

CLIMATE CHANGE: ON THE BRINK OF DISASTER AND THE BRINK OF SALVATION

Speaker

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Abstract

While the physics of climate change is well understood, much less well understood is how it will impact humans. What we can see is that the impacts of climate change are strongly non-linear and we can expect them to accelerate in the future. The good news is that the price of alternative, climate-safe energy is rapidly dropping. For the first time, we are able to largely solve the climate problem by transitioning away from fossil fuels at little or no cost to society. At this point, climate change is not a scientific or technical problem, but a political one.

Biography

Andrew Dessler is a professor in the Department of Atmospheric Sciences and the Earl F. Cook Professor of Geosciences at Texas A&M. His latest research focuses on climate change, water vapor, and clouds. His work has been critical in climate change both in informing the scientific community and introducing students to this important field. In addition to teaching, he contributes the public discussion on climate change by writing numerous opinion pieces and blogs, interviewing in the mainstream media and testifying before US select committees. He received his PhD in chemistry from Harvard University in 1994. He did postdoctoral work at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center (1994-6) and then spent nine years on the research faculty of the University of Maryland (1996-2005). Dessler spent 2000 as a Senior Policy Analyst in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, where he collaborated with Ted Parson. While there, he became aware of a profound lack of understanding among policymakers and the general public about how science works and how to interpret the conflicting claims one often hears in policy debates. Based on that experience, he wrote a book, *The Science and Politics of Global Climate Change: A Guide to the Debate*, that uses examples from the climate change arena to explain how science is used and misused in the policy arena. Dessler's academic publications include one other book: *The Chemistry and Physics of Stratospheric Ozone* (2000). He has also published extensively in the scientific literature on stratospheric ozone depletion and the physics of climate.



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