

Why is Global Warming Polarizing?

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Global warming is a complex controversy, unlike previous ones – Is the Earth flat or round? Is it at the center of the universe or is it a planet orbiting the Sun? – because it involves both science and ethics. Is the rise in the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide causing global warming? That question has a definite, objective answer, but the following one does not: what is the appropriate balance between our responsibilities to future generations, and our obligation to assist those suffering today? How do we prevent our subjective values from influencing our response to the scientific question?

This seminar explores an answer based on recent developments in the earth sciences which show that we are most fortunate to be in a very special place, planet Earth, at a very special time in its long and eventful history. “The greatest obstacle to progress is not ignorance, but the illusion of knowledge.”