RUTGERS-New Brunswick
Byrne Family First-Year Seminars
Fall 2012
Robin Leichenko, Associate Professor
Department of Geography
email: robin.leichenko@rutgers.edu
phone: 848-445-4056

TITLE: Don’t Blame Cities for Climate Change

MEETING TIME: Thursdays, periods 4 and 5 (1:15-4:15)

LOCATION: B-120 Lucy Stone Hall, Livingston Campus

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: Urban areas are often portrayed as key sources of environmental pollution and major contributors to global climate change. Yet urban regions and urban lifestyles can also be highly efficient, and many cities have initiated innovative programs to reduce their carbon emissions. This seminar explores the role of cities as both sources and solutions for global climate change. Topics to be discussed include energy consumption and carbon footprints of cities, urban spatial development and urban vulnerability to extreme climate events, greening urban development, and urban political action on climate change.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: This course requires students to:

1) attend class and participate in class discussion;
2) do the assigned readings before class;
3) attend a field trip during Week 4 of class;
4) work with another student on a research assignment;
5) present the results of the assignment in class.

READINGS: Course readings will be posted on Sakai.

ASSIGNMENT: The assignment will require working in groups of two to explore how a city of your choice is dealing with the issue of climate change. Students in each group will identify news articles, blogs, websites, and other forms of media (e.g., YouTube videos) that illustrate how a specific city is acting to provide solutions to climate change. Each group will develop and present a powerpoint presentation about their city and its activities. During the week 2 (Sept 13), students will form groups and will select some possible cities that they’d like to focus on. During the following weeks, each group will work together to learn about their selected city and its climate change mitigation and adaptation activities. Each group should be prepared to report on which city they’ve selected and the type of information they’re finding during week 3 (Sept 20). The powerpoints will be presented during week 5 (Oct 4). The presentations should be approximately 10 minutes long and should both describe and evaluate each city’s activities. Photos and short video clips are allowed in the powerpoints. All sources must be properly cited.

WEEKLY TOPICS

Week 1 (Sept 6) Introduction

Week 2 (Sept 13) Cities as Drivers of Climate Change: Energy Use, Consumption, and Carbon Footprints of Cities. This week we will also form groups and identify possible cities to study. Before class: Read Week 2 Reading on Sakai

Week 3 (Sept 20) Cities as Drivers of Climate Change: Urban Density and Urban Spatial Development. Each group will report on city selection. Before class: Read Week 3 Reading on Sakai

Week 4 (Sept 27) Cities as Solutions to Climate Change. Class field trip to New York City. We will take the train and will meet at the New Brunswick train station at 1:15pm, details to be announced. Before class: Read Week 4 Reading on Sakai

Week 5 (Oct 4) Cities as Solutions to Climate Change. Group powerpoint presentations and pizza party

Tues, Oct 2: Bonus Movie Event: Island President - Details to Follow