available through our library website.

### **Week 2: How the World Has Warmed**

January 17

January 19

Readings:

1. Sam White, Christian Pfister, and Franz Mauelshagen (editors), *The Palgrave Handbook of Climate History*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. “Chapter 25: Climate from 1800 to 1970 in North America and Europe,” and “Chapter 26: Global Warming (1970-Present).” Available through our library website.

2. IPCC, “Summary for Policymakers.” In *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. Find it [here](#).

### **Week 3: Why the World Has Warmed**

January 24

January 26

#### Readings:

1. Julia Adeney Thomas (ed.), *Altered Earth: Getting the Anthropocene Right*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. “Introduction: The Growing Anthropocene Consensus.” Available through our library website.
2. McNeill, J.R. and Peter Engelke, *The Great Acceleration: An Environmental History of the Anthropocene since 1945*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014. “Introduction” and “Chapter 2: Climate and Biological Diversity.” Available through our library website.

### **Week 4: Impacts of Global Warming – Droughts, Floods, and Catastrophe**

January 31

February 2: EXXON PAPERS ESSAY DUE

#### Readings:

1. Ingram, B. Lynn and Frances Malamud-Roam. *The West Without Water: What past Floods, Droughts, and Other Climatic Clues Tell Us about Tomorrow*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015. “Chapter 2: The 1861–1862 Floods: Lessons Lost” (pages 190-203 and 27-40). Available through our library website.
2. Worster, Donald. *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979, 2004. “Introduction,” “Chapter 1: The Black Blizzards,” “Chapter 5: Sodbusting.” Find it here: <https://www.fulcrum.org/concern/monographs/41687h57c>.
3. Liao, Kuei-Hsien. “Living with Floods: Ecological Wisdom in the Vietnamese Mekong Delta.” In *Ecological Wisdom*, pages 195-215. Springer, 2019.

### **Week 5: Impacts of Global Warming – The Melting Arctic**

February 7: INTEGRATIVE DAY, HFSC SOCIAL ROOM

February 9

#### Readings:

1. Sakakibara, Chie. *Whale Snow: Iñupiat, Climate Change, and Multispecies Resilience in Arctic Alaska*. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2020). “Introduction: The Whale Makes Us Human,” and “Chapter 5: No Whale, No Music.” Available through our library website.

## **Week 6: Impacts of Global Warming – Security and Violence**

February 14

February 16

### Readings:

1. Kelley, Colin P. et al. “Climate change in the Fertile Crescent and implications of the recent Syrian drought.” *Proceedings of the national Academy of Sciences* 112:11 (2015): 3241-3246.
2. Selby, Jan, Omar S. Dahi, Christiane Fröhlich, and Mike Hulme, “Climate change and the Syrian civil war revisited.” *Political Geography* 60 (2017): 232-244.
3. Daoudy, Marwa. *The Origins of the Syrian Conflict: Climate Change and Human Security*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. “Chapter 1: Climate Change and the Syrian Revolution.”

## **Week 7: Denying Global Warming**

February 21: TIPPING POINTS ARTICLE DUE

February 23

In class documentary: *Merchants of Doubt*

### Viewing:

1. Please watch the documentary [\*Merchants of Doubt\*](#), which you can view for free, through our library, by clicking the link. The film is a polemic that presents a history of climate change denial in the United States. It’s based on a popular book by historians of science Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway. The run time is one hour and thirty minutes.

### Readings:

1. Mike Hulme (ed.), *Contemporary Climate Change Debates: A Student Primer*. (London: Routledge, 2020). “Is the concept of ‘tipping point’ helpful for describing and communicating possible climate futures?”, “Should individual extreme weather events be attributed to human agency?”, “Is emphasising consensus in climate science helpful for policymaking?” and “Are social media making constructive climate policymaking harder?”. Available through our library website.

## **Week 7: Ending Global Warming**

February 27

March 5: FINAL TEST

Readings:

1. Wallace-Wells, David. "After Alarmism." *New York Magazine*, 2021. Available at: <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/climate-change-after-pandemic.html>.
2. Mike Hulme (ed.), *Contemporary Climate Change Debates: A Student Primer*. (London: Routledge, 2020). "Is it necessary to research solar climate engineering as a possible backstop technology?", "Do rich people rather than rich countries bear the greatest responsibility for climate change?," and "Does the 'Chinese model' of environmental governance demonstrate to the world how to govern the climate?". Available through our library website.