

## **PSYC185: Psychology of the climate crisis, Winter 2023**

Prof Adam Aron - 3rd January 2023

**Overview:** Without substantial cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, global heating will have increasingly devastating impacts on the biosphere and will increasingly disrupt organized human existence within the next few decades. This class focuses on how global heating arose and the effects it has, why there is so little action by decision-makers, why some people are still skeptical about the scientific facts and the need to respond, and what kinds of actions there are still time for us to take. It discusses the technical, political and social prospects for a just renewable energy transition, and the critical importance of a strong social mobilization of activists and advocates to impel decision-makers to achieve it.

**Content:** The class is based around a book which straddles history, physical science, political science, political economy, psychology, sociology, policy and technical aspects of the renewable energy transition. About 20% of the book is psychology. About 50% of the other readings are psychology.

### **Learning Objectives:**

1. Learn the facts of global heating, understand the economic/political/psychological blocks to action, and the central importance of social movements in impelling decision-makers to leave fossil fuels in the ground; learn the facts about the kind of technical/political/social program that would be necessary to do so.
2. Develop sophistication in thinking about the complex issues of a just transition, such as the issues around the need for new mining, the hope and pitfalls of technology, the promise and failure of international treaties, and the prospects of a transition under capitalism.
3. By studying and discussing empirical papers, appreciate the role of social science, and psychology in particular, in understanding the climate crisis and in hastening social change.

**Details of Course Credit/Evaluation:** **Removed here**

**Course Reader/Textbook:** Get the course textbook: [Climate Crisis: Science, Impacts, Psychology, Social Movements and Justice](#) by Adam R Aron, 2022, Cambridge University Press

Week	Tuesday Class/Lecture	Thursday Class with Group Discussion	Readings
Part 1: Background			
1 (01/10)	History	Understanding the Paris Agreement and Prospects for Internationally-Binding Climate Policy	<p><i>Tuesday:</i> Introduction Chapter: Aron Chapter 1: Aron Chapter 8, Market Solutions section, page 210 to 213 only</p> <p><i>Thursday:</i> <a href="https://zcomm.org/znetarticle/voluntary-international-law-and-the-paris-agreement/">https://zcomm.org/znetarticle/voluntary-international-law-and-the-paris-agreement/</a>  <a href="https://qz.com/2086578/is-the-paris-climate-agreement-legally-binding">https://qz.com/2086578/is-the-paris-climate-agreement-legally-binding</a></p>
2 (01/17)	Science	Critical evaluation of Net Zero.	<p><i>Tuesday:</i> Chapter 2: Aron <i>Thursday:</i> <a href="https://theconversation.com/climate-scientists-concept-of-net-zero-is-a-dangerous-trap-157368">https://theconversation.com/climate-scientists-concept-of-net-zero-is-a-dangerous-trap-157368</a></p> <p>Chapter 8 Aron, Geoengineering section, pages 205 to 209 only.</p>
3 (01/24)	Impacts	Emotions elicited by climate fiction, and psychological studies of emotion and climate change.	<p><i>Tuesday:</i> Chapter 3: Aron <i>Thursday:</i> Kim Stanley Robinson Chapter 1 PDF  Chapman et al. 2017 Nature Climate Change.</p>
4 (01/31)	Capitalism	<b>MIDTERM</b> (5.00 to 6.20pm)	<p><i>Tuesday:</i> Chapter 4: Aron <i>Thursday:</i> None</p>
Part II: From Skepticism to Belief			
5 (02/07)	Skepticism	Psychology Empirical #1: Longitudinal sampling shows how climate change beliefs change with political events	<p><i>Tuesday:</i> Chapter 4: Aron <i>Thursday:</i> Jenkins-Smith et al. 2020 Nature Climate Change</p>
6 (02/14)	Science Comm.	Psychology Empirical #2: Using prebunking videos to try to inoculate people to misinformation.	<p><i>Tuesday:</i> Chapter 6: Aron <i>Thursday:</i>  <i>Thursday:</i></p>

			Roozenbeek et al. 2022 Science Advances
7 (02/21)	Risk Perceptions	Psychology Empirical #3: How participating in collective action might prevent climate anxiety from becoming a mental health problem	<p><i>Tuesday:</i> Chapter 7: Aron</p> <p><i>Thursday:</i> Schwarz et al. 2022 Current Psychology</p>
Part III: From Belief to Action			
8 (02/28)	Justice	Coming Clean Documentary: How Climate Justice Principles Pertain to Climate Action in the UC System	<p><i>Tuesday:</i> Chapter 8: Aron</p> <p><i>Thursday:</i> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1N_dq9J7mDY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1N_dq9J7mDY</a></p> <p>Task Force on the Climate Crisis, UCSD <a href="https://senate.ucsd.edu/media/446537/climate-crisis-task-force-report-revised-07-16-20-final.pdf">https://senate.ucsd.edu/media/446537/climate-crisis-task-force-report-revised-07-16-20-final.pdf</a></p>
9 (03/07)	Technical and Political/Social Framework	Exploring what kinds of technical, economic and behavioral actions might cut emissions. Plus EnROADS simulator.	<p><i>Tuesday:</i> Chapter 9: Aron</p> <p><i>Thursday:</i> Huber: <a href="https://www.thenation.com/article/environment/mat-t-huber-interview/">https://www.thenation.com/article/environment/mat-t-huber-interview/</a></p> <p>Hickel et al. 2022 Nature Energy</p>
10 (03/14)	Social Movements	Psychology Empirical #4: What are the psychological factors underlying whether people join collective action on climate?	<p><i>Tuesday:</i> Chapter 10: Aron</p> <p><i>Thursday:</i> Castiglione et al. 2022 Royal Society Open Science</p>
<b>EXTRA CREDIT DUE:</b> 03/17 Friday 11.59pm [upload to CANVAS]			
<b>FINAL:</b> 03/23, 7pm to 9.00 pm			

### **Chapters and Articles not listed as URL above**

- Aron, A. R. 2023. *The Climate Crisis: Science, Impacts, Policy, Psychology, Justice, Social Movements*. Cambridge University Press.
- Castiglione, Anna, Cameron Brick, Stefanie Holden, Ella Miles-Urdan, and Adam R Aron. 2022. "Discovering the psychological building blocks underlying climate action—a longitudinal study of real-world activism." *Royal Society Open Science* 9 (6): 210006.
- Chapman, Daniel A, Brian Lickel, and Ezra M Markowitz. 2017. "Reassessing emotion in climate change communication." *Nature Climate Change* 7 (12): 850-852.
- Hickel, Jason, Paul Brockway, Giorgos Kallis, Lorenz Keyßer, Manfred Lenzen, Aljoša Slameršak, Julia Steinberger, and Diana Ürge-Vorsatz. 2021. "Urgent need for post-growth climate mitigation scenarios." *Nature Energy* 6 (8): 766-768.
- Jenkins-Smith, Hank C, Joseph T Ripberger, Carol L Silva, Deven E Carlson, Kuhika Gupta, Nina Carlson, Ani Ter-Mkrtchyan, and Riley E Dunlap. 2020. "Partisan asymmetry in temporal stability of climate change beliefs." *Nature Climate Change* 10 (4): 322-328.
- Robinson, K.S. 2020 Chapter 1. *The Ministry for the Future*. Orbit Books.
- Roozenbeek, Jon, Sander Van Der Linden, Beth Goldberg, Steve Rathje, and Stephan Lewandowsky. 2022. "Psychological inoculation improves resilience against misinformation on social media." *Science advances* 8 (34): eabo6254.
- Schwartz, Sarah EO, Laelia Benoit, Susan Clayton, McKenna F Parnes, Lance Swenson, and Sarah R Lowe. 2022. "Climate change anxiety and mental health: Environmental activism as buffer." *Current Psychology*: 1-14.