

Course title: Climate and Health - Spring 2025

Course Director: Sheila Modi, MD; Anusha Govind, MD

Faculty Sponsor: Sheila Modi, MD; Anusha Govind, MD

Department: Internal medicine, Infectious diseases

Student Liaison: Karen Lu, Abirami Krishnamurthy

Requirements:

- **Minimum participants for course to be conducted** - 4
- **Maximum number of students per course (if applicable)** - N/A

Rationale:

Our students are on the forefront of the Anthropocene Era; the era marked by human impacts on climate change. This course will be an introductory elective for our students to learn about the science behind climate change and the far-reaching adverse health effects this will have on their future patients. Clinicians must understand these effects to best serve our patients in a changing world. There are numerous adverse effects of climate change on human health and healthcare delivery, and we will be exploring these effects in each lecture. The lectures will be delivered by UT Southwestern faculty and faculty from Texas Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR), and we will also have guest speakers from community organizations. Some weeks will consist of a journal / book club format with pre-readings assigned or a documentary/film session with discussion. In this elective, students will learn tools and skills they can implement personally and how to be effective advocates at the local and state level.

Objectives:

- 1) Students will learn the science behind climate change and understand the basic tenets of natural and human causes that worsen global warming
- 2) Students will be able to identify adverse effects of climate change in their patients' health in various aspects from infections, pulmonary health, and nutrition
- 3) Students will learn the exaggeration of existing healthcare disparities in populations affected adversely by climate change
- 4) Students will learn how to appropriately take a history on a patient while addressing environmental exposures and concerns that could be contributing to their concerns
- 5) Students will be able to list concrete changes that they can implement in their own lives to help decrease their individual carbon footprint
- 6) Students will learn the tools and skills to advocate in the local, state, and national level to impact healthcare practices affected by climate change

Format:

Didactics as listed below, small group discussion on documentaries/films/journals/book chapters

Sessions will be a hybrid of in-person and virtual. All sessions will be on Tuesdays from 12-12:50 pm.

Student Evaluation:

Grades will be pass/fail. Attendance is required to receive credit for the course. Students will be expected to complete a small project to present at the end of the course (see below).

Course Evaluation:

Grading will be pass/fail. To receive transcript acknowledgment, students must:

- attend 10 of 14 participant hours
- complete the online REDCap course evaluation form

Project ideas:

Students may choose from the following ideas for projects listed below or propose an alternate project to be completed and presented during the last class session. Projects may be done individually or in small groups of 2-3 students.

1) Write a 3-paragraph essay:

-A reflection piece of what your baseline knowledge was about this topic, what you have learned during the course, and what you will be taking forward in your clinical practice.

-A more in-depth discussion focusing on one of the topics covered.

2) Patient education: Develop educational material (flyer/brochure) geared towards patients to mitigate environmental impacts on health.

3) Student education: Develop educational material geared towards students (could be for elementary, secondary, college, or medical students) regarding topics involving the impact of climate change on health.

4) Get involved in an advocacy activity and then discuss your involvement with the class