

Free online course from the European Space Agency presents a unique insight into our climate from space

Learners can sign up now for ESA's first MOOC – 'Monitoring Climate from Space' – which will draw on data from earth orbiting satellites

For release on 7th April 2015: The European Space Agency (ESA) is making its first foray into massive open online courses (MOOCs) through a partnership with the social learning platform, FutureLearn.

Free online courses will join ESA's wider educational portfolio as it continues to develop new ways of instructing digital natives. The first area of expertise to be unpacked in this way will be ESA's pioneering use of earth orbiting satellites to monitor the state of our climate and the impact of changes over time. ESA is using FutureLearn's platform as a crucial means of encouraging more widespread take up of its valuable earth observation data for educational, training and decision-making purposes.

Built to enable learning through conversation, FutureLearn's platform will make it possible for learners to discuss ESA's course material with one another, and with the scientists leading the course.

Dr Pierre-Philippe Mathieu, Earth Observation Applications Engineer at ESA, said of the partnership:

"Educating and inspiring the next generation of scientists is at the heart of ESA educational activities. As the learning landscape becomes increasingly digital, it is critical that we adopt new technologies to reach learners. By using the FutureLearn platform, we expect to reach many learners motivated to know more about the beauty of our planet from Space and the value of ESA missions, in order to better understand and protect our Earth System. More broadly, I hope to see these free online courses inspire a new generation by revealing the myriad of opportunities that science and space can offer."

Simon Nelson, Chief Executive of FutureLearn, said:

"In today's increasingly knowledge-based world, putting learners in touch with experts in their chosen field is an essential part of any education programme. I am honoured to welcome ESA to the FutureLearn partnership. No doubt our global community of learners will share my excitement at the opportunity to interact with renowned Earth Observation scientists in the pursuit of practical skills and knowledge."

First course

ESA's first MOOC, [Monitoring Climate from Space](#), is open now for learners to sign up for, with teaching set to begin on 8th June 2015. Over five weeks, a selection of the world's foremost scientists will guide learners through the role of satellite data in supporting decisions relating to climate change and sustainable development.

Designed for current and future policy makers, educators and anyone communicating about climate change, the course will aim to give learners a robust understanding of the datasets that should inform their work. As awareness continues to grow of the threat that climate change presents to our planet, the course will also appeal to a wider public interested in examining environmental elements – such as ice thickness, aerosol, sea level and soil moisture – in greater detail.

[Monitoring Climate from Space](#) will draw on measurements captured by recent earth observation missions by the [Cryosat](#), [SMOS](#), [GOCE](#) and [Sentinel](#) satellites, among others. It will also utilise findings from the [Climate Change Initiative \(CCI\)](#), ESA's global monitoring programme for essential climate variables.

One of the key contributors will be Dr Stephen Briggs, ESA Senior Advisor and chairman of the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS). He said of the course:

"It is my hope that learners will come away with a better understanding of the ways in which ESA's global Earth Observation missions can help scientists to better understand how the ocean, atmosphere, biosphere, and cryosphere operate and interact as part of an inter-connected Earth System. We will also introduce learners to the use of the data to support a variety of applications and environmental policies. This course will surely inspire learners across the world about the power and value of earth observation from space, and about learning more on this fascinating topic."

ESA is the latest in a growing list of world-class institutions offering career enhancing courses on FutureLearn. The Agency joins over 50 leading universities from around the world, and cultural bodies like the British Council, British Library and British Museum, all creating high quality learning experiences for over a million learners around the world.

FutureLearn is wholly owned by The Open University which has over 40 years of expertise in distance and online learning. The platform is currently used by over one million learners in more than 190 countries around the world.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The Monitoring Climate from Space course has been designed and produced for ESA by Imperative Space, under the guidance of leading academics and researchers in Earth Observation. The team behind Imperative Space has long-standing heritage in online education and video-led training, including involvement in a number of pioneering precursors to MOOCs over the last decade.

For additional information, please contact:

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About FutureLearn

FutureLearn is a social learning platform based in the UK and providing free, online courses from world-class educators. The partnership consists of higher and specialist education institutions from the UK and around the world, alongside cultural icons like the British Library, British Council and the British Museum. All these offer high quality courses to anyone with an internet connection,

anywhere in the world. The FutureLearn course experience centres on social interaction, whereby people learn by engaging in conversations around the learning material. FutureLearn is wholly owned by The Open University (UK), which has over 40 years' expertise in distance and online learning. For more information, visit www.futurelearn.com.

About Imperative Space

Imperative Space (www.imperativespace.com) is a media and education organisation specialising in space technology and its applications. It has been involved in the development of numerous large scale education initiatives linked to space science and technology, including Google's 'YouTube Space Lab', 'Our-Space' for the UK Space Agency, and the pioneering 'Space Studio School' in the UK.

Imperative Space has been developing educational and media innovations linked to Earth Observation data for several years, and has expertise in communicating about environmental matters using satellite imagery. The company works closely with ESA on education and engagement initiatives, and is currently leading another ESA project involving the use of satellite data in citizen science and crowd sourcing for space science, earth observation and humanitarian relief.

Imperative Space's film and media projects have included First Orbit (filmed entirely from the International Space Station), the 'Day in the Life' film series for the UK Space Agency, and a current documentary project tracing the development of the ESA ExoMars Rover and Aurora programme. Further information can be found at: www.imperativespace.com