

The Master of Arts Program in Climate and Society at Columbia University

Mark A. Cane

G. Unger Vetlesen Professor of Earth and Climate Sciences, Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory of Columbia University, and Director, Master of Arts Program in Climate and Society, Palisades, NY

Climate influences crucial development issues. Climatic hazards affect poor people most, destroying homes and livelihoods, and affecting participation in the development process itself. In both developing and industrialized societies, these hazards lead to food and water shortages, population displacements, and disease outbreaks. Such events trigger appeals for international assistance. At the international level, with the Kyoto agreement and beyond, governments are in the process of creating a "Law of the Atmosphere," just as they had earlier developed a Law of the Sea.

Recent research has generated a wealth of new knowledge about long-term climate change, shorter-term climate variability, and their socio-economic impacts. Decision-makers need clear and reliable guidance on impending climate shocks, as well as practical information and tools to deal with their consequences. Building on improved scientific understanding of climate and improved coping mechanisms, Columbia University is training a new generation of academics and professionals at the nexus of social science, climate science, and public policy.

The twelve-month M.A. Program in Climate and Society teaches its students to understand and cope with the impacts of climate variability and climate change on society and the environment. The program, now training its fourth class, emphasizes the problems of developing societies. The curriculum of the program will be described briefly, and the work our alumni are doing will be discussed.

Contact Information: Mark Cane, Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, Columbia University, 61 Route 9W, Palisades, NY 10964-8000, USA; Phone: 845 365 8344; Fax: 845 365 8736; Email: mcane@ldeo.columbia.edu; Website: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/climatesociety/>