

Book Review

Science

Author: Archer
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Howard Falcon-Lang (University of Bristol) writes Will the twenty-first century be remembered as the age of the generalist? After decades during which specialists have held sway, the multi-disciplinary nature of many scientific problems today are driving us back to our synthetic roots. No contemporary crisis is more profoundly broad based than global warming. In his new book, David Archer marshals a bewildering array of disparate facts to help us understand this complex issue. Beginning with the physics of the atmosphere, he carefully builds a picture of how the carbon cycle works and its effect on climate. Importantly, he distinguishes natural fluctuations from human-caused perturbations, and critically assesses levels of uncertainty, thus leaving no room for manoeuvre for those sceptics in the pay of oil industry. However, unlike many textbooks on the subject, Archer doesn't finish with the science. Rather he goes on to investigate the economic and political implications of global warming. Sure, unprecedented climate warming is happening, but is that really such a bad thing, and if it is—just how bad is it? How much is it going to cost, how can that cost be minimized without severe macroeconomic implications, and who is going to foot the bill? Based on an undergraduate course developed at the University of Chicago, *Global Warming: Understanding of the Forecast* is a *tour de force* of elegant explanation and didactic brilliance. Each chapter ends with a pithy list of 'take home points' to ensure the reader has grasped all the key facts, as well as few online 'projects' that help to take issues a little further and consolidate learning. I cannot recommend this book too highly; it is a well-written, evocative exposition of one of the most important issues of our time.