GEOG 2030 3.00 The End of the Earth As We Know It: Introduction to global environmental change (enrollment 90-120)

Course director: Dr. Robin Roth, Associate Professor, Department of Geography

This course is offered by the Faculty of Liberal and Professional Studies, Department of Geography. It was transitioned into a blended format in the Summer of 2012 and has since been offered in that format twice. 60% of what was formerly in-class lecture and activities has been transferred to an online environment. Each week students are responsible for watching approximately 90 minutes of assigned online lectures/videos (2-4 ranging in length from 20-45 minutes) and reading content prior to attending an 80 minute tutorial (N=30). Students are provided a set of questions to answer as they review the online content in preparation for tutorial discussion and participation in an online forum. In class tutorials are run by a TA and designed to clarify, elucidate and extend the online and reading material. The course director attends a portion of these tutorials at least every second week to answer questions and participate in discussion. The online activities along with the in-class tutorial elements of the course allow students to meet three of the four learning objectives of the course: explore environmental change as both a physical and social phenomenon; apply key perspectives on and approaches to environmental change and think critically about the role of power and ethics of international climate change negotiations. The fourth learning objective of the course; to investigate how the physical and social aspects of global environmental change manifest themselves differently in different places, is met through group work. Students are assigned to ‘learning groups’ of 4-6 students consisting of students enrolled in the class including, in some years, refugee students taking the course online from Thailand. These learning groups work together on a series of assignments throughout the semester aimed at increasing their understanding of how particular countries experience, contribute to, and address global environmental change. The challenges of group work are pronounced given the online nature of the communication but, in the context of this course, the exercise serves to illustrate some of the challenges faced in the international community when addressing climate change: difficulties communicating across distance as well as difference as well as the ‘free rider’ syndrome in common property management. The group assignment develops international/intercultural competencies (in years when refugee students also take the course) as well as technical competencies, online communication abilities and project management skills. The course as a whole helps students to develop skills in reading critically, synthesizing and presenting case study material, working effectively in groups, writing concisely and effectively and critical personal reflection and assessment.

To see Dr. Robin Roth, Associate Professor, Department of Geography describe her experiences and lessons learned from adapting her course format go to http://youtu.be/VXlbC9S4fFU?t=5m12s