

1) Course Logistics.

Course Section.	Days/Times.	Course Website.
GARP 0110-H01	MWF 13:40 to 14:30	https://sites.google.com/view/gps0110spring2021/home

- The classes on Mondays and Wednesdays are synchronous online and we meet as a group via Zoom.
- The class on Fridays is asynchronous online and you work through the course materials on your own.
- [Course Introduction Video](#)

Everything related to this course is available on the course website.

We do NOT use PLATO in this course.

2) Course Description.

Our overarching goal for this course is simple: We want to appreciate science as a useful tool for decision-making in a democratic society.

This course offers a broad and rigorous examination of important scientific topics, issues, and questions that are necessary to understand in order to make informed decisions in the 21st century. We will take an interdisciplinary approach across the fields of biological, physical, and earth/space sciences, addressing current scientific issues with an emphasis on connecting science, human impacts, and policy choices in a democratic society. Specific topics may include climate change, clean energy, sustainability, biotechnology, space explorations, infectious disease, and more. Readings, writings, and discussions allow students to expand and refine their scientific literacy and understanding of societal connections.

3) Learning Goals and Outcomes.

Learning Goals	At the end of this course, you will be able to:
Expand and refine scientific literacy.	1) Understand and discuss the scientific process, its characteristics, and its limitations. 2) Understand and discuss the fundamental connections and implications of the relevant scientific questions of today.
Connections between science, society, ethics, and policy.	1) Recognize and debate the connections between the scientific process, societal implications, and public policy.

	2) Recognize and evaluate the global and future ethical impacts of scientific research and policy decisions.
Increase Information Literacy	1) Identify different types of scientific information and sources and evaluate their usefulness, availability, and reliability. 2) Evaluate the quality, accuracy, reliability, and timeliness of the scientific information and sources.
Practice Critical Thinking	1) Effectively select appropriate modes of inquiry, interpretation, evaluation, and communication. 2) Have confidence in your analytical thinking skills despite uncertainty, ambiguity, controversy, or biases.

This course addresses GPS Learning Outcomes 4, 5, 7, 8, and 12.

4) Your Instructor: Dr. Carsten Braun.

- Wilson 203D
- 413.572.5595
- cbraun@westfied.ma.edu
- www.carstenbraun.us
- Office Hours: MWF 15:00-16:00 ([via Zoom](#)) or anytime by appointment
- [Anonymous Feedback](#) (via Padlet)

5) Assessment.

Your course grade is a function of your learning process throughout the entire semester and combines two tests, the weekly assignments, and the science research project. You cannot 'flunk' this course based on any one poor grade.

- Two Tests (each 20 percent). Test #1 will be at about the halfway mark and Test #2 at the end of the semester during finals week. Both tests will be 'take-home' format and address the major themes of the course and challenge you to pull together what you have learned over the course of the semester.
- Weekly Assignments (20 percent) to continuously expand and review your learning, graded using a [3:2:1:0 grading system](#).
- The Science Research Project (40 percent).

Your final class score will be calculated using these grade conversion cutoffs. I will not change the cutoffs, so you are assured the grade associated with these percentages.

Grade Conversion	
A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	60-66
F	0-59

- You will receive assignment details and assessment rubrics so that you are fully aware of my expectations.
- No make-up tests or assignments unless you are experiencing a documented emergency.
- No extra-credit assignments, but you are welcome to make-up missed work for partial credit (within reason) - consult with me as needed.
- Late Policy: 10 points deduction for each day late. Missing work: zero.
- Please allow at least one week for the grades to be ready.

If you feel that you are not progressing as well as you hoped, please talk to me during my office hours or a mutually convenient time – the sooner the better. Please do not wait until the end of the semester.

6) Course Organization / Suggestions for Success.

This course is broadly structured around three parts (see table below). We start with the ‘big picture’ - what is science and what are the connections between science and society? Parts 2 and 3 of the course focus on two of the most pressing topics at the connection of science and society that the President needs to address: global warming and sustainable energy. We also have time to explore other relevant questions and topics, for example genetic engineering/biotechnology, space exploration, infectious diseases, and more. Our class schedule is flexible so we can react to current scientific issues as they unfold.

Many instructors plan classes, assignments, and tests assuming that students follow certain steps in studying for a class. The following are some general rules for success in this course, and others:

- There is no textbook for this course.
- Understand course organization and expectations by reading the syllabus thoroughly. Please ask if something is unclear and check the course website daily for updates.
- [For every 1 hour of class time, you should plan on spending 2-3 hours outside of class studying, reading, writing, or reviewing.](#)
- Ask questions, especially if something is unclear. Other students probably have the same questions.
- Take good notes as you review the course materials - that’s a good learning strategy even in an online class.
- Learn with a partner or small team to expand your understanding by explaining the material to each other - meet on Skype, Zoom, etc.
- Please review the Academic Honesty Policy at Westfield State University. Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty will be severely sanctioned and handled by the appropriate authorities on campus.

Taking online classes is a little different from taking ‘face-to-face’ classes, but the basic ‘secrets of success’ are the same: stay organized, take notes, manage your time, collaborate, and ask for additional help and support as needed. I’m here to help, but you need to take the initiative.

7) Class Schedule.

Please see the [Class Schedule](#) here.

8) The Fine Print.

- Adjustments to the course schedule, requirements, assessment, and number/types/topics of the activities, assignments, and tests may be necessary to account for situations and circumstances that arise over the course of the semester.
- Attendance is mandatory.
- It is your responsibility to keep up with the course materials, online lectures, assignments, notes, tests, worksheets, grades, etc. I’m not your secretary.
- If you have to miss a class: please inform me in advance and remember: you are still responsible for the material we covered and any associated due dates.

9) Exceptions to Class Rules, Restrictions or Requirements.

Any student may request an exception to the class rules, restrictions or requirements. Please set a time to meet with me during my office hours or send an email to me so that we can discuss your reasons.

10) Video Conferencing.

In this course, we will use Zoom and other technology to meet remotely. By state law, nobody (instructor, students) is allowed to record these meetings (audio or video) without informing everyone in the meeting. Thus, you should never be recorded without knowing it (and have the right to turn off your audio and video). Things you write in the chat, however, may be saved and be discussed later in class (just like homework or exams you hand in or submit).

Please turn-on your cameras during class.

I want to encourage you to maintain eye contact with me during these meetings. This is a way for me to get feedback and for you to demonstrate engagement (like in a face-to-face conversation). There might be reasons (health conditions, privacy concerns, technology limitations, etc) why you can’t have a camera on, or choose not to. In this case, I would ask you to use other ways to give me feedback (e.g. use the chat functions, speak up in class if appropriate, send me your comments or summaries after the meeting).

If you have a disability-related reason to turn off the camera, please also contact your Banacos Academic Center advisor or write to Disability Services at ds@westfield.ma.edu for information and support.

11) Academic Strategies Program.

The Banacos Academic Center offers FREE Academic Strategies workshops and individual sessions open to all students on topics including understanding a syllabus, organizing time productively, making note taking effective, and preparing for exams. For questions, email to academicstrategies@westfield.ma.edu.

12) Support for Students with Disabilities Requesting Reasonable Accommodations.

It is the policy of Westfield State University to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering through the Banacos Academic Center. If you require reasonable accommodations in this class, please make your request with a Banacos advisor in the Banacos Academic Center. Please stop by or write to Disability Services at ds@westfield.ma.edu or, if you were accepted into the Learning Disabilities Program, at ldp@westfield.ma.edu to set up an appointment. Additionally, I strongly recommend that you make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss how we can work best together. Please note that a student may request accommodations through the Banacos Academic Center at any time in the semester.

13) Reading and Writing Center (RWC) Virtual Writing Support.

The RWC is dedicated to supporting you as you work on any type of writing project, at any stage of the writing process. If you can't get started, we'll help you brainstorm or unpack the expectations of the assignment. If you have a draft, we'll help you improve that draft and provide you with strategies for writing and revising future papers. To make a FREE appointment please visit www.westfield.ma.edu/reading. ALL RWC sessions are held online.

14) Counseling Center (Lammers Hall Annex) Virtual Support Services.

Life at college can get complicated. Students sometimes feel overwhelmed, and can experience a variety of challenges, such as anxiety, depression, relationship difficulties, and/or diminished self-esteem, to give just a few examples. Many issues can be effectively addressed with a little help. The Counseling Center helps students cope with difficult emotions and life stressors. The Counseling Center is staffed by experienced, professional counselors who are attuned to the needs of college students. The services are FREE and completely confidential. The Counseling Center offers check-in counseling, which is same-day appointment scheduling to ensure faster access to a counselor.

For the Spring 2021 semester, students can access our services via telecounseling appointments on a video chat platform. Find out more at <http://www.westfield.ma.edu/counseling> or by calling 413-572-5790. Please talk to me if you are distressed and you are not sure what to do about it.

15) Common Goods Food Pantry (Second Congregational Church).

Common Goods is a food pantry serving Westfield State University students, faculty, and staff who may be experiencing hunger and are struggling to purchase food. It is a safe, discreet, nonjudgmental, and welcoming space in which to distribute a variety of non-perishable foods and personal care items at no cost. Visitors to the pantry do not need to provide any financial documentation to use this service. Common Goods is housed in the Second Congregational Church on Western Avenue, adjacent to the entrance to the Commuter Parking Lot. For more information and hours, please visit www.westfield.ma.edu/commongoods or email commongoods@westfield.ma.edu.

16) Academic Honesty.

The University Academic Honesty Policy can be found [here](#). Students are expected to do their own work. Plagiarism and cheating are inexcusable. Any instance of plagiarism or cheating will result in no credit for the assignment or failure of the course. The University Classroom Student Conduct Policy can be found [here](#).

Any questions or concerns?

Please contact me via Email (cbraun@westfield.ma.edu)