

Climate Change: Controversy, Communication and Debate

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David Stainforth, Grantham Research Institute and Centre for the Analysis of Timeseries,
London School of Economics and Political Science, London.

The seriousness of the risks related to anthropogenic climate change are clear from basic scientific understanding. Yet recent controversies have given the impression to many that even the need to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions is matter of widespread debate in the scientific community. It is not. Yet there are many aspects of climate science which are. Aspects which fundamentally influence how we engage with and respond to the threat. These include policy options, and their implications, as well as basic questions of how scientists should approach the challenge of climate prediction.

Now is an exciting time to work in climate science. Innovative approaches are required across disciplines as diverse as physics, economics, chemistry, political science, statistics, computer science and philosophy. Furthermore the need for good communication between scientists, policy makers and the general public has never been more important. In this talk I will discuss the need for better communication and wider public discussion of the issues which are in fact being actively discussed in the scientific community. I will present some of the challenges of climate prediction by focusing on the results of the volunteer computing project climateprediction.net. This is a project which brings together both the essential questions of where we derive confidence in scientific statements, and the opportunity to engage directly with a worldwide community of enthusiasts.