HARVARD
Online

Climate Leadership: Creating Change in Uncertain Times

Syllabus

Climate Leadership: Creating Change in Uncertain Times is designed to meet the complexity and nuance of real-world climate challenges. This course will immerse you in first-hand accounts of authentic leadership dilemmas, allowing you to not only study climate leadership, but actively practice it. With the guidance of expert faculty, you will apply these concepts in your own context to turn course insights into practical impact. By the end, you will possess an adaptable, multidisciplinary skillset to navigate complex climate issues whenever and wherever they arise.

Modules		Case Studies	Takeaways	Key Exercises
Module 1	**Understanding the Nature of Climate Leadership**	**Longyearbyen, Svalbard** An Arctic community in the fastest-warming region of the planet questions its past as it attempts to reimagine its future.	• Climate change is a collective challenge requiring technical and adaptive solutions to address it. • Climate change is a human problem. It was created by human behavior and it requires changes to human behavior to address it. • Addressing climate change involves confronting questions about our values and identities. • Complexity, uncertainty, and loss are part of climate leadership, but meaningful progress remains possible.	• Diagnose the central climate challenge of your context. • Analyze the tradeoffs and competing value involved in your climate challenge. • Identify the role of leadership in defining and implementing the solutions.
Module 2	**Cultivating Agency**	**Youth Climate Activists** Four young people turn experiences of personal climate anxieties into a movement of climate action.	• Understanding how values and emotions influence our choices is essential to climate leadership. • Narrative is a powerful tool for articulating values and communicating them to others. • Challenging our assumptions about climate leadership can reveal new opportunities for progress.	• Examine your core values and how climate leadership may challenge and reinforce them. • Cultivate action-motivating emotions to maintain resilience and sustain your practice of leadership. • Create a narrative of self to shape and communicate your call to climate leadership.

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Modules		Case Studies	Takeaways	Key Exercises
Module 3	**Approaching Complex Challenges**	**The Marshall Islands** The most low-lying nation on the planet seeks a clarity of vision to help answer existential questions about its future.	• Climate change is uniquely complex, requiring deep understanding of the problem, multiple perspectives, and the ability to navigate uncertainty. • Recognizing conditions that can and cannot be changed is essential to effective climate leadership. • Climate leadership requires navigating power imbalances while recognizing that power has many sources and can shift. • Addressing climate challenges collaboratively requires understanding stakeholders' interests and identifying opportunities for mutual benefit. • Progress is possible even when the solutions to challenges are unclear.	• Practice observation and analysis to diagnose technical and adaptive aspects of complex challenges. • Analyze stakeholder behavior as data to uncover the shared interests beneath opposing positions. • Leverage shared values and collective narrative to drive progress when formal authority and technical solutions fall short.
Module 4	**Discovering Alignment**	**The African Adaptation Initiative** A diverse continent of 54 countries must find consensus around what to prioritize between the immediate development opportunities with long-term climate threats.	• Effective stakeholder conversations require understanding the interests and priorities that shape their perspectives. • Achieving collective solutions requires creating productive disequilibrium by strategically raising and lowering discussion temperatures. • Making progress in climate conversations means building relationships. • Strong relationships develop over time through shared values, mutual understanding, and reciprocal benefits. • Sequencing is important when trying to build coalitions.	• Navigate productive disequilibrium to help diverse stakeholders confront conflicting expectations and align around a shared challenge. • Evaluate your spectrum of stakeholders to uncover key potential allies. • Draft a backward-sequenced roadmap to build coalitions that drive collective climate action
Module 5	**Developing Interventions**	**French Fossil Fuel Financing (Part I)** Against overwhelming odds, a coalition attempts to stop a French bank from funding a coal mine.	• Successful interventions require both a vision and achievable steps towards that state: narrowed vision and strategic goals. • An effective strategic goal is specific, impactful, aligned to your vision, and appropriate to your context. • Developing a strategic goal requires analysis of process, substance, and relationships to identify barriers and opportunities. • Effective tactics are context-specific, strategic, and designed to motivate and empower others.	• Define measurable objectives that drive progress toward shared goals. • Analyze barriers and opportunities within your context to identify high-impact leverage points. • Map out concrete tactics to effectively advance your objective.

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Modules		Case Studies	Takeaways	Key Exercises
Module 6	**Enacting Lasting Change**	**French Fossil Fuel Financing (Part II)** The coalition takes on the wealthiest financial institutions in France in an effort to stop hundreds of coal projects	• Scaling interventions to build on success requires new strategic goals that reflect changing process, substance, and relationship (PSR) opportunities. • Navigating inevitable setbacks requires observing what happened, interpreting events, and intervening based on insights. • Mobilization builds engagement and momentum among like-minded groups and individuals to achieve short-term goals. • Long-term progress requires organizing through relationship-building, recruitment, and developing leadership capacity.	• Design iterative campaigns to build collective power and shift the landscape of opportunities. • Extract critical lessons from experimentation and past failures to iteratively adapt your strategy and drive progress. • Design equitable, sustainable leadership models that distribute power and build long-term resilience.
Module 7	**Building a Better Future**	**Epilogue** Voices from throughout the course return to reflect on ongoing challenges and the things that keep them engaged.	• It's important to engage in continual reflection about your climate leadership to ensure that your values, vision, goals, strategy, and tactics remain integrated. • Climate leadership is complex and challenging: you can and should sustain yourself by finding joy, developing anchors, and celebrating progress.	• Establish personal resilience practices to sustain your well-being and prevent burnout during long-term climate leadership. • Outline concrete next steps to continuously expand your climate leadership capacity after the course concludes. • Synthesize key insights from across the program to solidify and apply your new adaptive leadership toolkit.

Learning requirements: In order to earn a Certificate of Completion from Harvard Online and Harvard Business School Online, participants must thoughtfully complete all 7 modules, including satisfactory completion of the associated quizzes, by stated deadlines.

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