Climate and Society (ENVI 150)
Macalester College – Fall 2022

**Class meetings:** MWF 9.40 – 10.40 am, OLRI 243

**Instructor:** Louisa Bradtmiller  
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Office hours: Wed. and Thurs., 1:30 – 2:30pm, and by appointment via email

**Writing Assistant:** Alex Jabbarpour  
ajabbarp@macalester.edu  
Office hours: TBD

**Course description**
Seasonal and annual patterns of temperature and precipitation influence the development, success and collapse of civilizations. Regional climate determines numerous things about how humans adapt to survival there, including the type of shelter needed, the length of the growing season, and the availability/scarcity of freshwater. Using a combination of scientific and historical records, this course will provide a brief introduction to the climate system and will then focus on how changes in climate affected several societies throughout history. In the latter part of the course we will discuss observed global warming in the modern world, what the potential benefits and consequences of it may be, and whether or not there are lessons to be learned from our ancestors.

**Course organization**
Class periods will be a mixture of lecture, discussion and group exercises. The latter two will count towards the course participation grade (see below). The course will start off with a brief introduction to climate science followed by the application of those principles to several examples of the impact of climate on society. These examples span approximately the last 2000 years, and will also include projections for the near future as we conclude the course with a discussion of the likely impacts of climate change on various modern societies.

**Goals for students**
By the end of this course, students should be able to
- Explain the basic principles of climate science to a non-scientist
- Assess the vulnerabilities of a given society to potential (or past) changes in climate
- Communicate clearly and effectively through written and oral presentations of ideas

**Course texts**
What to expect in class

Moodle
The class Moodle page should be your first stop for information about readings, assignments, and what to expect in class. The page is color-coded: readings (green, or links) should be completed before class on the day of the entry, and assignments (purple) are due that day. This will require some looking ahead on your part.

Attendance
Attendance in lecture is at your discretion, although students who attend regularly are likely to receive higher grades than those who do not. The participation portion of your grade will be based on your contributions to classroom discussions/activities.

Homework
There will be 2 problem sets early in the course, designed to give you practice with the material and demonstrate your understanding of course content. You will have approximately a week to complete each one from the time it is assigned. I encourage you to work in pairs/groups on these assignments. However, each student must turn in their own assignment, written in their own words. This means that you may discuss the answers together, but must write them out yourselves. See me with any questions about what this means - copying will not be tolerated.

This I Believe essay
In the early weeks of class you will write a short personal essay based on the NPR series of audio essays called This I Believe. This assignment has three main purposes: first, it will help me get to know you as a person, and perhaps help you get to know each other. Second, it will help me get to know you as a writer, which will be a big focus of our course. Finally, it provides early practice in writing and revision. Practice is the best way to improve your skills at writing, revision, and really pretty much anything else.

Reflective writing assignments
Approximately every other week I will ask you to write a short (approximately 500 words) reflection about your learning in our course, connections you are making with the material, and other aspects of your academic life. I will also ask you to reflect on your experiences in your first weeks and months of college. These reflections help me know how things are going in the class, and they provide you with more practice writing. They also serve an important purpose in your learning: metacognition, the act of thinking about your own thinking, is an effective and essential tool as you develop the ability to learn more and more independently. These reflections will be graded on a 15 point scale:

0 – response is missing
5 – a response showing minimal effort either in length (very short) or content (not responding to the prompt)
10 – a very satisfactory response, touching on most or all of the questions posed by the prompt and showing a moderate commitment to self-reflection
15 – an excellent response, touching on most or all of the questions posed by the prompt and showing a deep commitment to self-reflection and its effect on one’s learning

**Essay**

This course provides instruction in argumentative writing as part of the writing program at the college. The first argumentative writing assignment will be a short (4 page double-spaced) essay due about halfway through the semester. This is a short piece, which makes it all the more crucial to write in a concise, organized way. Before the essay is due you will be asked to provide a draft for in-class peer review. You will also receive feedback from your Writing Assistant on this draft. See Moodle for writing prompts, due dates for all drafts, and grading criteria.

**Paper**

Throughout the second half of the semester you will write an individual research paper about the impacts of climate change on a modern society of your choosing, including advocating for a specific policy position. Papers will be 6-8 pages (double spaced) and require the use of high-quality sources, including peer-reviewed scientific literature. There will be interim deadlines to ensure steady progress on the project, and I will give feedback on a full draft of the paper. There will be ample opportunities for additional feedback. More details about deadlines and specific requirements will be provided on the paper assignment sheet (see Moodle).

**The First Year Course**

As you can likely tell by now, the FYC is unlike any other course you’ll take at Macalester. You live with your classmates, your professor is your adviser, and we will do all kinds of things sprinkled throughout the semester that have less to do with Climate and Society and more to do with adjusting to and making the most of your life at Macalester. While this might feel a little disjointed at times, I encourage you to embrace the uniqueness of this course, and I hope that you will look forward to having a fun (and often silly) time together.

**Grading**

Your final grade for this course will be determined by the number of points you accumulate throughout the semester.

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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>70</td>
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<td>Reflective writing (7 @ 15 points each)</td>
<td>105</td>
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<td>This I Believe essay</td>
<td>55</td>
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<td>Homework (2 @ 20 points each)</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>Paper (including interim assignments)</td>
<td>180</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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Other important information

Diversity
It is my intent that students from diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs are addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. I am committed to presenting materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. I appreciate your feedback on this and every aspect of our course, and your suggestions for ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups.

Health and wellbeing
I encourage you to be intentional about maintaining your physical and mental health during this and every semester at Macalester. Taking care of yourself in these ways will help you to be healthier, happier, and better able to focus on your academic work. Be aware of people, situations and circumstances that help you to feel focused and engaged, as well as those that cause you stress; try to maximize the former, and eliminate the latter as much as possible. While every person is different, for most of us regular and adequate sleep, healthy meals, regular exercise, and connecting with others are all ways to foster wellness. If you find that you are having trouble maintaining your health and wellbeing, please don’t hesitate to set up a time to talk with me, or with one of the many individuals or programs in the Hamre Center for Health and Wellness.

Accommodations
Your experience in this class is important to me, and I am committed to creating an inclusive and accessible learning environment. If you have already established accommodations with the Disability Services office, please communicate your approved accommodations to me as soon as possible so that we can discuss your needs in this course. If you have not yet established accommodations, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (this includes but is not limited to: mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), please contact Disability Services to make an appointment: disabilityservices@macalester.edu or 651-696-6974. Disability Services offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or temporary health conditions. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between you, your instructor(s), and the Disability Services staff.

Academic integrity
I take all instances of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. It is your responsibility to become familiar with Macalester’s policies on what constitutes each of these offenses and to behave accordingly. Instances of suspected academic dishonesty will be handled as outlined in college policies. http://www.macalester.edu/academicprograms/integrity.html

Miscellany
If you have concerns about any aspect of this course, please come see me sooner rather than
later. I am always interested to hear about how you think the class could be more interesting, and if there’s a topic you’re just dying to see covered, we’ll see if we can fit it in. I will be as accommodating as possible with respect to religious/cultural observances (with appropriate notice). I will respond to email during ‘normal business hours’. While it is possible that I will check my email at 2am, I probably won’t write you back until the next morning. So, don’t wait until the last minute to email with that question about your assignment that’s due tomorrow. Laptop use is prohibited in class unless you make special arrangements with me. Cell phone use will not be tolerated- please turn phones all the way off, or put them to sleep (no vibrate!).