

Wesleyan University students to present three climate change seminars at Chester Village West in November

*First-of-its-kind program in Central Connecticut
to promote understanding and advocacy among seniors*



Fifteen Earth and Environmental Science students in Wesleyan University's Service Learning Program recently visited Washington, D.C. to meet with Congressional staffers and environmental policy experts. The information they gathered will be included in three climate change seminars the students will present at Chester Village West on November 7, 14 and 21.

With three hurricanes and numerous wildfires under our country's climatological belt this year, the term *climate change* is appearing frequently in the news and in our conversations.

But what is climate change, exactly? How did our earth reach its current climate state? What events can we attribute to climate change? What requires more research? Where do we go from here? And what can we, as the earth's caretakers, realistically do?

These are questions that Earth and Environmental Science students at Wesleyan University will answer in three afternoon seminars they'll present at Chester Village West on November 7, 14 and 21. The seminars will be presented from 2 to 3:30 p.m., followed by Q&A and light refreshments.

It's all part of the university's credit-based [Service Learning program](#), where students work with organizations in Middletown and surrounding areas to address important issues in our society.

According to Suzanne O'Connell, Ph.D., Professor of Earth and Environmental Science, the 17 students in her Service Learning program this fall are designing the climate change seminars to educate seniors about the issue – and give them the tools to spread knowledge to their friends, families and elected representatives.

“Up to now, many of our courses and the larger climate change educators’ community have focused on Kindergarten-through-12th grade audiences,” O’Connell said. “However, because we know that seniors are active public advocates in many other areas, and because of the urgency of this issue, we thought the time was right to reach out to older populations.”

The idea to create a student-led climate change program for seniors began with Robin Andreoli, executive director of [the Rockfall Foundation](#) in Middletown Conn. Founded in 1935 by Middletown philanthropist and conservationist Clarence S. Wadsworth, the Rockfall Foundation supports environmental education and conservation in the Lower Connecticut River Valley. It helps fund program items outside Wesleyan University’s Service Learning budget, such as transportation for students on research field trips.

“The Foundation wanted to develop a climate change curriculum that would effectively reach seniors. To begin, we sought an open-minded retirement community we could partner with for the initial program,” Andreoli said.

Andreoli was familiar with Chester Village West and reached out to Marcy Conway, the community’s activities director. “When I visited Chester Village West, I spoke with many residents who were keenly interested in the topic,” Andreoli continued. “After getting the green light from Marcy, I proposed the service learning program to Wesleyan and got an enthusiastic response. The feedback Chester Village West residents can offer after students present these seminars will help us build future climate change programs for other senior groups.”

November’s climate change seminars at Chester Village West will cover three topics: November 7: The Present: how our planet’s climate system works. November 14: The Past: what we know about how our climate has changed over time. November 21: The Future: how we can make our planet remain a place that humans can live.

“Instead of a pure advocacy discussion, we want these seminars to be science-based,” O’Connell said. Experiential learning – in class, the lab and in the field – has been part of students’ preparation to teach the topic. To inform their research, they traveled to Washington D.C. in September to meet with Congressional staffers and other environmental policy experts; the trip was arranged by the Geological Society of America. They’re also reading the most recent report from the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#).

Both O’Connell and Andreoli are excited for the opportunity to help Wesleyan University students keep older generations up to date on climate change. And Chester Village West residents look forward to working with the students as active learners and advocates!

Chester Village West residents are encouraged to register for the November 7, 14 and 21 climate change seminars.