

SES 5518
Climate Migration
2024-2025 Spring
Department of Urban Planning and Design

Meeting Times and Location

Please refer to [My.Harvard](#) for the latest information on times and locations. When the course schedule is finalized, meeting information will be displayed here.

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[Current Semester Office Hours](#)

Course Description

Climate displacement is already a reality, with hundreds of thousands of people internally displaced and others crossing international borders. This will only grow over the coming decades. Climate migration is not new, and it shares many common features with other forms of migration, but in the current moment it presents unique challenges given the pervasiveness of environmental disruption.

We will grapple with this condition in two complementary parts of the seminar. We will explore foundations in the field through readings and discussion of major topics including how the framing of climate migration affects current debates, the spectrum of relocation from immobility to voluntary relocation, whether and how migration serves as adaptation, and planning for receiving communities.

We will put these concepts into practice through a project for the Climigration Network (CN), examining opportunities for Indigenous reclamation of land ownership, stewardship, or management (land back) to serve climate-related relocation. Students will research and synthesize domestic and international case studies of land back and analyze implications for climate migration, in dialogue with CN and experts in the field. For the final project, students will create a professional quality presentation recommending strategic opportunities for land back and relocation which CN and their partners can use as a resource.

Through the two complementary parts of the course, students will have an opportunity to work at the cutting-edge of practice while engaging thoughtfully with the full complexity of underlying climate migration challenges.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and analyze major concepts related to climate migration and articulate how they apply in practice
- Identify and synthesize promising practices in a field to inform future practice
- Engage with an NGO to produce a deliverable that is responsive to their needs
- Clearly communicate the results of original, applied research to an external client

Weekly Schedule and Topics

W	Date	Topic	Due
1	1/28	Topic: Situating Migration, Course and Project Overview	
		<i>Project: Intro to Climigration Network (CN)</i>	
2	2/4	Topic: Situating Migration	
		<i>Project: Ward Lyles Guest Lecture; Review Domestic Cases</i>	
3	2/11	Topic: Migration as Adaptation	
		<i>Project: Shanasia Sylman Guest Lecture; Domestic Cases - Determine Selection Criteria (CN optional)</i>	
4	2/18	Topic: Spectrums of Relocation	
		<i>Project: Eric Henson & Houma Nation; Guest Lecture; Domestic Cases - Propose and Agree on Cases</i>	
5	2/25	Topic: Habitability/Livability Debates	

		<i>Project: Meade Krosby Guest Lecture; Jessica Hensch Guest Reviewer; Domestic Cases - Develop Analysis Framework (CN optional)</i>	
6	3/4	Topic: Immobility	
		<i>Project: Develop Case Studies</i>	
7	3/11	Topic: Case Study Synthesis	
		<i>Project: Case Study Presentations (CN)</i>	Midterm Presentation
8	3/18	Spring Recess - No Class	
9	3/25	Topic: Borders and Migration	
		<i>Project: Review International Cases</i>	
10	4/1	Topic: Climate Migration Law and Policy	
		<i>Project: Review International Cases</i>	
11	4/8	Topic: TBD	
		<i>Project: Compare International Cases, Discuss, Develop Final Framework (CN optional); Jessica Hensch Guest Reviewer</i>	
12	4/15	Topic: Planning for Receiving Communities	
		<i>Project: Develop Final Analysis</i>	
13	4/22	Topic: Final Synthesis	
		<i>Project: Final Presentation: Land Back and Relocation: Ways Forward</i>	Final Presentation
	4/29	Blog Posts Due	Blog Posts

Assignments

The assignments in this course are in support of an external client, the Climigration Network (CN). During the course, we will also explore major topics in climate migration to provide a broader framework for understanding emerging practices and the context for this specific project. For each session that we will be covering a climate migration topic, students should plan to divide their time between the topical readings so that they are prepared to engage in a discussion and doing the project-related research.

From their website: “The Climigration Network brings community leaders and practitioners together to generate equitable, just, community-led approaches to relocation for people most affected by the worsening impacts of climate change – those who are now finding it impossible to live safely in place.” CN has recently undergone a strategic planning process, developing a vision for relocation processes rooted in local self-determination and establishing focus areas and goals

to realize
progress toward this vision by 2030.

Through partnering with communities, **questions have emerged for applied research:**

- How can the repatriation/rematriation of Indigenous land serve the interests of Indigenous-led relocation?
- How can such processes provide land to relocate to and culturally relevant stewardship of land that has been relocated from?
- How can this form of climate migration serve as adaptation?

Students will engage in a group research process to constructively answer these questions for CN and their partners, creating a useful deliverable which will serve as a reference as CN builds out this capacity with their partners.

Assignment 1: Research Domestic Cases (15%)

The research will be developed through the steps outlined here, however this will be flexible in response to CN's feedback and students' assessment of valuable directions to pursue.

- Review Landscape of Domestic Cases (prepare for class on 2/4)
 - Identify and document a broad range of cases in class spreadsheet for initial review
- Determine Selection Criteria for Deeper Dive (discuss in class 2/11)
- Prepare Summaries of Selected Cases for Discussion (prepare for class on 2/18)
 - Evaluate and agree on cases (in class 2/18)
- Develop Analysis Framework (in class 2/25)
- Develop Case Study Content (prepare draft for discussion in class on 3/4)
 - Based on agreed upon framework and format

Assignment 2: Domestic Case Study Presentations (20%) Due 3/11

This will be the first presentation to CN staff. Through the research process, we will discuss which cases to highlight and the most effective way to structure presentations to engage with CN. The goal is to facilitate discussion about how these case studies can provide a useful resource for CN and their partners. The number of slides and length of presentation will be determined based on the number of students/groups in the course and the number of cases identified through the research process. Presentations will be formatted using a template created in collaboration with the TA.

Assignment 3: Research International Cases and Synthesize (15%)

The research will be developed through the steps outlined here, however this will be flexible in response to CN's feedback and students' assessment of valuable directions to pursue.

- Review Landscape of International Cases (prepare for class on 3/25)
 - focus on Canada, Australia, New Zealand due to similar legal context
 - other locations may also be considered if students convince the group of their relevance
- Determine Selection Criteria (discuss in class on 3/25)
 - consider whether domestic selection criteria apply or whether these need to be revised
- Evaluate and Agree on Cases (discuss in class on 4/1)
- Prepare Comparison of International and Domestic Cases for Discussion (in class on 4/8)
 - Develop final analysis framework
- Develop Final Analysis (prepare draft for discussion on 4/15)

Assignment 4: Final Presentation: Land Back and Relocation: Strategic Opportunities (30%) Due 4/22

The final presentation to CN will serve as a resource they can use in partnership with communities. Building on the feedback from the midterm presentation and the additional research on international cases, we will discuss how to formulate a useful framework. The number of slides and length of presentation will be determined based on the number of students/groups in the course and the number of cases identified through the research process. Presentations will be formatted using a template created in collaboration with the TA.

Assignment 5: Blog Post: Land Back and Relocation (10%) Due 4/29

For CN, it is important to communicate their work and the broader implications of the land back opportunity for relocation to a wider audience. Students will write short reflections (approx. 500 words) on lessons learned from the research process and outcomes pitched to a general audience. CN may choose to post some of these reflections on their website.

Participation: 10%

This class is a collective endeavor, so students are expected to actively read and participate throughout.

Assessments

Grading

The GSD uses a pass/fail grading system that is different from most other schools at Harvard and

elsewhere. In this class, you need 60% to pass. 60-74% is a Low Pass, 75-89% is a Pass, and 90% and above is a High Pass. The majority of students will receive a Pass, and up to 25% of students will receive a High Pass. At the midterm, if you're on track to receive a Low Pass or below, I will send you a letter and we'll meet to discuss how you can improve.

Late Assignments

All assignments will be produced in groups for the external client so they will need to be on time.

Attendance

You will be expected to be present for all sessions with the external client. Beyond that, I will not be regularly taking attendance and attendance does not directly affect your grade, however it will affect your learning which could affect your grade. I do not record or permit the recording or streaming of in-class sessions. If you have to miss a class, you should discuss what you missed with a classmate.

Grading Rubrics

Asst. 1 Research Domestic Cases		
Review	Broad search captures a variety of cases from a variety of sources; summary of findings contributes to a robust in-class discussion of nexus between land back and climate migration	5
Summary	Provide a foundation to develop a cross-cutting analytical framework	5
Synthesis	Synthesis makes a strong argument for the relevance of chosen cases, connections between them, and potential for climate migration	5

Asst. 2 Domestic Case Study Presentations (Mid-term)		
Coordination	Presentation is well-coordinated between presenters and makes effective use of verbal, written, and graphic content	5
Written Communication	Well-structured, logical, memorable, convincing	5
Graphic Communication	Clear, memorable, effective use of emphasis and hierarchy (template to be developed by TA, so there is less latitude for this element)	2
Verbal	Clear, concise, compelling	5

Communication		
Client Engagement	Productive interaction with client, learns from and incorporates feedback	3

Asst. 3 Research International Cases

Review	Broad search captures a variety of cases from a variety of sources; summary of findings contributes to a robust in-class discussion of relevance of international cases	5
Summary	Provide a foundation to develop a cross-cutting analytical framework	5
Synthesis	Synthesis makes a strong argument for the relevance of chosen cases, connections between them, and especially connections between domestic and international cases, also for potential for climate migration	5

Asst. 4 Final Presentation: Land Back and Relocation

Coordination	Presentation is well-coordinated between presenters and makes effective use of verbal, written, and graphic content; professional level finish, ready to hand off to client	7
Written Communication	Well-structured, logical, memorable, convincing	7
Graphic Communication	Clear, memorable, effective use of emphasis and hierarchy (template to be developed by TA, so there is less latitude for this element)	4
Verbal Communication	Clear, concise, compelling	7
Client Engagement	Productive interaction with client	5

Asst. 5 Blog Post: Land Back and Relocation

Reflection	Demonstrates critical reflection about the project and research process	3
Voice	Accessible to general audience, avoids jargon, draws the audience in	4
Organization	Clearly structured, easy to follow, conveys a clear central	4

Case Study Resources

Land Back Resources

Chin, W. Y. (2022). "We Want Our Land Back": Returning Land to First Peoples in the Land Return Era Using the Native Land Claims Commission to Reverse Centuries of Land Dispossession. *Scholar*, 24, 335.

Farrell, J., Burow, P. B., McConnell, K., Bayham, J., Whyte, K., & Koss, G. (2021). Effects of land dispossession and forced migration on Indigenous peoples in North America. *Science*, 374(6567), eabe4943.

Glendenning, A., Nie, M., & Mills, M. (2023). (Some) Land Back... Sort of: The Transfer of Federal Public Lands to Indian Tribes since 1970. *Nat. Resources J.*, 63, 200.

Hasert, R., C. Countryman, A. Marchand., M. Poe, K. Avery, and M. Krosby. 2024. Climate Adaptation Barriers and Needs Experienced by Northwest Coastal Tribes: Key Findings from Tribal Listening Sessions. A collaborative product of the University of Washington Climate Impacts Group, the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, and Washington Sea Grant.

Jorgensen, M., & Taylor, L. (2022). Considerations for Federal and State Landback. Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development Landback Policy Briefs.

Racehorse, V., & Hohag, A. (2023). Achieving climate justice through land back: An overview of tribal dispossession, land return efforts, and practical mechanisms for #landBack. *Colo. Nat. Resources Energy & Env't L. Rev.*, 34, 175.

White, A. (2024). Private Law for Land Back. NYU School of Law, Public Law Research Paper Forthcoming, Alisa E. White, Private Law for Land Back, 51.

Case Study Resources

Domestic:

[#Landback North America StoryMap \(Sarah Deer and Ward Lyles\)](#)

[U.S. Dept of the Interior Land Buy-Back Program for Tribal Nations](#)

[NDN Land Back Resources](#)

[Sustainable Economies Law Center: Seeds of Land Return Toolkit](#)

[Legal Tools for Land Return](#)

[National Caucus of Environmental Legislators: Policy Pathways to Land Back](#)

[Resource Generation Land Reparations and Indigenous Solidarity Toolkit](#)

[Climate Change and Land Back](#)

[Indigenous Roots and Reparation Foundation](#)

[Sogororea Te' Land Trust](#)

[First Light Resource Library](#)

International:

[Land Back: A Yellowhead Institute Red Paper](#)

[Indigenous Leadership Initiative Resources](#)

[Briarpatch: Four Case Studies of Land Back in Action](#)

[Reciprocity Trusts](#)

[Australian Govt: Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation](#)

(TBC)

Readings

Books, articles and reports are available through Library Reserves on Canvas.

Week 1 - Situating Migration

Week 2 - Situating Migration

For Class:

Farbotko, C. (2022). The specter of mass climate migration across international borders: Dismantling an unscientific expectation. *One Earth*, 5(8), 841-844.

Whyte, K., L Talley, J., & D. Gibson, J. (2019). Indigenous mobility traditions, colonialism, and the anthropocene. *Mobilities*, 14(3), 319-335.

Additional Resources:

Brown, N. A. (2022). Continental land back: Managing mobilities and enacting relationalities in indigenous landscapes. *Mobilities*, 17(2), 252-268.

Lunstrum, E., & Bose, P. S. (2022). Environmental displacement in the Anthropocene. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 112(3), 644-653.

Marter-Kenyon, J. (2020). Origins and functions of climate-related relocation: An analytical review. *The Anthropocene Review*, 7(2), 159-188.

Week 3 - Migration as Adaptation***For Class:***

Szaboova, L., Adger, W. N., de Campos, R. S., Maharjan, A., Sakdapolrak, P., Sterly, H., ... & Abu, M. (2023). Evaluating migration as successful adaptation to climate change: Trade-offs in well-being, equity, and sustainability. *One Earth*, 6(6), 620-631.

Vinke, K., Bergmann, J., Blocher, J., Upadhyay, H., & Hoffmann, R. (2020). Migration as adaptation?. *Migration Studies*, 8(4), 626-634.

Additional Resources:

Gemenne, F., & Blocher, J. (2017). How can migration serve adaptation to climate change? Challenges to fleshing out a policy ideal. *The Geographical Journal*, 183(4), 336-347.

Randall, A. (2023) Resilience on the move: Migration's powerful role in creating climate resilience. Oxford: Climate Outreach.

Schraven, B., Adaawen, S., & Janoth, J. N. (2021). Migration as adaptation: Some considerations based on a literature review. *The Palgrave Handbook of Climate Resilient Societies*, 1-37.

Week 4 - Spectrums of Relocation***For Class:***

Yarina, L., & Wescoat Jr, J. L. (2023). Spectrums of Relocation: A typological framework for understanding risk-based relocation through space, time and power. *Global Environmental Change*, 79, 102650.

McLeman, R., Wrathall, D., Gilmore, E., Thornton, P., Adams, H., & Gemenne, F. (2021). Conceptual framing to link climate risk assessments and climate-migration scholarship. *Climatic Change*, 165, 1-7.

Additional Resources:

Renaud, F. G., Dun, O., Warner, K., & Bogardi, J. (2011). A decision framework for environmentally induced migration. *International Migration*, 49, e5-e29.

Week 5 - Habitability/Livability Debates

For Class:

Sterly, H., Borderon, M., Sakdapolrak, P., Adger, N., Ayanlade, A., Bah, A., ... & Zickgraf, C. (2025). Habitability for a connected, unequal and changing world. *Global Environmental Change*, 90, 102953.

Xu, C., Kohler, T. A., Lenton, T. M., Svenning, J. C., & Scheffer, M. (2020). Future of the human climate niche. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 117(21), 11350-11355.

Additional Resources:

Daoust, G., & Selby, J. (2024). Climate change and migration: A review and new framework for analysis. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, e886.

Lenton, T. M., Xu, C., Abrams, J. F., Ghadiali, A., Loriani, S., Sakschewski, B., ... & Scheffer, M. (2023). Quantifying the human cost of global warming. *Nature Sustainability*, 6(10), 1237-1247.

Paprocki, K. (2022). On viability: Climate change and the science of possible futures. *Global Environmental Change*, 73, 102487.

Selby, J., Hulme, M., & Cramer, W. (2024). There is no human climate niche. *One Earth*, 7(7), 1155-1157.

Week 6 - Immobility

For Class:

Yumagulova, L., Parsons, M., Yellow Old Woman-Munro, D., Dicken, E., Lambert, S., Vergustina, N., ... & Black, W. (2023). Indigenous perspectives on climate mobility justice and displacement-mobility-immobility continuum. *Climate and Development*, 1-18.

Zickgraf, C. (2021). Theorizing (im) mobility in the face of environmental change. *Regional Environmental Change*, 21(4), 126.

Additional Resources:

Ayeb-Karlsson, S., Baldwin, A. W., & Kniveton, D. (2022). Who is the climate-induced trapped figure?. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 13(6), e803.

Boas, I., Wiegel, H., Farbotko, C., Warner, J., & Sheller, M. (2022). Climate mobilities: Migration, im/mobilities and mobility regimes in a changing climate. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 48(14), 3365-3379.

Robins, D., Saddington, L., Boyd-Macmillan, E., Stojanovic, T., Hudson, B., & Lafortune, L. (2024). *Staying put in an era of climate change: The geographies, legalities, and public health implications of immobility*. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 15(3), e879.

Week 7 - Case Study Presentations, No Readings

Week 8 - Spring Recess, No Class

Week 9 - Borders and Migration

For Class:

Barnett, J., Farbotko, C., Kitara, T., & Aselu, B. (2024). Migration as Adaptation? The Falepili Union Between Australia and Tuvalu. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, e924.

McLeman, R. (2019). International migration and climate adaptation in an era of hardening borders. *Nature Climate Change*, 9(12), 911-918.

Additional Resources:

Boas, I., Gautam, A., & Olayiwola, A. (2023). Climate Change and Human Mobility in the Global South. In *The Palgrave Handbook of South–South Migration and Inequality* (pp. 435-453). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Mezzanotti, G., Kvalvaag, A. M., & Jarochinski Silva, J. C. (2024). From transnational to trans-Indigenous: a critical analysis of the role of categorization and everyday coloniality in Indigenous mobilities. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1-24.

Week 10 - Climate Migration Law and Policy

For Class:

International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP). (2024) Legal Action Agenda for Climate Displacement: United States, Latin America & the Caribbean.

International Organization for Migration (IOM). Institutional Strategy on Migration, Environment and Climate Change 2021–2030 For a comprehensive, evidence and rights-based approach to migration in the context of environmental degradation, climate change and disasters, for the benefit of migrants and societies. IOM, Geneva.

Additional Resources:

Behrman, S., & Kent, A. (Eds.). (2022). *Climate refugees: Global, local and critical approaches*. Cambridge University Press.

Byravan, S., & Rajan, S. C. (2022). Cross-border migration on a warming planet: A policy framework. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 13(2), e763.

Clark-Ginsberg, A., Balagna, J., & Blake, J. S. (2021). Addressing climate migration: a review of national policy approaches.

Roderick, W., Garg, S., Morel, L. M., Brick, K., & Powers, M. (2021). Cities, Climate and Migration: The Role of Cities at the Climate–Migration Nexus. *C40 Cities and Mayors Migration*

Council.

Rosignoli, F. (2022). Environmental justice for climate refugees. Routledge.

Waters, M. C. (2024). Preparing for climate migration and integration: a policy and research agenda. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1-20.

Week 11 - TBD

Week 12 - Planning for Receiving Communities

For Class:

C40 Cities, MMC, Baruch College, Scottish Government. (2024). Future Urban Landscapes: Climate Migration Projections in Cities.

Teicher, H. M., & Marchman, P. (2024). Integration as adaptation: advancing research and practice for inclusive climate receiving communities. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 90(1), 30-49.

Additional Resources:

Morris, E., Cousins, J. J., & Feldpausch-Parker, A. (2023). Transformation and recognition: Planning just climate havens in New York State. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 146, 57-65.

Bower, E., Harrington-Abrams, R., & Priem, B. (2024). Complicating “community” engagement: Reckoning with an elusive concept in climate-related planned relocation. *Global Environmental Change*, 88, 102913.

Lieberknecht, K., & Mueller, E. J. (2023). Planning for equitable climate relocation: Gaps in knowledge and a proposal for future directions. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 38(2), 229-244.

Rosengärtner, S. K., De Sherbinin, A. M., & Stojanov, R. (2023). Supporting the agency of cities as climate migration destinations. *International Migration*, 61(5), 98-115.

Week 13 - Final Presentations, No Readings

GSD Resources

[Frances Loeb Library](#)

[Ask a Design Librarian](#) [Research Consultations](#) [Research Guides](#) [Writing Services](#) [Mapping & GIS](#)

Digital Media Workshops (DMW)

Tutorials on a range of fundamental and emerging design technologies and techniques serve as a platform

for interdisciplinary learning, sharing, and serendipity. All workshops are hybrid; recordings of past workshops are on Canvas.

[GSD Fabrication Lab](#)

The GSD FabLab is an extension of the classroom and studio environment, enabling learning and design through making with a variety of processes and materials. Online training is required of all users.

Academic Coaching

Sessions are available to any student interested in developing or improving learning strategies, time management, and organizational skills. Students can book a virtual or in-person appointment with Sara Morrison, M.S. CLC, by emailing sara_morrison@gsd.harvard.edu or using [MS Bookings](#).

GSD Policies

[GSD Student Handbook](#)

The Student Handbook includes all student-facing policies concerning degree requirements, registration, enrollment, attendance, the GSD grading system, student finances, copyright, academic and personal conduct, and privacy.

[Generative AI in Teaching and Learning at the GSD](#)

This page provides policies, information, and guidance for courses regarding using generative AI in teaching and learning at the GSD. Note that all existing policies regarding the use and citation of references, including any aid received by human agents and non-human tools apply to the use of generative AI.

[GSD Community Values, Rights, and Responsibilities](#)

This statement explains the GSD's community values (excellence, respect, honesty, accountability) and the rights and responsibilities of GSD community members in upholding these values.

Disability Accommodations

Our goal is to remove barriers for students with disabilities related to inaccessible elements of instruction or design in this course. If reasonable accommodations are necessary to provide access, please contact accessibility@gsd.harvard.edu. Accommodations do not alter the fundamental requirements of the course and are not retroactive. Students should request accommodations as early as possible since they may take time to implement.

Land Acknowledgement

Harvard University is located on the traditional and ancestral land of the Massachusett, the original inhabitants of what is now known as Boston and Cambridge. We pay respect to the people of the Massachusett Tribe, past and present, and honor the land itself which remains sacred to the Massachusett People. [Harvard University Native American Program](#)

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