

ASU offers new course on climate futures

By Matt Oxford, ASU News
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Last year was the hottest year on record, and in addition to the rising temperatures, [climate anxiety](#) and a [desire for agency is also rising in younger generations](#).

To provide students with a knowledge base around climate systems — ranging from the causes to the practical solutions — Arizona State University has developed the course [CGF 194: Introduction to Climate Futures](#).

The course, which is eligible for sustainability credit under [General Studies Gold](#), will be taught in fall 2025 session C on the Tempe campus by faculty from the [College of Global Futures](#) and led by [José Lobo](#).

“It is our expectation that students seeking further training in the topic and who want to go deeper into the science of climate change and the socioeconomic aspects of addressing it can take advantage of advanced courses offered throughout the university,” said Lobo, a clinical associate professor in the [School of Sustainability](#).

Understanding the impact of climate systems and solutions to pressing challenges will be crucial for students as they navigate their lives as informed and engaged members in society. This course provides a space for students of all backgrounds and interests to participate in the discussion around our shared futures.

“I personally hope that this course provides both a realistic understanding of the challenge and an appreciation of the immense diversity of ways that people, scientists, communities, businesses and policymakers are already addressing the issue,” said [Sonja Klinsky](#), an associate professor in the School of Sustainability who is co-teaching the course.

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The work of [Stephanie Pfirman](#), a foundation professor and deputy director of the [School of Ocean Futures](#) who is also co-teaching the course, is focused on the Arctic — which is changing fast.

“On March 22 of this year, due to global warming, winter sea ice cover in the Arctic was the lowest it's ever been in recorded history,” Pfirman said. “This will have global implications, which are important for students to understand.”

Through taking this course, students will have a better understanding of how the climate works, how it is changing, what the impact is and how society is designing sustainable solutions for a resilient future.

“Our course provides students with the knowledge and critical understanding needed to navigate the difficult, often contentious debates on how to respond to climate change,” Lobo said. “We want students to step forward and be part of the conversation.”

Hear more about the new climate futures course from the instructors:

Question: What was the motivation for creating this course?

Stephanie Pfirman: Many students have told us that they see climate change as a looming crisis — but there is a lot of disinformation regarding what's causing it and what we can do. So we knew that it was important to have a course that introduces climate futures where we can talk with students about causes, consequences, and our responsibilities to future generations to act now.

José Lobo: Despite the importance of climate change and its consequences for the future well-being of human societies, there are very few courses which cover the causes and consequences of climate change at a truly introductory level. We want to provide the means for students with no prior knowledge of the topic to learn about climate change and its consequences.

Q: What are some of the learning outcomes for students?

Sonja Klinsky: The course has a number of important outcomes, but in general terms, these focus on understanding what climate change is, what is causing it, what the implications of it are for people and communities, and what some of the options are for addressing it. This course provides an accessible introduction for all students, regardless of their prior knowledge or skill sets. We hope students will take this knowledge with them into whatever further pathways they pursue.

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Q: Why is it important for students across ASU to study these topics?

Lobo: Grasping both the roots and consequences of climate change is key to spotting where climate adaptation and socioeconomic development can pull in the same direction. When you know why warming is happening, you can design adaptation responses that facilitate development and prosperity. Understanding of the causes and consequences of climate change turns adaptation from a defensive expense into a driver for inclusive and sustainable growth worldwide.

Klinsky: Honestly, it's important for all young people to know about climate change since it has the potential to shape many aspects of their lives. However, we can't reach all young people, so we are starting here at ASU. Climate change is so important because it touches our whole society. (It) is relevant to everything from our food system to how we generate and use electricity, to how we prepare for and deal with events like hurricanes, droughts and forest fires, to how we design our cities. Regardless of what major students pursue, or what career path they go into, climate change is almost certain to be relevant.

About the college

The College of Global Futures is part of the Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory, the world's first comprehensive, university-based approach to ensuring a future where well-being is

attainable for all of Earth's inhabitants.

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



An ASU student raises a hand during a Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory event at the Walton Center for Planetary Health. Photo by Katelyn Reinhart/ASU