

Advancing integrated thinking through interdisciplinary team teaching – a reflection of a graduate class on “Scales in the Climate System” as an interdisciplinary site

Abstract: This paper reflects on a graduate course on “Scales in the Climate System” that was team-taught by ten lecturers from different scientific fields including biology, soil sciences, oceanography, meteorology, mathematics, sociology, media studies, geography and geology. The idea was to create a “life experiment in real interdisciplinarity” by developing the concept of “scale” as an integrating tool for the study of diverse climate phenomena as well as their interrelations with social dynamics and the human dimension.

The paper presents the overall idea and discusses benefits and limitations of the scales approach based on participant observation throughout the course including formal classes and informal discussions and preparation meetings of the lecturers. It concludes by arguing for concept-based cross-disciplinary teaching formats to adequately socialise future (climate) scientists. The approach may be pertinent to any field with a strong problem-focus, and – in the context of the panel on “experiments in collaboration” – may be fruitfully discussed as a model for the human sciences.

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