

GEOL 150
Climate Change
4 Units
Fall 2024, Lecture Tues and Thurs. 11:00-12:20
Salvatori Hall 101

Instructor: Professor, Lowell D. Stott, Department of Earth Sciences,
Office: ZHS 235
Office Hours: Tue and Thurs after lecture, 12:30am-1:30pm (or by appointment).

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Teaching Assistants:
TBD

Lecture: Tuesday and Thursday.
Exams: In class administered online via Brightspace.
Laboratory Sections: See schedule.

Textbook: None required. Lecture Slides and Notes are provided prior to each class.

Course Description: Climate variability and change is potentially one of the most serious challenges humans have ever faced. This class will examine the scientific basis of global warming and future climate change and the possible impacts that will accompany that change. We will examine the factors that influence climate system behavior on our planet. To provide perspective on the climate changes taking place today we will also examine how the Earth's climate has varied in the past, prior to the short period that humans have inhabited the planet. We'll see that the Earth has experienced significantly different climate conditions in the past. There are important lessons to be learned from Earth's past. We will learn how scientists are estimating how the climate will change in the future, depending on the amount of greenhouse gas that accumulates in the atmosphere. We will end by looking at how society can engage in mitigation strategies to avoid the worst climate change outcomes.

Learning Outcomes: Students will gain an understanding of the major processes that affect the Earth's climate system including the energy balance that maintains the atmosphere's temperature and distinguishes our planet from every other planet in the solar system. Students will learn how

the sources of greenhouse gas concentrations vary over time, contributing to climate change and the impact of climate change on the droughts, flooding, health, and the economy. An overview of large-scale forces acting on the atmosphere and ocean will be used to show how changes in the Earth's energy budget affect atmosphere circulation, large-scale storms and average weather conditions globally. Students will also learn how climate science is carried out and how new scientific knowledge can aid in policy decision making.

e-Book (Not Required): If you'd like to have a text for your personal library and for use in this class, I recommend, **Our Changing Climate: Introduction to Climate Science**. The author is Chad Kauffman. The book is published by the American Meteorological Society as an e-book. You can purchase a rental at the following link: <https://edubooks.ametsoc.org/CLTX-Ed1>.

In Class Questions (not graded): You'll be asked questions during lecture. These will provide feedback to me so that I understand how well you are understanding the material we are discussing.

Midterm Exams. 50pts each. Midterm exams will be in class. Each is 50 questions, multiple choice. The questions are taken from Lecture.

Final Exam. 100 pts. 2/3 of the questions will be from first two midterm exams. 1/3 of the questions will be from the material discussed since the second midterm exam.

Extra Credit. 2 opportunities. Each is 10pts. Each involves a visit to a museum adjacent to USC. Each visit to the museum will be validated to your TA. Successful completion of the extra credit will be 10pts for each museum visit.

A **study guide** will be provided before each midterm exam and final exam.

Laboratory: You are required to do a laboratory section, which will be taught by a TA. These labs provide experiences designed to give you exposure to how climate science is conducted and how scientists formulate visualize data and then form hypotheses that are tested against observations and model experiments.

Grading: Details about grading are summarized at the end of the syllabus. Scores on all assignments and exams will be posted on [Brightspace.usc.edu](https://brightspace.usc.edu)

Academic Integrity: University policies on academic dishonesty are printed in SCAMPUS and SJACS, s. Because cheating negatively affects everyone in the class, we will follow USC guidelines and report all academic misconduct. USC policies on cheating are strict and the minimum punishment is a "0" on the assignment. The instructor and TAs are always available for extra help and advice. If the Prof. thinks you are at risk of failing the course, he will let you know via email and will encourage you to get extra help.

Disability Services: Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed; *please be sure the letter is delivered to the professor as early in the semester as possible, and at least 2 weeks prior to the first midterm.* DSP is open Monday-Friday, 8:30-5:00. The office is in Student Union 301 and the phone number is (213) 740-0776.

Course Syllabus

PART I- Earth's Climate as a Dynamic and Variable System

Week 1

Tues. Aug. 26, Introduction: The Scientific Method, Questions, Hypotheses, Theory

Thurs. Aug. 28, What makes Earth's Climate Special

Week 2 Observing Climate Change

Tues. Sept. 2, Climate System Variables, Observing, Detecting and Assessing Change vs Variability.

Thurs. Sept. 4, How Climate System Observations are used by scientists to understand Climate System behavior.

Week 3 Tools for Investigating Earth's Climate

Tues. Sept. 9, Defining Climate Zones on Earth (Deserts, Rainforests, Ice Caps etc.)

Thurs. Sept. 11, Observations of Changing Climate Zones

PART II Principles of Climatic Processes

Week 4 Radiation Flux and Heat within the Climate System

Tues. Sept. 16, Energy and Entropy (Energy Distribution, The Greenhouse Effect)

Thurs. Sept. 18, Global Radiation (Incoming vs Outgoing Energy)

Week 5 Water in Earth's Climate System

Tues. Sept. 23, Earth's Changing Energy Budget (continues from last week)

Thurs. Sept. 25, Earth's Changing Energy Budget (continues from last week)

Week 6 Atmosphere-Ocean Relationships

Tues. Sept. 30, **Midterm 1**

Thurs. Oct. 2, Role of Water in the Climate System

PART III Climate Variability vs Climate Change

Week 7 Forces that affect the Climate System

Tues. Oct. 7, Atmospheric Air Pressure; why “highs” and “lows”.

Thurs. Oct. 19, **Fall Recess**

Week 8 Atmospheric Circulation

Tues. Oct. 14, Pressure Gradient Force. Coriolis Force and Friction. Why air travels in circles around the planet

Thurs. Oct. 16, The Atmospheric Circulation Patterns and their related climate conditions

Week 9 Climate Changes

Tues. Oct. 21, Atmosphere and Ocean Interactions

Thurs. Oct. 23, Anticipating Climate Variability vs Change, Insights from Observations

PART IV Our Relationship to Climate Variability

Week 10 Climate Sensitivity

Tues. Oct. 28, Future Greenhouse Gas Emission Scenarios and Atmospheric CO₂. What happens to temperature

Thurs. Oct. 30, Feedbacks that influence how much the climate changes and why

Week 11 Climate Change and Climate Sensitivity to Changing Atmospheric Greenhouse Gases

Tues. Nov. 4, **Midterm 2**

Thurs. Nov. 6, Climate Sensitivity

Week 12 Anticipating Change, Climate Models and How They Inform Us

Tues. Nov. 11, International Efforts to “Simulate” the future with computer models

Thurs. Nov. 13, How the International Community Assesses how the Climate System can Change

Week 13 Climate Policy

Tues. Nov. 18, Climate Policy Making at the National and International Level

Thurs. Nov. 20, In class discussion about the prospects for intervention to avoid the worst climate outcomes

Week 14 Strategies for Mitigation and Adaptation

Tues. Nov. 25, Efforts to mitigate rising greenhouse gas emissions and developing adaptations to change

Thurs. Nov. 27, **Thanksgiving Break**

Week 15

Tues. Dec. 2, In Class Discussion about Climate Change

Thurs. Dec. 4, Semester Review

Week of Dec. 6-9 Study Days

Week of Dec. 10-17 Final Exams

Course Grading

Grading and Grade Calculation

Lab Portion: 33% of course (100pts)

In class midterm exams: 33% of course. 2 midterms (100pts (50pts each))

Final exam: 33% (100pts)

Extra Credit: 2 opportunities, each 10pts.

Calculating Your Final Course Score

$(0.33 * \text{Lab}) + (0.33 * \text{Midterms}) + (0.33 * \text{Final Exam}) + \text{extra credit} = \text{Final Score (out of$

300pts).

Notes about Exams

Midterm Exams (2), 50 questions. Multiple Choice. Each question is worth 1pt.

Final exam 100 questions. Multiple Choice. Each question is worth 1pt. About 66 questions will be from midterms 1 and 2.

No early exams are allowed.

Exams must be taken at the scheduled time unless special circumstances justify.

Students who do not take an exam receive zero points as a grade on that exam.

Make-up exams can be taken only in cases of illness or family emergency or other university event.

Make-up exams are scheduled and set by the instructor.

Notes about Grade Curves

A curve may be applied to the final score distribution at the end of the semester.

USC Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: sarc.usc.edu

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. equity.usc.edu

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. dsp.usc.edu

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Diversity at USC

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. diversity.usc.edu

USC Emergency Information

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. emergency.usc.edu

USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.

Provides overall safety to USC community. dps.usc.edu