

MA in Climate Change & Global Sustainability

Welcome Letter 2025-26

DEAR INCOMING STUDENT:

Congratulations on your decision to begin SIT's Global Master's in Climate Change this fall, and welcome to the program—the next step in your academic, personal, and professional development. The Climate Change faculty and staff look forward to supporting you throughout this exciting journey. I'd also like to take this opportunity to share some important information about the program and to answer some of your questions regarding what to expect. This letter and pre-arrival website contain important information about your upcoming studies and should prove useful as you prepare for the program.

YOUR CLIMATE CHANGE FACULTY

My name is Richard Walz. I completed a PhD in anthropology at the University of Florida, graduate coursework in East African history and ecology at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, and a BA in African studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I have spent more than twelve years in Tanzania. I have worked in various cross-cultural contexts researching, advising, and lecturing on a wide range of topics, including East African history and ecology, biological and cultural conservation, traditional landscape use, indigenous medicine, and rural development. My work has consistently engaged local and international public education and produced scholarly and popular publications.

As the program chair, my role is to coordinate all administrative and academic aspects of the program and to facilitate your learning. I am not expected, however, to do those things on my own. There is a strong network of faculty and staff in Iceland, Zanzibar, and in the US who work with me to help ensure that you have every opportunity to explore the causes and impacts of climate change and the various efforts to mitigate these effects and adapt to our changing world. On behalf of the staff and our program partners - our "SIT family" - I look forward to receiving and working with each of you during the coming year. To learn more about other SIT faculty and staff for this program, visit the [program web page](#).

GET TO KNOW YOUR COHORTMATES

Because of privacy laws, SIT is unable to share personal information about future students with other future students. About two months prior to departure, we will facilitate the creation of a Whatsapp group so that you all can start to get to know each other and if desired, consider possible housing and roommate scenarios as well. Please note that it is not intended to duplicate or replace official information and is for personal purposes only.

ACADEMIC AND GENERAL EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS

SIT's Global Master's in Climate Change builds on our expertise in experiential and adult learning in global settings. The curriculum combines our demonstrated success working with students since 2018 with our strong local ties in Iceland and Zanzibar, incorporating the expertise gained from years of experience in both locations.

The program's learning environment is different from what you may be used to. Your base studies will be in the classroom, but you also will learn directly from the environment, and from projects, activities, and communities involved in climate change research, mitigation, and adaptation. How you do this, what you learn, and the kind of knowledge produced is up to

you and your efforts. There are two broader considerations to keep in mind: first, you will be asked to make synthetic, intellectual sense of your first-hand experience in Iceland and Zanzibar; and second, you will be expected to be proactive about what the program offers in terms of learning opportunities. Usually, the students who learn and benefit the most from these types of programs are those who choose to be the most engaged in the program and with local communities and the environment. Finally, no one can change Iceland or Zanzibar to make you happier or more comfortable. You must be flexible, challenge your comfort zones, and adopt some new habits that may seem inconvenient, but which will enable you to accept and respect local realities. This requires a significant amount of patience and open-mindedness, and a positive attitude.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

To enable you to make the most of your time with SIT, we strongly advise you to begin now to monitor local and international media coverage of the countries and regions of your program. To get started you can access your recommended – but, not required – readings below. You can find most of them online, or at your local library.

- Degroot, D., et al. 2021. Towards a Rigorous Understanding of Societal Responses to Climate Change. *Nature* 591.
- Heinberg, R. 2010. What is Sustainability? In *Post Carbon Reader: Managing the 21st Century's Sustainability Crises*. R. Heinberg and D. Lerch, eds. Post Carbon Institute.
- Leckie, B. 2022. *Climate Change, Interrupted*. Stanford University Press.
- Levine, P. and Poe, M., editors. 2017. *Conservation for the Anthropocene Ocean: Interdisciplinary Science in Support of Nature and People*. Academic Press.
- Wallace-Wells, D. 2019. *The Uninhabitable Earth*. Penguin Random House.

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY - MODELS, TOOLS, AND DATABASES FOR CLIMATE CHANGE RESEARCH:

- <https://www.epa.gov/climate-research/models-tools-and-databases-climate-change-research>

TEMPERATURE ANOMALIES FOR THE LAST 100 YEARS:

- <https://www.facebook.com/ScientificAmerican/videos/10159092332105246/UzpfSTgxNjY4Mzc1NzoxMDE1NjMyODg3NzYwMzc1OA/>

EUROPEAN UNION ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY TARGETS AND OBJECTIVES:

- <https://www.eea.europa.eu/highlights/an-overview-of-eu-environment>

ICELANDIC GEO-SURVEY:

- www.isor.is/en

TRACKING GLACIERS:

- <https://www.motherjones.com/environment/2018/06/icelands-amateur-glacier-trackers-may-soon-need-to-find-a-new-mission/>

GREENHOUSE GASES IN THE ARCTIC:

- <https://www.pri.org/stories/2012-12-03/warming-climate-presents-grave-risk-greenhouse-gas-release-arctic>

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY OUTLOOK OF THE INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY:

- <https://www.iea.org/publications/renewables2017/> and https://youtu.be/mfNE_6ae6B4

COASTAL OCEANS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT - INDIAN OCEAN EAST AFRICA:

- <http://cordioea.net/>

WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN MARINE SCIENCE ASSOCIATION (SECTIONS ON CLIMATE CHANGE):

- <http://www.wiomsa.org/>

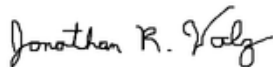
GOVERNMENT INFORMATION:

- Iceland CIA Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ic.html>
[Published by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, this is a compendium of statistics and commentary on the country, along with a basic map of the territory.]
- Tanzania CIA Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tz.html>

In closing, I know that you are making a huge investment of time and money to pursue your master's degree. To that end, I want to emphasize that my colleagues and I are very excited to begin collaborating with you and supporting your professional development journey.

I wish you all the best as you prepare for this exciting learning experience, and I look forward to meeting you soon.

Sincerely,



J. Richard Walz