

CLIMATE CHANGE CHRONICLE 15

A Climate Change Course for Teens

I was quite taken by the recent [UN Report](#) on the dangers of climate change. It indicated that given the rate at which our planet is warming, we would have to take definitive action by 2030. If we don't, we face dire consequences by 2040.

Like many people I'm not influenced or motivated by numbers. But what did motivate me was a comment by a reporter noting that by 2030 our three year olds will just be entering high school. That hit me. It will be our children and grand-children who will have to deal with the consequences of the damaged Earth they will inherit from us.

I asked myself what I could do to help. I decided to outline a curriculum for high school students. It is somewhat broad and rather simplistic. But it is designed to fit within the 800 to 900 words of these chronicles. So here goes.

The Course

Dear Students,

Welcome. I am Ms. Cosmos and I will be your teacher for this course on "Dealing with Climate Change." This is a four part course. Today I will simply touch upon the basic elements to give you a heads up about what is coming.

Part One: Some History

Here we will talk about the newly emerging geological age called the Anthropocene.... meaning "man-made". This age began with the Industrial Revolution at the end of the 1800s and continues into this century. Scientists have confirmed that Earth is warming. In the process this phenomenon is bringing about irreversible transformations: loss of species, poisoning of oceans and rising waters, droughts, forest fires, tornadoes, destruction of farm land, millions of refugees, and so forth.

In the 1950s when scientists began reporting the warming there were mixed reactions. Some people responded by engaging in environmental efforts. But for many this was a sort of an "in one ear out the other" phenomenon. We will discuss the various reactions to this emerging news about climate change.

Part Two: The Causes of Climate Change

In Part Two we will study the causes of the out-of-control climate change disruption. As you will see this section is about our systems, particularly our economic, political and legal systems. For a long time we benefited from these systems—especially those of us who lived in what was called the developed world. But the very systems that benefited us also caused problems.

Our economic systems were based upon neoliberalism, a concept that required corporations to make continual profits for their shareholders. Along with it came the concept that corporations have a right of unlimited access to Earth's increasingly limited resources.

Our political systems were interested in jobs and profits for their constituents. They often depended on corporate funding and so did their bidding by passing laws and policies that helped corporations.

And our legal systems were designed to get on board. They declared corporations to have the same rights as persons and supported the basic rules of the economic and political systems. Their environmental laws were only designed to limit the damage we could do to the environment and had very little staying power. They could be removed with a stroke of the pen.

Part Three: The beginnings of change.

In this section you will see some of the fledgling efforts to turn things around. Beginning in the current century there were increasing climate change disasters. Climate change was considered more and more important by many people and there were more and more articles in the news media.

What was most significant in this period was the growing awareness that our systems were a major cause of the climate change problem. It became recognized that new systems were needed. Articles began to appear about new living economic systems that could live within a living Earth. There were many efforts to explore new forms of government—especially forms of government that would take root at the local level. And we also saw the emergence of interest in Earth law and the rights of Nature.

Along with all of these exciting changes came many areas of conflict. Those who were benefiting most from the existing systems wanted things to remain the same. Those who were not benefiting from the existing systems wanted changes. We will go into some detail on all these issues.

Part Four: Soul-craft

In the final part of this course we will deal with soul-craft. This is an inner spirituality or awareness that helps us change our thinking about Earth.

Most members of my generation have grown up with a sense that we are separate from Earth. We are “here in our bodies” and Earth is “something out there.” Soul-craft helps us destroy this separation and realize that we are earthlings. We have come from other life forms. In a sense they are our kin. What we are doing to Earth we are doing to ourselves, our families and our loved ones. All of us depend upon Earth for our continued existence.

Soul-craft also helps us build resilience for the struggle ahead of us—helping Earth care for itself in the face of great opposition.

So that’s the outline of the course. I hope you will enjoy it and I’m looking forward to working with you.

“The Teach” (*Note: I would welcome any suggestions you might have for the course.*)

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