

**WESTERN UNIVERSITY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**  
**Undergraduate Course Outline 2022-23**

**PHILOSOP 2356F**  
**Philosophy of Climate Change**

Fall Term M 3:30–5:30 PM. W 4:30–5:30 PM Talbot College 205	Instructor: Wayne Myrvold Office: Stevenson Hall 4143 Office hours: MW 13:30–14:30 wmyrvold@uwo.ca
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**PREREQUISITE CHECKING**

No prerequisites.

**DESCRIPTION**

A well-known philosopher identified the central questions of philosophy as: What can I know? What must I do? What may I hope? In this course we will look at these questions as they arise in connection with climate change, not with an aim to finding definitive answers to them, but with the goal of developing skills to help us deal with these questions in the face of an ever-changing climatic and political situation.

We are none of us experts in all aspects of climate change (not even climate scientists!). We must to some extent rely on others in deciding what to believe about scientific matters, such as climate change. This poses the problem of navigating the often bewildering web of information, misinformation, and disinformation about climate change. We will discuss the nature of evidence in science, and the ways that messages in the media get shaped by various forces in society.

Climate change also raises questions of what actions are to be taken. We will explore issues of personal responsibility (should we focus on personal lifestyle choice?) and collective responsibility.

There is a tendency in some presentations to talk as if it is too late for meaningful action. We will face this sense impending doom, and raise the question: what kind of future is possible?

No background in climate science will be assumed; in the first weeks we will go over the basics of contemporary climate science.

**TEXTS**

Assigned readings, available on Course OWL site.

**OBJECTIVES**

Students will be able to explain the basic conclusion of contemporary climate science, and the nature of the evidence for those conclusions. They will be able to identify and employ strategies for distinguishing reliable and unreliable information on the internet. They will be able to describe the major approaches to thinking about the relation between individual and collective responsibility. They will be able to describe, and critically evaluate, the major approaches to

mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.

### **METHOD OF EVALUATION**

Two short written assignments; final project (details to be discussed in class); two tests.

#### **Short Assignments:**

# 1 (due Sept. 21) 15%

# 2 (due Oct. 12) 15%

**Final project** (due Nov. 16) 20%

#### **Tests:**

Midterm (Oct. 26) 25%

Final (TBA, Dec. exam period) 25%

Assignments will be submitted online via OWL. Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day late. In conformity with departmental policy all written assignments must be submitted to turnitin.com for plagiarism checking by the due date. Assignments not submitted to turnitin by the due date will be counted as late, and students will not receive credit for written assignments not submitted to turnitin.com.

No assignments will be accepted after the last day of classes,

### **AUDIT**

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

### **DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES**

The Department of Philosophy policies that govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses are available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>.

It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested.

The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at

[http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

### **EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive an assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade. For 3000- or 4000-level courses in which such a graded assessment is impracticable, the instructor(s) must obtain an exemption from this policy from the Dean and this exemption must be noted on the

corresponding course syllabus. In rare instances and at the Dean's discretion, other courses could receive a similar exemption, which also must be noted in the course syllabus.

### **COURSE ASSIGNMENT**

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

### **ACADEMIC OFFENCES**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

### **PLAGIARISM CHECKING**

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

### **SUPPORT SERVICES**

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.