

## **Scientist Interview Assignment**

**Deadlines: Thursday 4/23, Tuesday 5/12**

The goal of our course is twofold: we seek to explore the human *and* scientific dimensions of global change. Thus, you will engage in two interview experiences to address both of these dimensions, and share your experiences with the class through presentations and individually through a personal reflection.

Your first interview assignment is to interview a practicing scientist at Stanford University. These scientists have already agreed to be interviewed for this course. As scientists-in-training, you will probably be in your comfort zone speaking with scientists, who likely use a vocabulary and context you are familiar with, and are members of your academic community.

The purpose of this assignment is for you to learn about the science of global change firsthand from someone studying it. Just as we learn about global change through its local manifestations in our articles, we will be learning about its dynamics on a smaller scale through specific research projects. You will explore a specific avenue of research that provides one piece of the global change puzzle. By sharing what you've learned with the class and incorporating this information into your region project, you will also be acting as a science translator!

We also hope that through this assignment you will better understand how the specific knowledge of a scientist contributes to the advancement of the larger scientific field, as well as how scientists see their work influencing their everyday decisions as citizens.

### **Before your interview:**

1. In your initial email: introduce yourself and the class project. Recognize their busy schedule and be flexible scheduling the interview. Reserve ~30 minutes.
2. Research your interviewee. Use the URL provided as a starting point. Look at their lab website, recent news from their lab, and skim the titles/abstracts of some of their recent papers.
3. Bring whatever tools you need to keep track of your conversation (we do not recommend taking notes on a laptop; writing on the iPads/paper notepad is less obtrusive)
4. At the beginning of the interview itself, introduce your project and your motivations to get the interviewee oriented and comfortable

### **Questions to ask during your interview (you don't need to use all of these; use these as a springboard for your draft questions):**

*Keep in mind that the goal of this assignment is to discuss mostly science and scientists doing science, not science communication (although it is okay to touch on that)*

- Start easy: what is this person's position (grad student, post doc, professor)? What is their scientific/academic background and how long have they been working in their field? What do they identify as? (eg, geologist, climatologist, ecologist, interdisciplinary, etc)
- Have they ever considered themselves a global change scientist? How did they come to consider themselves one?
- How do they describe their research agenda, in their own words?
- Ask questions about their area of expertise. Try to get at the story of how they came to be an expert in their field. What are they working on currently, and why do they think it is important?

- Ask them about the systems they study specifically and how they use their scientific training to explore and understand these systems. What techniques/methods do they employ?
- What is the temporal and geographic scale of their work?
- How did they design their research projects? What larger scientific concept/question are they attempting to address?
- Who are their collaborators? Do they work with any non-scientists? If so, how did they come to decide to work with non-scientists, and how do they view this type of partnership?
- Ask them about what they have found in their research (or hope/predict to find if they are not in the results phase of their work).
- How do they generally disseminate their results?
- Ask them how their work relates to the topic of global change. How do their data/results add insight into these processes of change?
- Ask for their opinion on a current environmental problem in their field, or that you've seen in the news
- Ask them about their perspectives as a scientist. How has being an academic and a scientist influenced their view of the world in the context of global change and its subsequent problems (i.e. the themes of this course)?
- Be sure after your final question to ask if they want to clarify anything, if there's anything they wanted to add or reflect on.

**After the interview:** Write an email thanking your interviewee for their time!

#### **Thursday 4/23: Draft interview questions**

*Required reading: NCA (National Climate Assessment) Part 2. Read the Sector(s) that corresponds with the expertise of your interviewee, and use to guide your questions/ provide "hooks" for discussion.*

Post your draft interview questions to Lacuna Stories. Use the NCA and research the interviewee's website/publications as a foundation. You will peer edit another student's questions during class time using Lacuna Stories. Although you will have these questions written, you can (and should) improvise during your actual interview.

#### **Tuesday 5/12: Interview AND presentation due**

1. Submit a 300-500 word summary of your interview. Summarize the scientific content of your interview as it relates to their research and global change, and address the perspectives/toolkit of your interviewee (**this is not a personal reflection**). Use scientific language, as if you are writing an abstract. Submit via Lacuna Stories.
2. Create a powerpoint slide (a single slide!) to present the scientific content of your interview to the rest of the class. Share the scientific information you've learned about global change, and the toolkit your interviewee is using. Connect the research your interviewee is performing to *at least 1 article* you've collected, and share what you think the connection is. This should be approximately 2-3 minutes long.