New Interdisciplinary course/workshop
Tuesdays 3-5pm, Spring 2009
Part of the Cornell Climate Change Forum,
Sponsored by the Cornell Center for a Sustainable Future,
with support from the Colleges of Engineering and
Agriculture and Life Sciences

Climate Change Controversies

Join world-renowned scholars in a joint faculty-graduate student seminar/workshop on climate change controversies. The goal of this seminar is to address the important questions of what we should do about climate change and how. What level of climate change is sufficiently safe? What level of CO2 is a feasible goal? What are the equity issues – social, international and intergenerational -- associated with climate change policy? What ways of assessing costs and benefits are economically, ecologically and ethically defensible? What kinds of policies and technologies are best suited to meeting the greenhouse challenge? How will social, economic and political processes, national and international, shape the response?

Answering these questions requires scholars and stakeholders from many different backgrounds. In this seminar/workshop, leading figures in the global response to climate change will come to Cornell to interact with a small group of faculty and graduate students (<25 total, half graduate students). We expect half of the meetings to be lead by the visitors to the program. Each will also give a public lecture (typically on Monday) and will be available for informal interaction with members of the seminar/workshop and the Cornell community as a whole.

Requirements: Faculty are expected to attend the sessions of the invited speakers which are every other week. Faculty willing to make this commitment should send a message describing their interest to Richard Miller (Philosophy, rwm5), Natalie Mahowald (Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, nmm63), or Philip McMichael (Development Sociology, pdm1).

Graduate students are expected to meet every week, complete relevant readings, and take part in discussions. We hope for graduate student participation in the hosting of the visitors, as well. Written work will partly involve collaboration among graduate students taking the course in a joint paper discussing the best response to the challenge of global warming. Each graduate student will also submit a paper on a specific aspect of the problem, presumably reflecting his or her contribution to the joint paper. A faculty participant from a relevant discipline will help each student with the term paper and provide the grade and comments. We also hope to put together an annotated list of important readings on the climate controversy for subsequent classes to use. The course is listed as Philosophy 643: Social and Political Philosophy (R. Miller.) It is for 4 credit hours, and may be taken S/U.

Graduate students interested in taking the course and willing to make these commitments should send a short statement of interest and background, including departmental affiliation, to Prof. Mahowald, Prof. McMichael or Prof. Miller. Selection from applications will be guided by a goal of diverse and fruitful interdisciplinary collaboration.