

## Climate Change and Herding in Mongolia: Incontrovertible Warning Signs and Local Responses

June 20-July 3, 2022

Course Instructors: Dr. Annika Ericksen, ansrics@gmail.com,

**Course Overview:** In this course participants will engage in explorations and research into climate change in Mongolia, with a focus on herders' observations and responses to climate stress. Through this module, students will have the opportunity to conduct interviews with herders and local environmental management professionals, to compare meteorological measurements with herders' local knowledge of a changing climate, and to explore potential adaptation to climate change in relation to social, economic, and political forces in rural Mongolia. Participants will also visit sites of historic, cultural, and ecological significance such as Kharkhorin, the capital of the Mongol Empire, and Erdene Zuu monastery.

The course emphasizes the value of local knowledge for understanding and addressing climate change impacts. We will also draw from research in natural and social science disciplines such as climatology, geography, rangeland ecology, and anthropology to understand challenges in nomadic pastoralism.

Herders throughout Mongolia are knowledgeable about climate change, both from the news and from clear transformations in weather patterns and rangeland ecology that they have witnessed over the past two or more decades. We will learn how herders are being impacted by these changes and what they see as the best solutions—such as grassroots environmental management, educational programs, improved government services, or policy changes—that would support the herding livelihood amid changing conditions.

We will learn how herders are adapting and organizing to build resilience against increasing stresses like drought, pasture degradation, and abnormal winter precipitation, but we will also consider the need for institutional support for safeguarding herding livelihoods and facilitating adaptation. Finally, participants will reflect on the interview methodology and the value of local ecological knowledge for understanding the effects of climate change.

Participants do not need to speak Mongolian; program leaders and staff will provide translation during interviews with herders and local experts. Lodging will be in ger camps. Participants will have opportunities to engage in some aspects of herding culture, such as riding horses and/or camels and milking goats.

### **Anticipated Course Activities:**

**June 20-21:** Program and Course Orientation in Ulaanbaatar. Participants will meet the students and faculty in the ACMS Field School, gain an introduction to Mongolian language, culture, history, and contemporary issues, and begin to engage in course preparations such as an overview of field interview techniques and crucial issues impacting herders.

**June 22-27:** Staying at Ugii Khishig ger camp by Ugii Nuur in Arkhangai province

While lodging at a tourist *ger* camp, we will have daily engagement with local officials, experts, and herders to discuss climate change and environmental challenges. We will learn from them how Ogii Lake and the surrounding pastures have been affected by climate change. We will also spend time with herding families to learn about traditional knowledge in herding and handcrafts through participant-observation.

**June 28-July 1:** We will stay at a ger camp near Kharkhorin Historical Site and Erdene Zuu Monastery. Participants will learn about Mongolian history while visiting two important historical sites and museums. We will also continue to learn about steppe ecology and interview herders in the area about climate change and their strategies for adapting to current challenges. We will stop at Elsen Tasarkhay sand dunes and have an introduction to desert ecology and the issue of desertification.

**July 2-3:** ACMS Mongolia Field School wrap up conference in Ulaanbaatar. Join together with the participants of the other field school courses along with students, faculty and interested persons in Ulaanbaatar to discuss observations and findings from the field research work and site visits.

#### **About the Instructors:**

**Annika Ericksen**, holds a PhD in Anthropology with an interdisciplinary minor in Global Change from the University of Arizona. Her first introduction to Mongolia was as a Peace Corps volunteer in 2004, and she has been going back ever since. Her dissertation on dzud disasters and post-socialist politics of responsibility in Mongolia was supported by an ACMS research fellowship and a Fulbright-Hays DDRA.

#### Course Assistant:

Tsermaa Nyamdavaa is from a herder's family in Ulziit soum, Uvurkhangai province, Mongolia. Currently, she is a Ph.D. candidate at the Natural Resources Management Department, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, USA. Her dissertation focuses on the implementation of Community-based natural resources management principles within Buffer Zone rangelands of Hustai National Park.