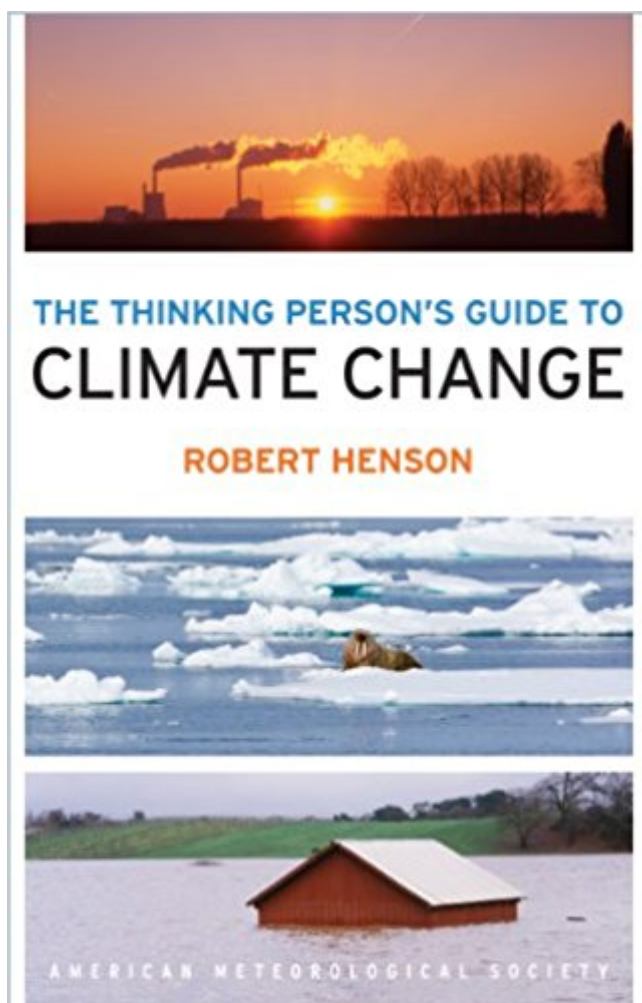


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The Thinking Person's Guide To Climate Change



Synopsis

Everybody can be a thinking person when it comes to climate change, and this book is a perfect roadmap. Start a web search for “climate change” and the first three suggestions are “facts,” “news,” and “hoax.” The Thinking Person’s Guide to Climate Change is rooted in the first, up to date on the second, and anything but the last. Produced by one of the most venerable atmospheric science organizations, it is a must-read for anyone looking for the full story on climate change. Using global research and written with nonscientists in mind, the Guide breaks down the issues into straightforward categories: “Symptoms” covers signs such as melting ice and extreme weather, while “Science” lays out what we know and how we figured it out. “Debates” tackles the controversy and politics, while “Solutions” and “Actions” discuss what we can do as individuals and communities to create the best possible future. Full-color illustrations offer explanations of everything from how the greenhouse effect traps heat to which activities in everyday life emit the most carbon. Special-feature boxes zoom in on locations across the globe already experiencing the effects of a shifting climate. The Thinking Person’s Guide to Climate Change combines years of data with recent research, including conclusions from the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. This reference provides the most comprehensive, yet accessible, overview of where climate science stands today, acknowledging controversies but standing strong in its stance that the climate is changing—and something needs to be done. The Thinking Person’s Guide to Climate Change is a full update and revision of Robert Henson’s, *The Rough Guide to Climate Change* and is now published through the American Meteorological Society, with distribution through University of Chicago Press.

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Customer Reviews

"If you're bewildered by the complexity of the climate change/global warming issue, and want a comprehensive, easy-to-understand guide that presents an unbiased view of the important issues, look no further than Henson's The Thinking Person's Guide to Climate Change. . . . Henson is probably the world's premier science writer in meteorology and climate change." (Jeff Masters Weather Underground)"Henson has written a complete and powerful climate change science book, updating and expanding upon his The Rough Guide to Climate Change." (National Center for Science Education)"The Thinking Person's Guide to Climate Change . . . is aimed at the general public more than the specialist. In spite of this, it is still worthy reading for professionals working in ecology, meteorology, geology, or any segment of the environmental sciences. . . . It covers most of the issues related to the topic, from geophysics to soil microbiology and through phenological changes to the impact of global warming on human life and possible political as well as technological solutions. Moreover, it does all this in such a clear and logical style, simplifying the most complex processes through a series of examples and short explanations. . . . Vivid. . . . The book does not stop with understanding, it also emphasizes the responsibility everyone has to control emissions of greenhouse gases and provides actions everyday people can take to combat climate change. . . . I wish this book were on the shelves of bookstores all around the world, translated to most languages, because this would enable the huge family of interested readers to get detailed insight into the problems climate change causes and to get involved in the battle against climate change." (Conservation Biology)

Based in Boulder, Colorado, Robert Henson is a meteorologist and blogger at Weather Underground and contributing editor of Weatherwise magazine. Before joining Weather Underground in 2015, Henson spent more than 20 years writing on weather and climate for the National Center for Atmospheric Research. He is the author of Weather on the Air: A History of Broadcast Meteorology and coauthor with C. Donald Ahrens of the textbook Meteorology Today (11th edition). His Rough Guide to Climate Change was a finalist for the United Kingdom's Royal Society Prize for Science Books.

I like how this book presents the actual facts and very little political propaganda. It presents both sides of the argument often. The only thing I don't like is how it brings up evolution so often. We all know climate change is a controversial science, why add more controversy and doubt to it? Overall, excellent book though.

This book is well written, balanced, and comprehensive. It covers the subject from pretty much every angle -- the science, the politics, what you can do on a personal level. As someone new to climate activism, it was exactly the kind of book I was looking for.

This is a recommendable book, but not as much so as it might have been. It is indeed *derived* quite closely *from material originally published as the Rough Guide to Climate Change*, by the same author, and, as with its predecessors, includes some important updates befitting a still fast-evolving subject. This work remains valuable as a concise yet encyclopedic, readable yet scientifically accurate *one-stop-shopping* reference guide. It was for that reason that I purchased the second edition of the *Rough Guide*, *used it for a class I taught, recommended it to the students, and later replaced it with the equally praiseworthy third edition.* Though it has the same section titles, and much the same solidly informative content as the 'Rough Guide,' this newer *Thinking Person's* Guide, *has added length without adding comparably to quality, and unfortunately does not fully replace the earlier publication (e.g., the third edition).* The most serious step backwards is the complete axing in the new book of a very well-done ten page section of *Resources: Climate change books and websites* in its predecessors. Given the book's *raison d'être* as a reference tool, to entirely omit the sources for additional reading component amounts to a notable editing error. Any inference (e.g. from page xvii) that the AMS bookstore website (with a small number of its own publications on climate topics, T shirts, etc.) is some sort of effective online replacement for a proper comprehensive bibliography and source guide would be absurd. The *digital versions of key graphics* (available on the webpage for the book itself, though this is not clear from the page xvii directions) will no doubt be useful for lecturers but do not show more than what is in the printed book itself (albeit well done there). The *"Who's Responsible"* section of the book contains

more material than the *Rough Guide* did, but a chance was missed to add in the most important international comparison. Carbon dioxide emissions are long-lived and accumulate in the atmosphere: to keep their “greenhouse effect” from increasing would require not just leveling off emissions but eliminating them more or less altogether, on a net basis. (A roughly level stock of atmospheric CO₂ requires a roughly zero net flow, at least for centuries to come). A key stumbling block to international carbon emissions agreements has been the consistent reluctance of large but late industrializers such as China and India to commit to major cuts, on the basis that their cumulative historical emissions are still well below the magnitude of predecessors such as the US and UK. This expanded “Thinking Person’s Guide,” however, includes no country-by-country comparison of cumulative CO₂ releases. Another missed opportunity occurs in the similarly worded but now longer by about a fifth “Heated Debate” section where the at least potentially misleading use of the word “skeptical” is undiminished if not increased. Some public criticism of climate change science is “skeptical” however most of it in recent years has been anything but, and the amount of genuine uncertainty voiced (concerning the basic scientific findings) has by any objective assessment been in notable long term decline since at least the late 1990s. Of course, the motives for and forms exhibited by efforts to spread disinformation about climate science vary, but if a single catch-all designation is required, one could easily think of a number which would be more accurate than “skepticism.” The new book missed a chance to devote about one of its about fifty additional pages to the still apt and still underquoted observation of science historian Spencer Weart in 2006: “Half a century ago, nearly all scientists thought greenhouse warming was scarcely likely to be a problem. It took decades of accumulating evidence, with many hard-fought debates, to convince them they were wrong. Panels of scientists convened on climate change hundreds of times in many countries. As scientists, most of the panelists were professional skeptics.” Author Robert Henson and the AMS are to be commended for dispassionately tackling some of the more controversial and politically thorny aspects of climate change policy debates, but going along (even accidentally) with the semantic trick of mislabeling disinformation about science as skepticism is unnecessary. A related (and ripe for revision but not revised) text example occurs in the author’s introduction: “Whether you’re alarmed, skeptical, or simply

curious. This book will help. The book will indeed help, and a plug for it on that basis is both justified and informative, but buying into the deliberately misframed dichotomy of “alarmists” versus “skeptics” is an unfortunate illustration of what the book itself on pages 336-37 rightly criticizes as the “misleading sense of symmetry” resulting from a misapplied “media paradigm” of “two sides to EVERY story” [or, in this example, three sides]. Portraying almost as a sort of random personal preference a dichotomy between searching for scientific truth and deliberately obfuscating it does not seem particularly respectful to the “thinking person” towards whom the book is aimed. A more subtle misconception, though still easily remediable and well within the ability of open-minded “thinkers” to understand a clarifying revision of, occurs at the outset of the AMS policy director’s foreword: “The choices we make over the next several years will help set the direction for civilization and (Earth’s climate) for decades and centuries to come.” While this hyperbole cannot be definitively ruled out, it certainly cannot be proven either, and it is a defacto gift to peddlers of anti-science myths. One of the most potent arguments against the past several decades of advancement in climate science has been the impression (exaggerated and misleading but not entirely unfounded either) of repeated warnings of impending doom repeatedly not coming to pass. Time is indeed of the essence in anthropogenic global climate disruption, for two powerful reasons: 1) Each year’s delay in acting to significantly cut humanity’s reliance on fossil fuels makes it increasingly difficult for us to end up staying below the total “safe for climate as humans have known it” amount of such fuel which can be cumulatively consumed. 2) We will probably not know for sure when they hit us until after they have, but at some stage positive feedback “tipping points” are likely. We may be reaching some major ones already now or maybe not for many decades to come, but whenever they do come, they are very probably going to be quite bad news, especially in retrospect. It is thus crucial to get this timing issue right. We cannot say how much more time we will have to work with and on what basis, but continued delay is reckless. NOT, however (and repeated periodically like a marketing slogan), that the next little while is necessarily known to be THE decisive time frame. The Foreword, inadvertently no doubt, but nonetheless most unfortunately, misconstrues this timing issue, and on the opening page of the text.

“We must act right now or else” overhyping has been an endemic

but helping stall climate policy development for decades. Ironically, the overall high caliber of this book makes it a more glaring error here than elsewhere. These drawbacks are nevertheless readily repairable, and it is to be hoped that future editions will take the "thinking person's" mission more to heart and seek to go a few small but vital steps beyond the readable how-to-manual-for-anyone objective, as worthy as that more limited goal surely is. Meanwhile, this book, like its preceding editions, can still be widely recommended for its deft and generally thorough depiction of trees. For a really clear view of the broader forest as well, readers will need to go elsewhere, and the first place I would suggest starting with would be the list of sources included in its immediate predecessor but inexplicably dropped from this volume.

A very good and comprehensive book. It is already a bit dated, as things are changing quickly...most notably the Paris Accord. However, a worthwhile read.

one of the most informative books available on the topic of climate change

Accessible, easy to read, informative. I reviewed this book for a curriculum adoption in a local school district and liked it so much I purchased the book for myself.

Required reading for a meteorology class. Was interesting.

We used it in our Osher Lifelong Learning study group; well written, authoritative, current and helpful.

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