

Climate Systems Science: CLIM6001

School of BEES, Faculty of Science

T2, 2022

UOC: 6

Prerequisites: CLIM2001 or PHYS2801 or GEOS2711 or MATH2241

Course Coordinators

Dr Tim Raupach and Prof Steven Sherwood

Climate Change Research Centre

Email: t.raupach@unsw.edu.au, s.sherwood@unsw.edu.au

Course summary

Climate science incorporates aspects of atmospheric science, oceanography, hydrology, biology, chemistry and physics. An understanding of the observations of and interactions between the Earth's carbon cycle, hydrological cycle and key chemical species is key to understanding the mechanisms that underpin climate and in particular climate change. This course will build on students existing understanding of these separate disciplines and present an integrative multi-disciplinary approach to understanding the key drivers of the Earth's climate as well as how these drivers are measured and incorporated into mathematical models of climate. Theoretical understanding gained in lectures will be explored in practical sessions using a range of simplified statistical and climate models that will allow students to appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of the assumptions inherent in each modelling approach. By allowing students to understand the myriad of feedbacks and complex interactions between components of the climate system, this course provides the foundation for interpreting climate model projections and understanding the key sources of uncertainty in climate prediction. These are essential prerequisites for research in this area and invaluable skills for graduates looking to apply their knowledge in the university sector, government or private business.

Course aims

This course aims to give students an understanding of the key systems that control the Earth's climate, how they interact, as well the uncertainties associated with direct climate observation and future climate modelling. Students will have an appreciation of the range of observational data products that allow us to understand climate processes, including uncertainties associated with sampling and representativeness. Students will also develop an understanding of how climate models are built, executed and evaluated against observations. Through this, students will gain the skills required to critically interpret climate model projections and understand key aspects of the uncertainties associated with those projections.

Student learning outcomes:

Learning outcomes are the skills and capabilities we hope this course will help you to attain i.e. what we have in mind while we're teaching. They include the ability to:

1. Assess the limits of inference for a given observed climate data product on both spatial and temporal scales, determine sampling uncertainty and representativeness, and estimate noise levels.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of primary pathways of the carbon cycle, including photosynthesis, autotrophic and heterotrophic respiration and ocean solubility, as well as identify the climatic and biogeochemical conditions that enhance or restrict the carbon changes.
3. Explain a range of key climate feedback mechanisms and discuss how these are likely to have affected the Earth's palaeoclimate.
4. Identify the basic components of a climate model and assess common representations of atmospheric, oceanic, cryosphere, and terrestrial processes within current generation state-of-the-art climate models.
5. Critically interpret aspects of future climate projections that deserve higher or lower confidence and recognise the sources of uncertainty in such projections including downscaling techniques.
6. Perform experiments using simple and complex models of the climate system, analyse numerical output, and present results with evidence to support discussion.

Reading material

“Introduction to Climate Dynamics and Climate Modelling”. By Goosse H., P.Y. Barriat, W. Lefebvre, M.F. Loutre and V. Zunz. Online textbook available at <http://www.climate.be/textbook/>. Further reading material may be prescribed for each week on Moodle, predominantly from online material. Please check Moodle regularly as updates to the reading list may be posted throughout the course.

There is a list of useful general references below.

<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/>

<https://www.publish.csiro.au/book/6558/>

<https://www.science.org.au/files/userfiles/learning/documents/climate-change-r.pdf>

Lecture slides and recordings

We will make lecture slides and recordings available ASAP after each lecture. Lecture slides are not intended as a comprehensive representation of material covered in lectures and therefore are in no way a substitute for lecture attendance and effective note taking. They are made available simply to help structure and supplement students' notes.

Assessment

Assessment grading is as shown in the table below. Full details of assessments, including assessment criteria submission and details of feedback, will be made available on Moodle.

Activity	Contribution
First 7 tutorials	20%
Last 4 tutorials / presentation and written report	30%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	30%

More information about the assessable tasks above:

- Tutorials will mostly be computer-based but will also include some theoretical problems. It is expected that you will not be able to complete the tutorials tests within class time and will therefore be expected to spend some additional time completing assignments outside of class time. You should hand in your tutorial assignments by the beginning of the following week's tutorial. Assignments will be marked and handed back to you by the Thursday tutorial of the following week.
- The last 4 weeks of tutorials involve learning how to run a low resolution fully coupled climate model. Each person will be given a different 'experiment' to run and in the last tutorial you will be expected to give a 15-minute presentation on the results to the rest of the class and the lecturers. You will be marked on your understanding of the problem and how you contextualise your topic and the clarity and delivery of your presentation.
- The midterm and final examinations will contain short and longer answer questions, to test your ability to synthesise several aspects of the course material.
- In addition to the oral presentations, CLIM6001 students (only) will do a written report based on their experiments reported in their presentation. This report will be written in the format of a short research article.

Academic misconduct will not be tolerated

Substantiated instances of cheating or plagiarism may result in a failure grade. Please see <https://www.student.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism> if you are in any way unsure of what constitutes plagiarism.

Help

Academic Skills can offer personalised, confidential help with writing and a range of other skills. Contact them at <https://www.student.unsw.edu.au/skills>. UNSW Counselling offers a free and confidential service to students. Find out more at <https://www.counselling.unsw.edu.au/>.

Equity and diversity

Students who have a disability that requires adjustment in their teaching or learning environment are encouraged to discuss their study needs with the course convener prior to, or at the commencement of, their course, or with the Equity Officer (Disability) in the Equity and Diversity Unit (<https://www.student.unsw.edu.au/els>). Issues to be discussed may include access to materials, signers or note-takers, the provision of services and additional exam and assessment arrangements. Early notification is essential to enable any necessary adjustments to be made.

Grievance policy

Should you wish make a complaint regarding this course, the UNSW Grievance Policy can be found at <http://www.gs.unsw.edu.au/policy/documents/studentcomplaintproc.pdf> and the procedure for the resolution of complaints about student experiences at the University can be found at <https://www.edi.unsw.edu.au/conduct-integrity/complaints-unsw/student/student-complaints>. In all cases you should first try to resolve any issues with the course coordinator (contact details above). If this is unsatisfactory, you should contact the Director of the Climate Change Research Centre (Prof. Katrin Meissner K.Meissner@unsw.edu.au). If this

in turn is not satisfactory, you can contact the Associate Dean (Education). The University Counselling Services can also offer advice on any grievances.