



## AERC and UNU-WIDER's Online Course:

#### Climate Change Science and Modeling of Biophysical and Economic Impacts

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## Why course on climate change?

- Funds are being given to developing countries to include climate change in their analyses (biophysical and economic)
- Researchers do not have proper background in climate change to perform good analyses.
- Need for concise and relevant information from well respected researchers.

## Why online course?

- Reach larger number of participants
- Gather top experts to provide lectures
- Create course/format that can be updated and used multiple times.

### Concerns with online format

- Technical issues
  - Internet connection
  - Software/computer issues
- Participants ability to learn online

Participants ability to connect to

others/instructors



## Addressing online concerns

- Consulted with professional online educators on best way to run an online course
  - How to engage participants
  - Course Material dealing with internet issues in developing countries (FTP site, sending out DVDs)
- Evaluated many different learning platforms
  - Used Blackboard CourseSites no cost
- Experts vs one instructor

## **Experts Vs One Instructor**

- The climate change field is constantly changing with many views and biases.
- Instead of having one instructor lecture on the different aspects of climate change, have experts from each sector provide lectures on

the latest thoughts/ideas.

Have an instructor/course facilitator aid participants in discussion.



## **Experts**

- Adam Schlosser (MIT, climate science);
- Kerry Emanuel (MIT, cyclones and extreme events);
- Jim Neumann (Industrial Economics, sea level rise and storm surges);
- Kenneth Strzepek (MIT/CU, hydrology, extreme events, and water resources);
- Paul Chinowsky (CU, infrastructure modeling);
- Channing Arndt (UNU-WIDER, crop modeling).
- Sherman Robinson (IFPRI, CGE, PE modeling)
- Rob Davies (U of Zimbabwe, Market Failures, Discounting)
- James Thurlow (UNU-WIDER, Country level economic model)

### **Course Overview**

- A four week online course to address the current science and thoughts on climate change and its biophysical and economic implications.
- Created for professionals working in different disciplines that are being faced with addressing climate change in their work.
- The goal is to provide core knowledge of good climate science and best modeling practices.
- The course material includes readings, lectures, discussions, and a small final group project.

### **Course Overview**

Part I: The climate system including evidence and skepticism of climate change, climate change scenarios (SRES, GCMs) output and reliability, downscaling, and projections and how to use them.

**Part II:** The biophysical impacts of climate change including modeling of hydrology, flooding, and droughts; crop modeling; water resources modeling; and infrastructure modeling.

Part III: The economic impacts of climate change including greenhouse gas emissions, market failures, discounts, mitigation, CGE and PE models, and country-level economic modeling.

## Groups

- ▶ Participants were divided into groups of ~3-5 based on geographic location.
- Participants posted their answers to the discussion questions in their group discussion board.

Participants completed a small final group

project with their group.



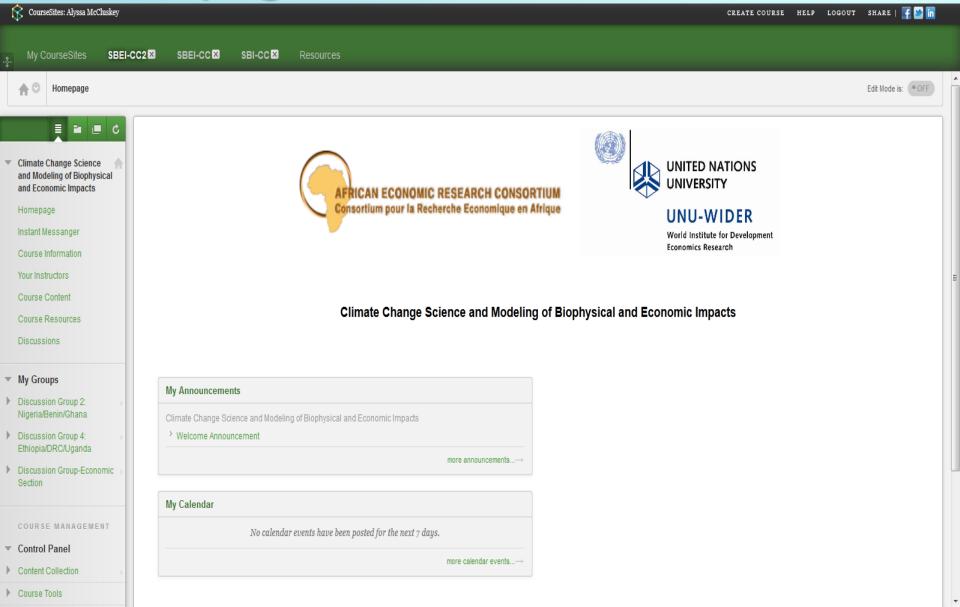
## What is required to complete course?

- Participants must answer all discussion questions in their group discussion boards.
- ▶ Participants must comment on 1–2 other participant's post in their discussion board for each topic.

Participants must complete the final group

project.

# A Look at the Course Website: Homepage



## A Look at the Course Website: Homepage



CourseSites: Alyssa McCluskey

CREATE COURSE HELP LOGOUT SHARE | F W in

Alyssa McCluskey Posted to: Climate Change

Impacts

Science and Modeling of Biophysical and Economic



My CourseSites

SBEI-CC X

#### Welcome Announcement

Posted on: Tuesday, February 28, 2012



Welcome to the Climate Change Science and Modeling of Biophysical and Economic Implications Course! We look forward to your participation in the course.

This course is an outcome of the collaboration between the United Nations University - World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER) and the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC).

The developer for this course is Alyssa McCluskey from the University of Colorado Climate and Civil Systems Lab (CLICS) and UNU-WIDER...

Below are welcome messages from Channing Arndt, the External Project Director for Climate Change for UNU-WIDER and Innocent Matshe, the Director of Training for AERC.



#### Welcome Message from UNU-WIDER's Channing Arndt

\*Note: If the video is breaking up often, it is a good idea to push the pause button and allow the video to download for some time before playing



Welcome Message from AERC's Innocent Matshe

Duration: (1:00)

Welcome again, and please look through the 'Course Information' and 'Course Content' Folders. NOTE: The best way to navigate the sections is to use the back arrow.

Climate Change Science and Modeling of Biophysical and Economic Impacts

Homepage

Instant Messanger

Course Information

Your Instructors

Course Content

Course Resources

Discussion

▼ My Groups

Discussion Group 2.
Nigeria/Benin/Ghana

Discussion Group 4: Ethiopia/DRC/Uganda

Discussion Group-Economic Section

# A Look at the Course Website: Navigation

- → Homepage: announcements, calendar of assignments
- Instant Messenger with other participants and instructor
- > Course Information: description, syllabus, requirements, etc.
- Your Instructors: Background bios on all instructors
- Course Content: All assignments and material
- Course Resources: Additional material, further reading
- Discussions: Discussion forums for each topic where participants can ask questions to instructors and the entire class
- My Groups: Each participant has access to one, smaller discussion group where they posts their answers to the different discussion questions and comment on each other's posts (also group for final project)

## A Look at the Course Website: Example of Topic Material Presentation

#### Climate Change Science by Adam Schlosser



#### Climate Change Science Introduction



Introduction by Adam Schlosser

Duration: (1:87)

Short Introduction Video of Lecturer: Brief overview of lecturer background and what they will cover



#### Climate Change Science Readings

#### List of Required Readings

The following documents on the science of climate change have been provided by Adam Schlosser. Please read these documents before viewing the PowerPoint Presentation.

Document 1: Climate projections: Past performance no guarantee of future skill? (This document is intended only for the participants in this course and their own personal research use. It is not intended for circulation to others.)

Document 2: The end of model democracy?



#### Climate Change Science Presentation

Please view the following presentation on climate change science provided by Adam Schlosser. It has been divided into 4 parts for easier downloading. Once you open the file in Powerpoint, you can start the slide show from the beginning and the presentation should play with Adam Schlosser's narrative.

Climate Change Science Lecture: Part I Climate Change Science Lecture: Part II Climate Change Science Lecture: Part III Climate Change Science Lecture: Part IV

List of Lectures to View (narrated PowerPoint presentations – trimmed to 15 minutes for easy download)

\*New Addition: Self Assessment Quiz (small set of T/F and multiple choice questions based on readings and lecture to highlight points in the



#### Group Discussion Question

DUE: November 2nd

After completing the readings and viewing the presentation, please visit your discussion group and respond to the following discussion questions:

Group Discussion Questions Material Questions participants will answer in their small group discussion boards

- 1) You require information from weather forecasts and climate predictions to make a decision. Knowing that no model is perfect, would you prefer to consider; only one model deemed "the best"; a small collection of "better" models; or the entire collection of models (knowing they all contain some degree of "truth")? Why?
- 2) Given your response in 1) upon what basis would you evaluate reliability of the model(s) that you have chosen? Are you confident that all the model data you have comprehensively span the uncertainty of your required forecast/prediction?
- 3) You have been asked to conduct a climate change analysis and choose a set of GCMs. Your boss wants you to choose GCMs that best replicate the historic climate. Provide a short paragraph on why this is or is not a good idea.
- 4) Comment on at least one other participant's post in your discussion group (Due November 4th).

# A Look at the Course Website: Example of Group Discussion Board

#### This is monitored by instructor(s) to Thread Detail make sure students are understanding The Thread Detail Page provides a complete view of the Thread and its contents. Options for viewing and managing the thread are located here. More Help material correctly **↓** \_ □ Climate Change Science Discussion Question Alia Didler > Reply Total Posts: 4 Unread Posts: 0 Message Actions Select All None P. Climate Change Science Discussion Question Alia Didier ALIA Didler Yelognisse 11/2/11 12:52 PM 4 111 1 FI- RESPONSE FROM DENIS MOUZOUN 11/4/11 S:14 AM Alvasa McCluske RE: RESPONSE FROM DENIS MOUZOUN (Didler Reaction) ALIA Didler Yelognisse 11/4/11 9:12 AM RE: Climate Change Science Discussion Question Alia Didler Greg Edame 11/29/11 2:30 AM Select All None Message Actions 💝 | Collect Other Participants respond to Alia's post and create a discussion Climate Change Science Discussion Question Alia Didler > Author: ALIA Didler Yelognisse 23 (Your views: 9) Posted Date: Wednesday, November 2, 2011 12:52:32 PM EDT Wednesday, November 2, 2011 12:52:52 PM EDI Alia's Answer to a Discussion **Ouestion** I would prefer to use the entire collection of models. As stated in the question all models contain some degree of "truth". And I can add that some model contain a degree of truth not captured by others. All models are based on a set on assumption and modeling strategies. Some can better predict for a given time period and for a given region than others. Even we can cannot be sure that using all model will nearly cancel out theur error, many studies have demonstrated that even adding a poor model can improve a prediction (Knutti, 2010). I respond that I will choose all models. Howether if their number is so great I can use a strategy to select a representative number given the region on which I need my forecasts. Some model will perform well in predicting information for some regions than others. One strategy that I can use to select the "best" and evaluate the reliability of there is to rank all models in terms of their capacity to reproduce correctly historically data. For that purpose I can use the root mean square error (RMSE) or the sum of squared error of prediction using past information. And select the model with RMSE or SSE less than a given value. I'm not confident that the uncertainty is spanned. I think that it is almost impossible to comprehensively span the uncertainty of required for forecast/prediction. We just try to achieve an acceptable level of confidence. Using the selected models I think that it is almost impossible to comprehensively span the uncertainty of required for forecast/prediction. We just try to achieve an acceptable level of confidence. Using the selected models I think are the best and using appropriate aggregation method I can achieve this acceptable confidence level. Models are mostly built on historic data and are then used for prediction. So how can we be confident on the prediction of a model? One simplest way is to rely on its ability to replicates historic data with a minimum of error. With this argument it is better to use a set GCMs which replicate historic data and conclude that the boss idea is good. Howether I don't think so and can argue that all models have a part of truth which can be very helpful in improving the quality of prediction when added to the others. Sometimes one set of model can perform well in a time period because they consider well a particular event which others does not do but have other strengths. A recent study conducted by Reifen and Tourni (2009) have shown that there is no evidence that past performance- based model selection will deliver better results than the entire model.

Climate Change Science Discussion Question Alia Didler >

## What do participants get from course?

- Latest information/ideas on climate change from leading experts in the different disciplines
- Access to all the papers and lecturers to use in their own teaching/research.
- Learn where to get data and further information that was not covered.
- Gain new colleagues through their group discussion boards and final group projects.
- Access to a network of past graduates of the course
- Certificate of Participation

## **AERC Perspective**

## Why an AERC course on climate change?

- AERC's network system
- Enhances collaboration between researchers with similar interests
- Maximizes reach Geographic dispersion of researchers, busy with their daily work
- Ease of 'buy-in' from policy makers
- Presently no dedicated material within AERC's training network
- Create mass interest and understanding
- Build a research agenda for CC work

### **Obstacles**

- Technology and technical
- Background of researchers and 'follow-through'
- Time allocation both daily and total time allocation. Ideal would be AERC framework participation
- Capacity constraints Most research units have quite a few staff
- Financial
- Communication (including single language researchers with limited english language skills)
- Remoteness

### Course Sessions Offered

- First session had 28 participants with 2 weeks online 1 week (economics) face to face in Cape Town
- Second and third sessions had ~20 participants with all 3 weeks online

## **Choosing Participants**

- AERC network
- Variety of disciplines
- Variety of locations
  - 17 different countries in first session



### Assessment of the course

- Interest was/is very high
- Clearly very successful 25 of the applicants to follow-on call for research, applied
- Several proposals have been received within AERC's other research windows
- CC work has been included as a plenary session topic for the continent-wide AERC Conference
- Participants evaluations generally highly positive
- Most potential participants are willing to invest time to learn the material
- Academics find it useful as a way to organise themselves to teach the course or similar courses

### Student Success Rate

- From initial sign up to full completion of course had ~2/3 participants complete the course
  - Drop out reasons
    - Illness
    - Family emergencies,
    - Other work too busy out in field
  - Some did complete coursework in following session

### What Past Participants Are Saying...

"This was my first time to attend the online course, the communications and logistics were very efficient, making it easy for learners."

"The instructors were very useful and gave meaningful insights in all the questions addressed to them. In fact, they gave all known sources for the relevant materials on the topic where the question was raised. I was impressed."





"Thank you for giving me the opportunity to learn more about climate change. The course has broaden my horizon as far as climate change is concerned."

"The course content was very useful to me. I have learned a lot form it, and I recommend other people with interest on climate change to do the course."

## How are Participants Using Material...

- On a team working with the local authority on climate change impacts on health in urban areas
- For a PhD proposal
- Writing a paper

Using it in teaching master's course "Agriculture Policy and Trade"

Jonathan Quartey

As literature for publishing a paper.

In workshop presentations

## Main keys to success

- Quick response time to participants for technical issues
- Requiring discussion (comments on other posts)
- Feedback and interaction with experts
- Engaging and high quality materials

### What could be done better?

- Timing
- Course detail generic
- Assessment of cohorts differentiation
- Follow-up activities to incentivise research or other academic/practical work

## **Future of Course**

## Why offer this course for fee?

- There is a need for this type of course: past participants have gained a lot from the course and highly recommend it to others. We have gathered a set of comprehensive material to give one a rich background in climate change covering multiple aspects of the topic (science, biophysical, and economic)
- By requiring a small fee, it provides motivation, credibility, and commitment to the students while allowing us to continue to offer the course.

### ICliCS to take over course

ICliCs will be the institute that will take over the online course with the ability to take in course fees, pay instructors/experts, and provide future development of the course.

## **Next Steps**

- Minor editing of course content
- Review of economic section
- Advertising
  - Audience of academics: teachers and researchers
  - Using UNU–WIDER network
  - Using AERC network
  - Universities
  - Past Participants

## Thank you

## Extra Slides

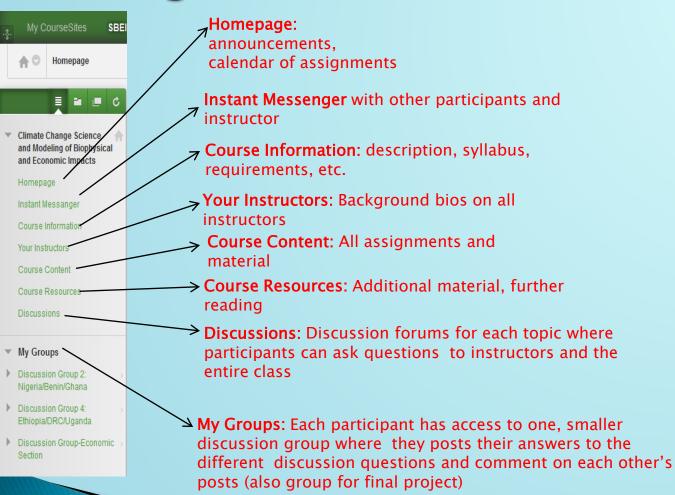
## How are Participants Using Material...

- "In Zambia the country has just come out of erection, in September 2011. I have been trying to find a route to the government bodies who can make use of the information gained from the course but because of no permanent staff in many offices, I am waiting for the dust to settle, so to say. On a positive note the CBU is carrying out a project with the local authority on Climate Change impacts on health in urban areas. I am part of the team."
- "I have been fortunate enough to use the material from the course while writing my PhD proposal. Hopefully the project will be approved and I will use the material further over the next 3 years."
- "I am working on my paper entitled" Effects of Climate Change on Agriculture in Swaziland. This paper will be proposed to different international journals for publication in 2012. The course material is one of the sources of the paper draft. I just incorporated the climate change mitigation and adaptation policies into my master's course syllabus for the Spring semester 2012. The course title is "Agricultural Policy and Trade". I do believe that your course syllabus has equipped with all necessary tools for my teaching and publications purpose in this field."
- I have used the material "as literature for my research papers. The materials were up to date, as most of the study materials were references less than 2 years old."
- I have used the material "in Workshop presentations. The materials were explicit and easy for the audience to understand."

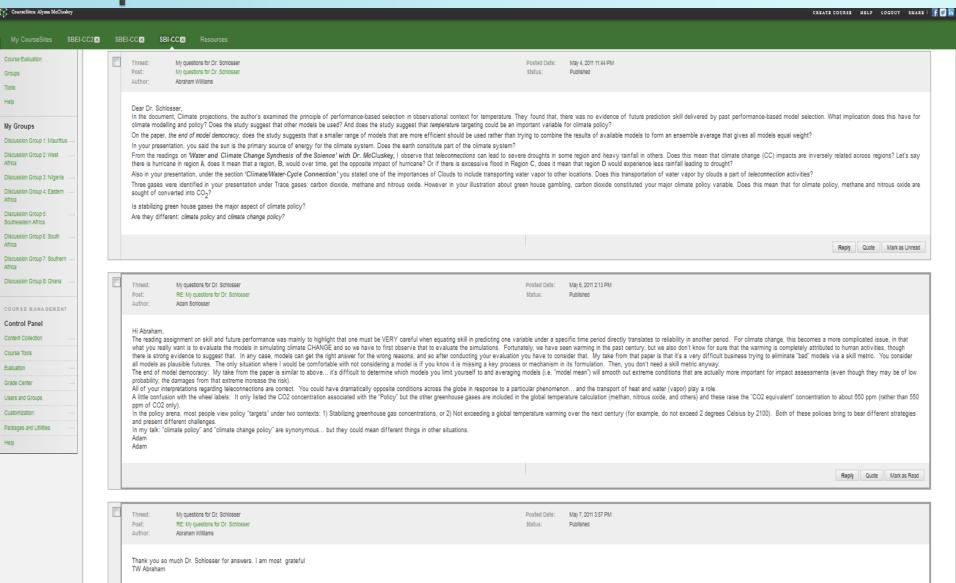
## What do participants get from course?

- Participants get the latest information/ideas on climate change from leading experts in the different disciplines (i.e. not just one lecturer covering all material, but specific experts from each topic) This is important for a topic with many different view points and constantly changing ideas.
- Participants have access to all the papers and lecturers to use in their own teaching/research. They also learn where to get data and further information that was not covered.
- Participants gain new colleagues through their group discussion boards and final group projects. This networking is important in this specialized field of study.
- Participants get access to a network of past graduates of the course that are involved in climate change research where ideas and latest happenings in climate change are shared.
- Participants receive a Certificate of Participation if they complete all the tasks of the course.

## A Look at the Course Website: Navigation



# Topic Discussion Board from Expert



# Topic Discussion Board from Expert

