



Cunningham

USF Engineering Class: The Science and Politics of Global Warming

Physical Science/General Education Class offers undergraduates opportunity to form and support their own opinions on greenhouse gas emissions

TAMPA, Fla. (August 9, 2010) The College of Engineering at USF is offering a two-part course on the effects of greenhouse gas emissions. Taught by [Assistant Professor Jeffrey Cunningham](#), “Global Warming: Science and Politics of a Contemporary Issue” is divided into two distinct interdisciplinary themes.

The first half explores the scientific data, including historical temperature-keeping, sea level changes and shrinking glaciers. Presented in a non-technical and unbiased manner, the science aspect focuses on greenhouse gas emissions (such as carbon dioxide) and if this data supports the theory that human activities are the cause.

The second half covers the legislative methods of environmental issues, including how legislation is introduced and the process it takes to become law. In conclusion, students will be asked to present their own opinions on global warming, backing it up with the scientific evidence and political strategies covered in the class.

“The idea of this class is not so much to convey information,” explains Dr. Cunningham. “I am trying to get students to think about global warming. It has been described as the greatest threat facing our society today. And it has been suggested that the notion of man-made global warming is the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American public.”

The Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering offers several classes on global climate change. However, his class is unique in its 50/50 interdisciplinary approach.

In describing the course, Cunningham says, “I think there are two big reasons to take this class. The first is the combination of science and politics. The second reason is the ability of the students to make sense of a really complex topic.”

The airwaves are saturated with talk show hosts and the 24-hour news cycle bombards viewers with talking heads taking opposing views. Lawmakers point to record snowfalls in Washington DC as a

rebuttal to global warming. NOAA recently released information confirming June 2010 as the hottest month on record since records were kept starting in the 1880s.

By taking this class, Prof. Cunningham clearly states that “Students can identify what makes sense in an argument they hear, and what does not. This class gives them the ability to make their own informed decisions about a very complex topic. And I think that is a very valuable skill. Not only for the topic of global climate change, but for any complex topic that the students will encounter in their lifetime.”

Cunningham continues, “The student does not have to agree with me. If the student can formulate a coherent and substantiated argument to support his or her opinion - that is the success of this class.”

Students can check out the [syllabus](#) for more detailed information on the course. Professor Cunningham received his MS and PhD from Stanford and teaches civil and environmental engineering. He is currently researching carbon capture and sequestration and its application to Florida coal-fired power plants.

The University of South Florida is one of the nation's top 63 public research universities and one of only 25 public research universities nationwide with very high research activity that is designated as community engaged by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. USF was awarded \$380.4 million in research contracts and grants in FY 2008/2009. The university offers 232 degree programs at the undergraduate, graduate, specialist and doctoral levels, including the doctor of medicine. The USF System has a \$1.8 billion annual budget, an annual economic impact of \$3.2 billion, and serves more than 47,000 students on institutions/campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg, Sarasota-Manatee and Lakeland. USF is a member of the Big East Athletic Conference.

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