GEOG 401
Climate Change

January 14
Discussion Points

Excerpts for Discussion

“In scientific terms, most of the fundamental workings of our planet, including the processes that change climate and landscapes on short and long timescales, were already well understood by the end of the twentieth century.”

“In the context of the unprecedented magnitude and rate of global environmental changes, many people consider that major social, political and economic changes are needed to cope with, manage or avert the worst impacts. These changes should involve new structures and dialogues between scientists and other members of society, for participation in collective decision-making about the future.”
Excerpts for Discussion

“In 2011, world population reached 7 billion inhabitants (United Nations, 2011), and current estimates suggest that our numbers will peak at approximately 9 billion some-time over the next century (Lutz et al., 2008; United Nations, 2011).”

Defining climate change:
“...climate scientists define climate change as a physicochemical problem, the consequence of perturbed atmospheri”c chemistry, planetary albedo and the like.”
“sociologist, Anthony Giddens, addressed climate change entirely as a political problem”
“for economists, it is seen as the ‘biggest market failure’”

Excerpts for Discussion

• “Gro Harlem Brundtland, the chair of the World Commission on Environment and Development, wrote in the foreword of Our Common Future, the Brundtland Report (1987):
‘Environment is where we all live; and development is what we all do in attempting to improve our lot within that abode. The two are inseparable.’”
More food for thought

“The economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of the environment, not the other way around.” (Gaylord Nelson, founder of Earth Day)

“All economic activity is dependent upon that environment and its underlying resource base of forests, water, air, soil, and minerals. When the environment is finally forced to file for bankruptcy because its resource base has been polluted, degraded, dissipated, and irrevocably compromised, the economy goes into bankruptcy with it.”

– Gaylord Nelson (Beyond Earth Day — Fulfilling the Promise, 2002)

The Bretherton diagram (Earth System Science: A Closer View, NASA Advisory Council, 1988):
Who Said this?

• "I think global warming may be real. ... It is not unanimous among scientists that it is disproportionately manmade. What I get a little tired of on the left is this idea that somehow science has decided all this so you can’t have a view."

• "I haven’t been shown any definitive proof yet that [climate change] is what caused [Sandy]. And this is just, listen, this is a distraction. I’ve got a place to rebuild here and people want to talk to me about esoteric theories."

• "Climate change, as they have defined it, can never be disproved, because whether it gets hotter or whether it gets colder, whatever happens, they’ll say, well, it’s changing, so it proves our theory."

• "The volcano that erupted over in Northern Europe [in 2010] actually poured more CO2 into the air in that single act of nature than all of humans have in something like the past 100 years."

• "I do not believe that human activity is causing these dramatic changes to our climate the way these scientists are portraying it."

• "The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-­competitive."

Who Said this?

• "The Earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth. In many parts of the planet, the elderly lament that once beautiful landscapes are now covered with rubbish."

• "Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last 200 years."

• "We are not God. The Earth was here before us and was given to us."

• "The idea of infinite or unlimited growth, which proves so attractive to economists, financiers and experts in technology ... is based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the earth’s goods, and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry at every limit."

• "Yet all is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start."
Who said this?

• “This is not some distant problem of the future. This is a problem that is affecting Americans right now. Whether it means increased flooding, greater vulnerability to drought, more severe wildfires — all these things are having an impact on Americans as we speak.”

• “Part of what’s unique about climate change, though, is the nature of some of the opposition to action. It’s pretty rare that you’ll encounter somebody who says the problem you’re trying to solve simply doesn’t exist. When President Kennedy set us on a course for the moon, there were a number of people who made a serious case that it wouldn’t be worth it; it was going to be too expensive, it was going to be too hard, it would take too long. But nobody ignored the science. I don’t remember anybody saying that the moon wasn’t there or that it was made of cheese.”

• "We’ve got to accelerate the transition away from dirty energy. Rather than subsidize the past, we should invest in the future — especially in communities that rely on fossil fuels. That’s why I’m going to push to change the way we manage our oil and coal resources, so that they better reflect the costs they impose on taxpayers and our planet.”

• “Look, if anybody still wants to dispute the science around climate change, have at it. You’ll be pretty lonely, because you’ll be debating our military, most of America’s business leaders, the majority of the American people, almost the entire scientific community, and 200 nations around the world who agree it’s a problem and intend to solve it.”

Who Do We Believe?

Rush Limbaugh  Al Gore  Rajendra Pachauri
Getting the Message Out?

Why Are We Resistant to This Message?

What affect has Al Gore had on the climate change debate?