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# Changing Climates: 2018 Theme

As we assess our natural and social environments in 2018, we are finding ourselves in the midst of any number of “changing climates”—all with significant implications for humanity and the world around us.

Among the most evident and pressing is **global climate change**, which if unchecked, will have profound and devastating consequences for life on Earth as we know it. Climate change is altering weather patterns, sea levels and oceanic life, global ecosystems and biodiversity, agricultural production, water resources, and the livelihoods—and very lives—of a significant portion of the world’s human population.

But other climates are changing as well: the **social climate**, with conflict over women’s rights and LGBTQ+ rights, conflict over refugees and migrants, and conflicts over the practices of mass incarceration; the **racial climate** in the United States, in particular, with increased tensions arising from inequality in law enforcement and emboldened white nationalism; the international and domestic **political climate**, with wars of growing complexity and movements of growing nationalist and populist tendencies that have fundamentally altered discourse, policies, and programs; the **economic climate**, with challenges to the globalization/free trade paradigm internationally and the wealth gap at home; the **intellectual climate**, with new challenges to intellectualism itself and intensifying debates within the academy over specialization, professionalization, and interdisciplinarity; the **cultural climate**, with ever-growing impacts of technology in our lives, with gaps between highly educated and less educated segments of society, with controversy over sources of information and expressions of creativity, and with living in community with people of different faith traditions, ideologies, and life ways; and, indeed, our own **university’s climate**, with efforts to achieve the reality of a campus dedicated to “diversity and inclusion,” and with new initiatives to evaluate our very notions of academic purpose and success—through experiential learning, “signature work,” and collaborative engagement.

At the same time that we **investigate the changing climates around us**, we also can—and must—**engage in the active project of changing climates**. We have the opportunity to utilize

the knowledge we gain through our education at IWU to change a variety of climates in a positive way—as we try to implement our university’s mission of “commit[ment] to diversity, social justice, and environmental sustainability” in order to produce students dedicated to “democratic citizenship and life in a global society.”



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