

OLLI / NOAA “Climate & Society” Course Description (Modification of Course Format)

Updated August 16, 2011

This is an 8-week course comprised of eight, 90-minute sessions focused on the intersections of climate and selected societal frames of relevance and value to every citizen. Subject matter experts will organize the presentation panels and deliver the presentations.

Course Objectives

The main objectives of the “Climate & Society” course are:

- to help participants become more deeply knowledgeable about the ways in which climate intersects with important, societally-relevant “frames” (e.g., energy, health, agriculture);
- to introduce participants to subject matter experts and authoritative sources of information;
- to test and evaluate a new model for civic engagement between scientists and non-scientists designed to promote open dialog and an increase in climate literacy among participants;
- to focus discussion less on the “problems” associated with climate and more on the opportunities and solutions for mitigation and adaptation.

Topical Frames

Classes will alternate between lecture-style/Q and A plus comments format and facilitated roundtable-style sessions. In the lectures, subject matter experts will present an overview of the subject matter (~1 hour) followed by participant Q&A (~30 min). The course topics are grouped in two bins—adaptation and mitigation. We will combine the topics into panel-style presentations, as described below...

Originally proposed class topics:

- Human health
- Environmental health
- National security
- Agriculture
- Energy
- Economy
- Water access and availability
- Infrastructure

Regrouped as follows:

I. Mitigation:

Week 1: Energy and Economy

Week 2: Roundtable discussions

II. Adaptation

Week 3: Human and Environmental Health

Week 4: Roundtable discussions

Week 5: Food and Water
Week 6: Roundtable discussions
Week 7: National Security and Infrastructure
Week 8: Roundtable discussions

Course Dynamic

For weeks 1,3,5, and 7 (lecture and Q+ A followup format) panels of 2 or 3 subject experts present the state of knowledge on the intersection(s) of climate and the above-listed topical frames. The scope of the presentations and ensuing discussions would focus on:

- significant risks presented by climate change &/or variability;
- policy ideas, options and/or proposals with trade-offs for each;
- barriers to action (cognitive, technological, political, economic, etc.); and
- where course participants can go to learn more (i.e., authoritative sources).

Course presenters should recommend sources of information (either hardcopy handouts or online sources) in their lectures sessions to enable participants to dig deeper and to come to the follow-up roundtable sessions (weeks 2, 4, 6, and 8) prepared to discuss ideas and options for addressing the risks associated with climate, barriers to action, and ways overcoming those barriers.

In these subsequent roundtable sessions, participants will discuss the topics and issues and develop their own recommendations. Roundtable session participants will be divided into groups of about 8 people. OLLI will provide a facilitator for each of the 8 member discussion groups for the four roundtable sessions to ensure that everyone is heard, and to help shepherd the discussion toward points of convergence. OLLI will assign a note taker to each of the 8 member discussion groups for the four roundtable sessions to ensure that the key points in each discussion group are captured. (If OLLI is unable to provide the facilitators as volunteers among OLLI members registered in this course, then each group will select two people from their group to serve in the roles.) It should be noted that OLLI course registrants who volunteer for these important roles will be providing a great service to OLLI members and are keys in maximizing the effectiveness of this course as a learning experience and ensuring that the goals of this course are attained. Course participants that volunteer for these roles will be given a short orientation prior to the first class session on role duties and expectations by Alan Rubin/OLLI and David Herring/NOAA as the co-sponsors of this course. Be assured that facilitators and note takers will still be able to fully participate in roundtable group discussions.

Outcomes

Each roundtable produces a group consensus presentation on what the participants feel should be done to address the climate risks associated with each discussion frame (e.g., human and environmental health). They should identify the key risk(s) they wish to address, their proposed ideas for how to address the risk, the relevant barriers to action that exist, and how they propose overcoming those barriers. At

the end of each roundtable session, the note takers from each table will stand and deliver a short report to the plenary on what their group discussed and recommends.

Course Evaluation

At the end of each roundtable session, each participant would be asked to complete a short questionnaire in which we measure things like:

- how engaging or motivating were their discussion sessions?
- what were they doing between the sessions in terms of gathering more information, having conversations with friends, family, or classmates, etc.?
- what knowledge was gained?

Such data would help OLLI and NOAA to evaluate the viability of this course design as a potential model for civic engagement to promote climate literacy that may be worthy of “scaling up.”