

### ***ES 488/588 Climate Science and Policy in Sāmoa***

**Instructor:** Professor Ronald Mitchell, Political Science and Environmental Studies [rmitchel@uoregon.edu](mailto:rmitchel@uoregon.edu)

**Language of instruction:** English

**Location:** National University of Sāmoa (NUS), Apia, Sāmoa

**UO course credit/hours:** 4 credits; 40 contact hours; 120 engagement hours (all course activities, including readings, field trips, assignments, project research)

**Dates:** Summer 2025 (4 weeks in Sāmoa, 1 week remote)



Pacific Climate Warriors.

#### **Course Description**

Despite producing just 0.02% of global emissions, the Pacific is disproportionately impacted by climate change. In this course, you will learn about Indigenous and Sāmoan perspectives and responses to climate change with a particular focus on art and activism. Being immersed in Sāmoa itself, you will see first-hand impacts of climate change and on the ground adaptations. In addition, you will learn about the Sāmoan way (fa'a Sāmoa) and gain an understanding of how indigeneity figures in the global context. This course is completed alongside ES 488/588 Climate Science and Policy in Sāmoa. Through coursework with UO and National University of Sāmoa instructors, home stays, excursions, and working with Sāmoan community groups will help integrate Indigenous culture and art with climate science and policy.

Climate change is the largest environmental threat facing humans and other species that inhabit planet Earth. We are increasingly aware of the causes, impacts, and likelihood of climate change. Yet, recent international meetings on climate change suggest that the nations, and people, of the world are unwilling to take actions on the scale and timeline that most scientists say is needed to avoid the most severe impacts of climate change. In short, the demand for climate action implied by most scientific evidence has not yet been matched by the supply of action from political leaders, policy-makers, and the public. This course will help you understand the climate science, factors that influence progress on this global crisis, and international, national, and local policies that are helping address it.

- **Understanding the science:** What do we know and what don't we know about climate change? To what extent is it human-caused and how do we know? How does one assess the arguments of those who argue that human-caused climate change is occurring compared to those who argue the opposite?

- **Setting the agenda:** What has gotten climate change on the international policy agenda? What role has scientific evidence played? What role have nongovernmental organizations and activists (e.g., Greta Thunberg) played? What factors have kept climate change off the policy agenda?
- **International responses to climate change:** negotiating an agreement: Why have countries taken action on climate change at some times but not others? Why are some states "leaders" on climate change and others "laggards"? How are states, businesses, NGOs, and individuals responding?
- **Non-international responses to climate change:** What actions are countries taking on their own, without international cooperation? What are multinational corporations, local communities, and individuals doing about the problem?

### **Learning Objectives**

Upon successfully completing this course students should:

- Understand key insights from the natural and social sciences regarding a) the human activities that changing the global climate, b) the expected impacts of climate change on humans and natural ecosystems, and c) the social factors that foster or inhibit action to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- Recognize the range of strategies being used to address climate change as well as the factors that contribute to or prevent their success.
- Demonstrate critical thinking and communication skills through writing assignments.

### **Instructional Methodology**

Contact hours will occur on Mondays through Fridays and will take the form of

- **Lectures** by UO and National University of Sāmoa (NUS) faculty and, as available, community leaders, policy-makers, indigenous stakeholders, and political activists.
- **Discussions** among students in the class and lecturers, guest speakers, and community partners.
- **Experiential education** coordinating with policy-makers, community activists, and others to identify and develop partner-identified projects related to reducing climate vulnerability and increase community resilience in the face of climate threats.

### **Required Materials**

There are no required books for this course, though there are two required for the other course that is part of this study abroad program. All reading materials will be available on a Canvas webpage BUT ALSO on a thumbdrive (that GEO will provide) or downloadable as a folder for your laptop before departure. It is crucial to get these files because of challenges that may arise because of potential internet access issues in Sāmoa.

### **Course Requirements**

#### **Four in-class quizzes (20%)**

You will need to complete four in-class quizzes (worth 5% each).

#### **Brief essays (20%)**

You will write two brief essays (worth 10% each) in response to a prompt that asks you to engage with several of the assigned readings.

#### **Independent Study Project (60%)**

Your Independent Study Project (ISP) will be a self-designed research project related to the course content. You will submit a single final project that will be graded and count for both courses. The ISP can be designed as an individual or, with prior faculty approval, a group project. Students are expected to work closely with faculty throughout the course to conceptualize and develop an independent research projects that investigates a well-formulated research question that links to the "Art & Activism" track, the "Science & Policy" track, or that bridges between the two tracks.

An "Art & Activism" ISP should engage with Indigenous artistic and activist responses to climate change. It can address creative responses and/or incorporate a creative component itself (e.g., developing a mini-documentary or a podcast series to address your research question). A "Science & Policy" track ISP should engage with efforts to address climate-related challenges and policies developed by international, national, local, or non-governmental organizations.

**Your ISP will be graded as follows:**

- Week 2: Written initial project plan including formulated research question (10%): 750-1,000 words.
- Week 3: Written revised project plan, potentially replacing initial one. Initial review of literature as access allows (10%): 1,000-2,000 words.
- Week 4: Finalized project plan, initial research findings/creative project, developing review of literature (15%): 2,000-3,000 words.
- Week 5: Written final paper that includes description of research or creative project, review of the field, and all deliverables (25%): paper of 3,000-4,000 words PLUS all agreed-upon deliverables.

**Grading Scale**

A+: Work that represents superior excellence. Student exceeds expectations and is creative in their approach.

A: Work that displays an exceptional grasp of material and is well executed and free of errors.

B: Work that fulfills the criteria of the assignment and demonstrates command of the material but is not exceptional.

C: Work that demonstrates a basic grasp of the material and satisfies some of the assigned criteria.

D: Work that lacks a substantive grasp of the material or is executed in a manner that is below college standards yet constitutes some effort to engage with the material.

F: Work that is weak and incomplete, representing a misunderstanding of that material and assignment expectations.

## ***Samoa Course Schedule.***

Students arrive Faleolo International Airport, on or before Sunday June 22. Check in to Tivoli Aparthotel.

### **Week 1 - Context, Climate Change & Culture (Sāmoa, 23–27 June)**

#### **Monday June 23**

**Accommodation:** Tivoli Aparthotel

- SIT Orientation to Sāmoa Day 1 at National University of Sāmoa, Dr. Fetaomi Tapu-Qiliho National University of Sāmoa, National University of Sāmoa,
  - Expectations, Health & Wellness, Risk Management, Ethics and Values, Cultural Expectations & Intercultural Experiences
- Survival Sāmoan Language Class
- UO Course introduction & overview, Profs Lopesi & Mitchell
- **Mitchell: Climate Change and Sāmoa from Indigenous and Western perspectives**
  - Latai-Niusulu, A., et al. 2023. "Climate micro-mobilities as adaptation practice in the Pacific: the case of Samoa," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B-Biological Sciences*, 378(1889), 1-8

#### **Tuesday June 24**

**Accommodation:** Tivoli Aparthotel

SIT Orientation to Sāmoa Day 2 at National University of Sāmoa, Dr. Fetaomi Tapu-Qiliho

- Guest Lecture: Sāmoan History, Context, Culture & Pacific Worldviews
- Guest Lecture: Climate Change in Sāmoa (vulnerabilities, impacts & adaptation)
- Guest Lecture: Obstacles & Opportunities for National and Community-Level Adaptation
- Guest Lecture: Pacific Activism and Art in Response to Climate Threats
- Readings:
  - Arnold, M. 2018. "Living with Climate Change in Polynesia," *Climate Policy Lab*

#### **Wednesday June 25**

**Accommodation:** Tivoli Aparthotel

- Site visit: South Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP) or Scientific Research Organization of Sāmoa
- Site Visit Debrief Homestay Orientation
- Survival Sāmoan Language Class
- Church Visit Briefing: Culture and Religion in Sāmoa; Indigenous Knowledge– Dr. Fetaomi Tapu-Qiliho
- **Mitchell: Morality, Religion, and Climate Change**
  - Wyeth, G. 2017. "Samoa Officially Becomes a Christian State," *The Diplomat – Asia-Pacific Current Affairs Magazine*
  - Pope Francis. 2015. "Encyclical letter of the Holy Father Francis on care for our common home." Rome: The Vatican
  - Gardiner, S. M. 2006. "A perfect moral storm: intergenerational ethics and the problem of moral corruption," *Environmental Values*, 15(3), 397-413
  - Bertana, A. 2020. "The Impact of Faith-Based Narratives on Climate Change Adaptation in Narikoso, Fiji," *Anthropological Forum*, 30(3): Routledge, 254-273
  - Nunn, P. D., et al. 2016. "Spirituality and attitudes towards Nature in the Pacific Islands: insights for enabling climate-change adaptation," *Climatic Change*, 136(3), 477-493
  - Jackson, L. C. 2014. "Young people's knowledge of climate change and the God factor." Apia: Centre of Samoa Studies, National University of Samoa

#### **Thursday June 26**

**Accommodation:** Lefaga, Faimafili Village Resort Fales

Excursion day to Faleseela Village, Faleseela Environment and Protection Society

- Guest Lecture: Indigeneity, Conservation & the Environment
- 'Ava Welcome Ceremony and Group
- Hike & Tree Planting Activity

- Readings:
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**Friday June 27**

**Accommodation:** Homestay

Excursion day to Savaia Village, Savaia Marine Reserve

- Hike and Giant Clams, Mangrove Exploration
- Meet & Move in with Homestay families

## **Week 2 - Understanding Climate Change in Sāmoa Part 1 (Sāmoa, 30 June–4 July)**

### **Monday June 30**

#### **Accommodation:** Homestay

- Weekend Debrief & Group Homestay
- Site Visit: Sāmoa Culture and Arts Centre and/or Malua School of Art, Ms. Leua Leonard
- **Mitchell: Climate Change, the Scientific Basics**
  - Shapiro, M. 2021. "Eunice Newton Foote's nearly forgotten discovery," *Physics Today*
  - Rosen, J. 2021. "The Science of Climate Change Explained: Facts, Evidence and Proof," *New York Times*
  - Kolbert, E. 2015. "If we burned all the fossil fuel in the world," *New Yorker*
- Initial in-class discussion of ISPs
  - Examples of previous Sāmoa ISP's [here](#)
  - Possibility to connect ISPs to work of SPREP or Sāmoan Ministry of Natural Resources & Environment
  - Write histories of 1) climate impacts, 2) adaptation to climate change, 3 loss & damage
  - Specific project ideas:
    - UNDP. 2017. "Samoan villagers receive grants for locally-driven climate adaptation initiatives," *UNDP Climate Change Adaptation Website*
    - UNDP. 2017. "Samoan villagers receive grants for locally-driven climate adaptation initiatives," *UNDP Climate Change Adaptation Website*

### **Tuesday July 1**

#### **Accommodation:** Homestay

- Site Visit & Discussion: Ms. Sunshine Organic Farm in Tuana'i: 'Gender, Indigeneity & Agribusiness' - Ms. Floris Niu
- **Mitchell: Western and Indigenous Ways of Knowing the Natural World**
  - Anderegg, W. R. L. 2010. "Diagnosis Earth: the climate change debate," *Thought & Action*, 23-36
  - Boykoff, M. T. and J. M. Boykoff. 2004. "Balance as bias: global warming and the U.S. prestige press," *Global Environmental Change*, 15(2), 125-136
  - Oreskes, N. 2019. "Science Isn't Always Perfect—But We Should Still Trust It," *Time*
  - Thompson, C. 2019. "Tupaia's chart: two ways of seeing," in C. Thompson (ed), *Sea people: the puzzle of Polynesia*. New York: Harper Paperbacks, 88-98
  - Fackler, M. and H. Ueno. 2025. "In Japan, an Iceless Lake and an Absent God Sound an Ancient Warning," *New York Times*

### **Wednesday July 2**

#### **Accommodation:** Homestay

- Survival Sāmoan Language Class
- **Mitchell: IPAT and the Social Drivers of Climate Change**
  - Waggoner, P. E. and J. H. Ausubel. 2002. "A framework for sustainability science: A renovated IPAT identity," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 99(12), 7860-7865
  - Mitchell, R. B. 2011. "Graphs of global trends in I, P, A, and T." Eugene, OR: University of Oregon
  - Mitchell, R. B. 2012. "Technology is not enough: climate change, population, affluence, and consumption," *Journal of Environment and Development*, 21(1), 33-6
  - Thøgersen, J. 2021. "Consumer behavior and climate change: consumers need considerable assistance," *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*, 42, 9-14

### **Thursday July 3**

#### **Accommodation:** Taufua Fales, Lalomanu

- Village Tour of Tsunami-affected areas
- **Mitchell: Impacts in Small Island Developing States**
  - Thomas, A., et al. 2020. "Climate Change and Small Island Developing States," *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 45(1), 1-27

- Jackson, L. C. 2022. "An Impossible Choice Part 1: When climate change arrives at your door," *Podchaser*
- Gordon-Strachan, G., et al. 2024. "Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change: Samoa Data Sheet 2024," *The Lancet*
- Australian Aid. 2021. *Pacific Risk Profile: Samoa*. Sydney: Australian Aid
- International Climate Change Adaptation Initiative. 2011. *Current and future climate of Sāmoa*. Sydney: Pacific Climate Change Science Program, Australian Government

#### Friday July 4

##### Accommodation: Homestay

- **Mitchell: Adaptation in Small Island Developing States**
  - Betzold, C. 2015. "Adapting to climate change in small island developing states," *Climatic Change*, 133(3), 481-489
  - Nalau, J., et al. 2018. "The Role of Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge in Ecosystem-Based Adaptation: A Review of the Literature and Case Studies from the Pacific Islands," *Weather, Climate, and Society*, 10, 851-865
  - UNDP. 2017. "Samoan villagers receive grants for locally-driven climate adaptation initiatives," *UNDP Climate Change Adaptation Website*
  - McGinn, A. and A. Solofa. 2020. "Multi-level Governance of Climate Change Adaptation: A Case Study of Country-Wide Adaptation Projects in Samoa," in W. L. Filho (ed), *Managing Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific Region*. Hamburg: Springer, 231-253
  - Latai-Niusulu, A., et al. 2024. "Working with nature, working with Indigenous knowledge: Community priorities for climate adaptation in Samoa," *Nature-Based Solutions*, 6, 100144

##### Due:

- Draft ISP plan including formulated research question (10%): 750-1,000 words.

### **Week 3 - Understanding Climate Change in Sāmoa Part 2 (Sāmoa, 7 July–11 July)**

#### **Monday July 7**

**Accommodation:** Homestay

- **Mitchell: The Importance of Local Knowledge and Empowerment**
  - Nunn, P. D., et al. 2024. "Traditional knowledge for climate resilience in the Pacific Islands," *WIREs Climate Change*, 15(4), e882 (1-25)
  - Flores Palacios, X. 2015. "Samoa: Local Knowledge, Climate Change and Population Movements," *Forced Migration Review*, 49, 59–61
  - Buckley, C. 2025. "At This Clinic in Hawaii, Nature Is the Medicine," *New York Times*

#### **Tuesday July 8**

**Accommodation:** Homestay

- Survival Sāmoan Language Class
- **Mitchell: Loss and Damage in Small Island Developing States**
  - Savarala, S. 2024. "Snapshot of Loss and Damage in SIDS under the Climate Promise," *UNDP Climate Promise Website*
  - N'Guetta, A., et al. 2025. "Loss and damage in tropical fisheries: a systematic review of people, climate, and fisheries," *Regional Environmental Change*, 25(1), 25-36
  - Wewerinke-Singh, M. and D. Hinge Salili. 2020. "Between negotiations and litigation: Vanuatu's perspective on loss and damage from climate change," *Climate Policy*, 20(6), 681-692

#### **Wednesday July 9**

**Accommodation:** Homestay

- **Mitchell: Psychological and sociological perspectives on climate change**
  - Gifford, R. 2011. "The dragons of inaction: psychological barriers that limit climate change mitigation and adaptation," *American Psychologist*, 66(4), 290-302
  - Cialdini, R. B. 2003. "Crafting normative messages to protect the environment," *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 12(4), 105-109
  - Cialdini, R. B. and W. Schultz. 2004. "Understanding and motivating conservation via social norms (Report prepared for the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation)." Tempe: Arizona State University

#### **Thursday July 10**

**Accommodation:** Homestay

- Le Manumea Cultural Show: Island Night Buffet Dinner & Show
- **Mitchell: Climate Solutions: Economics, Psychology, Law, and Local Activism**
  - Rotzoll, I. C. 2024. "Regional Pacific Nationally Determined Contribution Hub Highlight of Achievements (Phase 3: June 2023-July 2024)," Regional Pacific NDC Hub
  - Guest Speaker (tbd): Nasalo, S., et al. 2024. "Assessing the Regeneration of Human Generated Mangrove Systems in Fiji – Case Study of Nasese and Lami Foreshore (Masters Thesis)." Suva, Fiji: University of the South Pacific

#### **Friday July 11**

**Accommodation:** Homestay

- Site Visit: Sāmoa Conservation Society Botanical Garden (Aloma Black)
- Coastal walk, O le Pupu Pu'e National Park To Sua
- To Sua Ocean Trench

**Due:**

- Written revised project plan, potentially replacing initial one. Initial review of literature as access allows (10%): 1,000-2,000 words.
- Reading Response one (Indigenous Pacific Approaches to Climate Change) (10%): 1000 words. Due by 11.59pm 13 July.



#### **Week 4 - Independent Study Project week (Sāmoa, 7 July–4 July)**

##### **Monday July 14**

**Accommodation:** Homestay

- Introduction to Mini ISP (Independent Study Project) Week
- Guest Lecture: Indigenous Research Methodologies
- Guest Lecture: Field Methods and Ethics
- Mitchell: Assessing the effectiveness of climate actions, activism, and policies
  - Kumazawa, R. and M. Callaghan. 2012. "The effect of the Kyoto Protocol on carbon dioxide emissions," *Journal of Economics and Finance*, 36(1): Springer US, 201-210

##### **Tuesday July 15**

**Accommodation:** Homestay

- ISP in class project work

##### **Wednesday July 16**

**Accommodation:** Homestay

- ISP in class project work

##### **Thursday July 17**

**Accommodation:** Homestay

- Student presentations
- Final program wrap-up and debrief

##### **Friday July 18**

- Goodbyes to host families and depart from Apia

**Due:**

- Finalized project plan, initial research findings/creative project, developing review of literature (15%): 2,000-3,000 words.

**Week 5 - Project final week (remote 28 July–1 Aug)**

- Day 1: Work plan for project completion; plans to overcome obstacles
- Day 2: Writing up final reports, part 1
- Day 3: Writing up final reports, part 2
- Day 4: Finalizing deliverables
- Day 5: Finalizing project reports for submission to community partners

**Due:**

- Written final paper that includes description of research or creative project, review of the field, and all deliverables (25%): paper of 3,000-4,000 words PLUS all agreed-upon deliverables. Submit by August 1 11.59pm.

**Accessible Education Statement**

Both the University of Oregon and we as instructors seek to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify either instructor if any aspect of the instruction or design of this course results in disability-related barriers to your participation. For more information, please contact the Accessible Education Center in 360 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or [uoaec@uoregon.edu](mailto:uoaec@uoregon.edu)

**Academic Misconduct Statement**

The University Student Conduct Code (see <https://conduct.uoregon.edu>) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students' obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at <https://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism>

**Reporting Obligations**

We are both designated reporters. For information about our reporting obligations as faculty, please see Employee Reporting Obligations on the Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance (OICRC) website. Students experiencing any form of prohibited discrimination or harassment, including sex or gender-based violence, may seek information and resources at <https://safe.uoregon.edu>, <https://respect.uoregon.edu>, or <https://investigations.uoregon.edu> or contact the non-confidential Title IX office/Office of Civil Rights Compliance (541-346-3123), or Dean of Students offices (541-346-3216), or call the 24-7 hotline 541-346-SAFE for help. We are also mandatory reporters of child abuse. Please find more information at <https://hr.uoregon.edu/mandatory-reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect>

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## **References**

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- Nasalo, Salote, Hilda Waqa-Sakiti, Viliamu Iese, and Timothy Reeves. 2024. "Assessing the Regeneration of Human Generated Mangrove Systems in Fiji – Case Study of Nasese and Lami Foreshore (Masters Thesis)."
- Nunn, Patrick D., Roselyn Kumar, Hannah M. Barrowman, Lynda Chambers, Laitia Fifita, David Gegeo, Chelcia Gomese, Simon McGree, Allan Rarai, Karen Cheer, Dorothy Esau, 'Ofa Fa'anunu, Teddy Fong, Mereia

- Fong-Lomavatu, Paul Geraghty, Tony Heorake, Esau Kekeubata, Isoa Korovulavula, Eferemo Kubunavanua, Siosinamele Lui, David MacLaren, Philip Malsale, Sipiriano Nemani, Roan D. Plotz, Gaylyn Puairana, Jimmy Rantes, Lila Singh-Peterson, and Mike Waiwai. 2024. "Traditional knowledge for climate resilience in the Pacific Islands." *WIREs Climate Change* 15 (4):e882 (1-25).
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