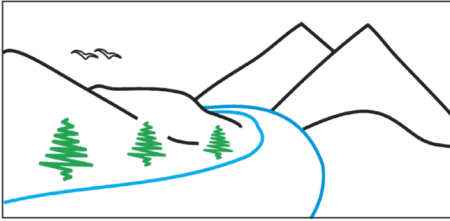


NRESi



"Our environment is our future"

RESEARCH COLLOQUIUM SERIES

Dr. Jerry Osborn

Professor, Dept. of Geoscience, University of Calgary



Friday
Oct 30, 2009

3:30 - 4:30

LECTURE THEATRE

7 - 152

LIGHT REFRESHMENTS
SERVED AT 3:20 PM

The Global Warming Debate: The messy and bitter intersection of science and politics

The great majority of climate scientists are convinced that recent warming is largely due to anthropogenic effects, and many think that serious, perhaps catastrophic, climatically-induced problems await humanity in the next several decades. But a small minority of actively publishing climate scientists, a considerable number of scientists in other fields, many conservative politicians, as well as some significant proportion of the general public, remain skeptical. Even though the train is already preparing to leave the station, in the form of proposed cap-and-trade legislation in the U.S., debate continues in a variety of venues that include scientific journals, the web, pop print media and television, think tanks, houses of government, courtrooms, schools, and churches. The debate is complicated by fusion of several questions which are not always separated by debaters, and by mixing of scientific and social issues to the degree that interpretations of science are influenced by social/political philosophy.

The result is wildly varying views on scientific issues, defensiveness and entrenchment of scientists, cherry-picking of evidence to support points of view, diversions over hockey sticks and oil-company funding, and immense public confusion, as each side belittles the other in an attempt to sway public opinion.

This talk will offer a brief overview of the state of debate over CO₂-generated warming, from a point of view that is disinterested politically and without vested interests scientifically. Some examples of influences on, and excesses of, the debate will be followed by a very brief look at current arguments made by both believers and deniers. It is concluded that there will be no end to controversy in the near future, because cooling influences provided by internal ocean-atmosphere variability and a quiet sun may for the next few or several years mitigate whatever anthropogenic warming is in the system, leaving room for some ongoing ambiguity.