

Classroom Climate Forum Exercise

Instructions

Your task is to work as a group to develop and defend a proposal for addressing climate change in ways that address human needs and otherwise better serve the needs and interests of more of the world's people. Ideas for your proposal should be informed by the work being done by social movements, even if you offer new innovations or modifications of existing projects or campaigns. Thus, your initial task as a group is to find out what people are doing to address the particular aspect of climate change on which your group is focused.

Craft your proposal to present in a workshop similar to those run by organizations participating in various world, national, regional, or local social forums. These meetings often coincide with governmental meetings like the negotiations on the UN Convention on Climate Change. Your proposal can target any level of activity (i.e., local, national, global) or actor (i.e., national governments, international organizations, transnational corporations, general public or civil society groups). You should begin your research by identifying the various kinds of proposals that other groups have made to address the problem you're seeking to address. Your group might pick up that proposal and seek to make it more widely accepted, or you may adapt ideas in an existing proposal. Jerry Mander's [Manifesto on Global Economic Transitions](#) (International Forum on Globalization) provides an excellent framework to help you begin this work, along with a helpful list of resources and links. Some ideas of the types of proposals you might advance:

Ideas for Group Topics	
Food systems	Recognition of Rights for Mother Earth
Transportation and mobility	Transition Towns
Shaping Policy/Political Debates	Divestment from fossil fuels
Changing consciousness/Paradigms	Transitioning to a low-carbon food system
Communications	Reducing our society's dependence on travel
	City-level climate survival strategies
	Movement-building for environmental justice
	Advancing principles of environmental justice

The exercise has three key parts. First, you will work as part of a group to **develop a proposal** to present during our class's climate forum. A brief (max. 3-5 page) written summary of the proposal, including any references to key sources, should be posted on the course website prior to your group presentations. Second, your group will **present and defend your proposal** twice: at mid-term in our class's Preparatory Committee (PrepComm) and at the final climate forum. The presentations will be followed by discussion and questions from other delegates, and your group must be prepared to address questions raised by other social forum delegates. The second presentation should take into account feedback from other delegates during the PrepComm. Third, at the end of the semester, each student will **write individual reflection papers** on the experience of engaging in this social forum process (see below).

Your group must prepare a "brief" on your proposal that will be posted on Blackboard before the Preparatory forum and our final Climate Forum. This will present the other delegates with a summary of your proposal's main features. Limit this brief to 3-4 pages. Your group should organize a division of labor to produce this document. The key pieces of this proposal are: 1) a *short* summary of the problem and outline of your proposal for how to respond to it; 2) a discussion and defense of the proposal's feasibility—i.e., how will it address problems that other efforts have been unable to address?; how does your proposal build on past experiences and related

lessons? and 3) a discussion of how your group proposes to preempt or overcome anticipated opposition from governments, international officials, or civil society groups. Our Preparatory Committee will provide an opportunity for you to hear questions and critiques from fellow delegates as you work to improve your proposal.

Each team will have about 15 minutes during the Climate Forums to present their proposal and to field questions from delegates, and there will be opportunities for online discussions outside of the class meeting. To further inspire your creativity, delegates to the Forum will be asked to rate the proposals according to their creativity and impact as well as feasibility, and the delegation with the most votes from the assembly will receive **prizes** ☺.

Reflection Paper: Each student is required to complete a reflection paper (800-1000 words) on the experience of participating in a social forum (**Due April 24th**). Your essay should reflect on the lessons from your experience and assess the prospects that the World Social Forum process and similar social movement activities can improve upon what governments are already doing to address major global problems. Also, provide an honest review and assessment of your own work and effort in this project. In addition, please address *one or more* of the following questions in your essay: 1) What did you learn about your topic and about the possibilities for alternatives to the dominant models of economic and political globalization? 2) What did you find most challenging about participating in the PrepComm and Forum? What were the biggest obstacles you encountered, and how did you/your group overcome them? 3) What did you learn about leadership and working in groups that might inform our thinking about social movements and global change? 4) What was the biggest surprise and/or the biggest disappointment you found in doing this exercise?

Resources

- Solidarity Economy Network www.populareconomics.org/ussen/
- *Yes! Magazine* profiles community initiatives for positive change: www.yesmagazine.org/
- New Economics Foundation: <http://www.neweconomics.org/>
- A number of chapters in *What Next: Climate, Development, Equity* contain good examples of proposals being discussed by civil society groups and policy makers and may provide a basis for your group projects.
- Solidarity Economy Network: <http://www.ussen.org/>
- International Forum on Globalization <http://ifg.org/what-we-do/publications/>
- Cavanagh, John and Jerry Mander, Ed(s). 2004. *Alternatives to Economic Globalization: A Better World is Possible, 2nd Edition*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers. (on reserve at Hillman library)
- [The Post-Carbon Reader](#) offers chapters with proposals for moving towards a low-carbon society.

Here's a [call for submissions of case studies](#) of solutions to social problems. You are encouraged to submit your project to be considered for publication in this collection, called *Beautiful Solutions*. The Beautiful Trouble book and website offer examples of how creative nonviolence has been used to challenge dominant social practices.

<http://beautifultrouble.org/>