
IDH 2930: STORMS AHEAD

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
SPRING 2017

INSTRUCTOR

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HELP SESSIONS: THURSDAYS 1-4PM, AND BY APPOINTMENT

Credits: 1

Class Hours: Wednesday, Period 6 (12:50-1:40pm), HUME 119

COURSE DESCRIPTION & LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Course Description:

Storms of My Grandchildren is written by James Hansen, a leading climate scientist who has spent decades watching his climate predictions (higher temperatures, rising sea levels, greater atmospheric CO₂, etc.) come to fruition. He uses an uncensored, scientific approach to clearly indicate the realities of climate change; Climate change is happening at an alarming rate and we are quickly approaching a point of no return. Although we know that significant changes in carbon usage are needed to slow changes in our climate, the solutions are controversial and require us to rethink how we manufacture goods, manage our lands, and use fossil fuels. Decisions to make (or not make) these changes by governments and policy makers can have huge economic and social impacts. This, in turn, leads to disagreements among groups with competing interests. To be a responsible citizen, you have to evaluate climate change science critically, separate facts from opinions, and recognize biases and propaganda. Therefore, it is important to develop critical thinking skills necessary for handling biases on all sides of this controversial issue. This course will focus on the sound conservation ethics and scientific information needed to be an informed citizen, while encouraging sensitivity to the needs of different entities.

In this class, we will explore the literature at three levels: a popular book (*Storms of My Grandchildren*), peer-reviewed papers, and news articles. *Storms of My Grandchildren* will be the main focus of the class and provide students with a general understanding of climate change science and necessary solutions. It will be supplemented with current scientific literature, which will be used to evaluate experiments related to climate change and teach students how the research is done. Finally, students will be responsible for finding recent news articles for some chapter topics to examine the information most readily available to the general public. Discussion and writings will focus on the similarities and differences between information in the three types of literature.

Course Objectives:

- Develop the critical thinking skills needed to evaluate climate change science and potential solutions in a complex and rapidly deteriorating world
- Evaluate current climate change science in the scientific literature and popular news
- Relate climate change science to current political and economic concerns
- Identify practical issues related to climate change solutions in a human-dominated world
- Discuss how The Paris Agreement seeks to slow climate change and whether it is too little, too late

EVALUATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Distribution of Grades

80% Weekly Informal Writing
20% Participation

Grading Scale (no rounding)

<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Grade</u>
100-93	A	76-73	C
92-90	A-	72-70	C-
89-87	B+	69-67	D+
86-83	B	66-63	D
82-80	B-	62-60	D-
79-77	C+	59-0	F

Brief Overview of Major Assignments (additional details and grading rubrics will be provided)

Weekly Informal Writing (Linked to Informal, In-class Discussions)

Students will be expected to keep an electronic journal of thoughts, ideas, questions, and observations relevant to course content throughout the semester (one per week of at least 500 words and due by midnight on Tuesdays). The journal should contain brief summaries and introspective thoughts about class readings, questions regarding assigned reading material that may serve as fodder for in-class discussion, and current climate change-related news items of interest to the class (with references). On occasion, I will request that students use their journal to answer specific questions related to the readings. I also will be looking for evidence of substantial contributions students make to in-class discussions related to their journal entry, which may include questions posed in class, news items shared with the class, or other substantive contributions made to in-class discussions.

Participation

To earn credit for this component of their grade, students must firstly attend class and be prepared contribute to lively discussions. Second, students will be expected to attend a short class fieldtrip to the University of Florida Weather Center. Third, each student will lead a chapter discussion at least once during the semester.

Required course materials

Hansen, James. 2009. *Storms of My Grandchildren: The Truth About the Coming Climate Catastrophe and Our Last Chance to Save Humanity*. Bloomsbury USA, New York, NY.

Policy on Late Work

For every day an assignment is turned in late, your grade will be lowered by 10%, unless instructed otherwise. Activities completed in class will not be accepted once the class period has ended unless otherwise indicated.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policy and can be found in the online catalog at:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

RESOURCES TO HELP YOU SUCCEED

Course Website

The course website can be accessed on Canvas using your myUFL key. The course site will contain readings, announcements, helpful links, and other important course information, as well as an online grade book.

Academic Civility

Meaningful and constructive dialogue is encouraged in this class and requires a degree of mutual respect, willingness to listen, and tolerance of opposing points of view. Respect for individual differences and alternative viewpoints will be maintained at all times in this class. One's words and use of language should be temperate and within acceptable bounds of civility and decency. Friendly persuasion wins friends and influences people. Aggressively arguing your point often does the opposite and stops dialogue.

Academic Integrity

You are expected to do original work. This means stating, in your own words, the information you research for your written work and properly referencing words and ideas of others. It also means performing independently on non-group assignments. This is serious business and infractions can severely interfere with your career aspirations. Please see the UF policy for student conduct and honor for additional information at:

<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>

Wellness

UF Counseling and Wellness Center offers individual counseling, wellness counseling, couples counseling, problem solving help, CERC crisis services, and other assistance. For more information, visit:

<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>

Students with Disabilities Act

UF Disability Resource Center strives to provide quality services to students with physical, learning, sensory or psychological disabilities, to educate them about their legal rights and responsibilities so that they can make informed decisions, and to foster a sense of empowerment so that they can engage in critical thinking and self-determination.

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Feedback

I encourage your constructive criticism, suggestions, ideas, and other feedback for improving the course. Please refer to contact information on the first page.

Additionally, students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Discussion Topic	Readings to be completed PRIOR to class
Jan. 4	Introductory Information • James Hansen TED Talk	
Jan. 11	The Vice President's Climate Task Force	Preface & Chapter 1
Jan. 18	The A-Team and the Secretary's Quandary	Chapter 2
Jan. 25	A Visit to the White House	Chapter 3
Feb. 1	Time Warp	Chapter 4
Feb. 8	Dangerous Reticence: A Slippery Slope	Chapter 5
Feb. 15	The Faustian Bargain: Humanity's Own Trap	Chapter 6
Feb. 22	Is There Still Time? A Tribute to Charles David Keeling	Chapter 7
Mar. 1	Field trip to University of Florida Weather Center	
Mar. 8	<i>Spring Break</i>	<i>No Class</i>
Mar. 15	Target Carbon Dioxide: Where Should Humanity Aim?	Chapter 8
Mar. 22	An Honest, Effective Path	Chapter 9
Mar. 29	The Venus Syndrome	Chapter 10
Apr. 5	Storms of My Grandchildren	Chapter 11 & Afterward
Apr. 12	Guest Speaker - TBA	

Disclaimer

I reserve the right to revise the discussion topics and reading assignments. Additional readings, including scientific articles or chapters from other books, will occasionally be assigned. Any updates to the schedule will be posted on Canvas and you will be notified via email. Please make sure your Canvas preferences are set to receive periodic class updates.