Climate Change

Imperial Seminar Presentation

Ivo Welch

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Intro, Level, Point

- CC is among the most fascinating subjects of our times, even if it is not *financial* economics.
- ► The level is for finance and economics researchers without much background in climate change.
- ▶ I will (try to) convince you that for everything that matters, there should be almost no disagreement.
 - important vs. unimportant disagreements
- ▶ It advertises a free textbook and hopes one of you will teach such a course.

Warning: Presentation Coverage

- Covers many areas,
- Covers work of many other researchers,
- Covers textbook (my class), and
- Mentions my own research.

Too much!

- Many opinions, emotions, and misinformation about CC.
 - Anyone who reads knows a little about bits and pieces.
 - Extreme intellectual hostilities, even for academia.
 - Often information is distorted by ideology and politics, too.
 - ▶ I will miss many subtleties in my 75-min attempt.
 - ▶ I may have to cut some discussion short. Too much material. **Apologies in Advance.** Talk to me over coffee.
 - But I do want to answer (tough) questions. Point of a seminar.
 - I will tell you if I oversimplified, don't know, or disagree.
 - ► I am not trying to be brusque.

Talk (and Textbook and Course) Outline

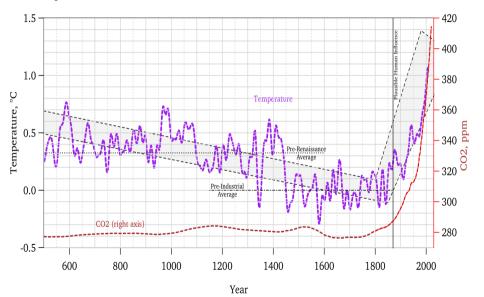
- 1. Climate Change Earth Science Background
- 2. Social Science Perspective
- 3. Technological Situation

1. Climate Change (Earth Science)

- ► Hold policy questions until "2. Social Science."
- Until 2, science questions only, please.

- ▶ I use data and predictions from the IPCC.
 - ► Reasonably good, despite some (reasonable) quibbles.
 - ► Like economics: Not everything is correct and unbiased but it's way better than the alternatives.
 - Like economics: In flux. Not knee-jerk but reasonably disciplined.
 - ► What would even be reasonable alternatives?
 - More than good enough for what my own points are.
 - ▶ (Interesting to argue earth science details for other researchers.)
 - not my main expertise.
 - if a little better or worse, no problem for what I will suggest.

Strong Evidence

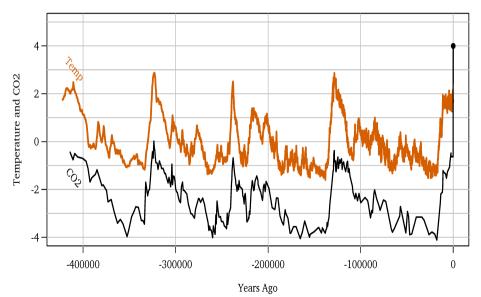


Mechanism

- ► Earth has been heating up and will continue to do so.
 - ► Measurable current radiation imbalance: In-Out.
 - Mean consensus: Think ≈ 2-3.5°C by 2150 (1°C already).
 baseline always difficult to keep straight. I consult book.
 - 2°C: Boston vs. NY vs. DC vs. Raleigh
 - ► 4°C: Munich vs. Milan vs. Palermo
 - Think Scandinavia, Germany, Italy, Israel
 - Trimic Scarlandivia, Scrindivy, 1840,
 - Not uninhabitable, but different
 - Problems where hot, poor, and populous

- ► More catastrophic scenarios, say up to 5°C+, possible.
 - domino effects, feedback loops, tipping points, unknownsetc.
 - low prob, but not far-left tail...probably, but not certain.
 - scientists are not giving a probability distribution.
- ► Expected Mean Sea Level (MSL) Rise: ≈ 1-2 feet.
 - could be 6 feet if glaciers melt!
 - 240 feet since last ice age
 - ▶ fight climate change? 10cm exp diff
 - The ice age is coming, the sun's zooming in. Meltdown expected, the wheat's growing thin Engines stop running, but I have no fear 'Cause London is drowning I live by the river

CO2 Now: Smoking Gun?!



Scientific Evidence?

- Most paleo-evidence is irrelevant.
 - CO₂ was endogenous, except in some episodes.
 - hotter temperatures also "bubble out" CO2.
 - arguing badly about paleo-evidence, on behalf of a hidden policy agenda, only gives fodder to trolls.
- Recent 150 years, plus physics, identify current cause:
 - ► Humanity is running a ghg experiment and it is working!
 - Isotopes strongly suggest fossil fuel drove increase in CO2.

▶ But it doesn't really matter much. If CC had been due to hotter sun, the important questions would be the same:

What should and can we do about CC now?

- ► Focus of Book: Mitigation (Reduction of CC).
- (Adaptation is arguably more important?!)

- Science: Lots of uncertainty about CO₂ → Temp (climate-sensitivity) coefficient.
 - ▶ Doubling of CO₂ increases global temp by how many °C?
 - From 1 to 5, with consensus average about 2-3.
 - range 1-5 quite possible in complext Earth

physics of GHG effect solo about 2.

- ► Humanity has increased CO₂ by 50% (280 to 420 ppm).
- ► Air CO₂ will go considerably higher (to 750-850ppm).
- ...but never to Mars (think 95% air CO₂)
- ► Temporary interlude: Earth will remove human CO₂ again (but temp interludes can kill lots of life);

- Science Plus Econ: relatively better predictions of future CO₂ emission paths:
 - ► RCP 2.0 3.0 some dreamers still believe possible.
 - ► **RCP 4.0 6.0** realistic range
 - +2°C to +2.5°C (above today, not preind)
 - subject to clean-E progress, econ growth, renunciation.
 - ► CC is coming. **Action range** is limited to about 0.5°C.
 - ► RCP 8.0 9.0 almost surely no longer the future.
 - ▶ +3°C+
 - use only as (inferior) standin for "worse than expected" outcome
 - backward-looking, we are still on it (clean E is coming)

RCP 4: Aggressive Activism

RCP 6-7: Neglectful Complaisance

Difference: 0.3-0.5°C.

- ► CC will be major problem in "marginal" regions.
 - ► (Change itself is costly [and, slow change is inevitable].)
 - exact locations unknown
 - planet redistributes heat (e.g., through weather).
 - most net costs will probably not be in the USA or Global North.
 - some costs, some benefits, much adaptation.
- (CC is not the same as water shortages, species mass extinction, or biosystem collapse, although it can contribute to these problems, too.)

Grumpy Economists

- ► I am not making up that countries will be hurt. This is the overwhelming scientific consensus.
 - WHO: diseases, famines, etc.
 - QJE: excess deaths in the millions, mostly in Africa. (but...)
 - ► I have empirical evidence that hotter years have depressed growth in hot countries. See below.
 - Not only Stern, but also Nordhaus, Pindyck, etc. agree.
 - You can disagree exactly whether it is just bad or very bad. You should not disagree that the best prediction is "no harm" or that there is little uncertainty.

- ► Global climate change (even if 3-5°C)
 - could kill millions of people prematurely
 - poverty already kills hundreds of millions prematurely
 - will likely be bad for hundreds of millions of people,
 - but will likely only be nuisance for billions of other people.
 - there are no models in which CC is predicted to dent worldwide pop growth or shrink per-person forecast income.
 - Nothing is certain, though.



- ▶ Unlikely that the world will end due to CC.
- ▶ Not certain that the world will *not* end due to CC.
 - extremely unlikely, though no one knows for sure.
 - credible scientists do not predict it.
 - same for contagious epidemics, nuclear wars, supervolcanos, undetected major asteroids, etc.

- My own policy points below will be the same, regardless of where CC outcome will end up:
- 1. between "just nuisance (small costs)"
- 2. and "end of advanced civilizations (extreme costs)."
- ► You are welcome to an alternative educated POV,
 - but please don't try to argue scientific evidence facetiously for the sake of politics and ideology. I am not the right person for this anyway.
 - ▶ if this is what you want to, feel free to join the Heritage Institute or Greenpeace.

World Temp Map and Trend Map

Sidenote: My Own Current Empirical Work

- ► (Existing) Facts:
 - ► About 1°C avg WW warming in last 40 years.
 - Good year-to-year variation (but esp in North).
 - Hotter years have been harmful to countries!
 - (Adaptation could reduce future harm.)
- (Wrong Existing) Empirical Work:
 - All that mattered was poverty.
 - Geography was unimportant.
 - Shown only on margin, but also solo(!)
 - Arguably wrong specification.

(With Romain W:)

- ► Weird Specification in earlier work
 - ▶ Poorer countries have had a neg coef
 - ► Hotter countries (solo!) have had a pos coef
- Correct Specification
 - ▶ Hotter countries have *never* had a positive coef
- Novel and Perhaps Worrisome: After year 2000
 - Geography has become the dominant harm determinant.
 - Poverty has been carrying much little importance.
 - Inescapable harm?
 - (but long-term adaptation more related to wealth?)

2. Social Science

Now policy (soon), so policy questions welcome

- Fossil fuels and particle emissions have costs and benefits.
 - ► Fossil fuels have serious negative externalities (PM and GW).
 - simple public goods problem.
 - Socially, collectively, world parties burn too much FF on the margin now, *relative* to a social coordinated optimum.
 - costs, benefits, redistributional aspects.
- Tradeoffs are changing
 - externalities of fossil fuels have been becoming larger.
 - renewables are only now becoming economically viable.

Economic Workhorse Models

- Integrated Assessment Models (IAM)
- Nordhaus, Stern IAMS
 - seminal and great (but) sketch models.
 - CC is economically harmful. SCC (not /tC but /tCO₂).
 - ► Shadow price of emissions is \$30-\$50/tCO₂.
 - Add in CC uncertainty, shadow price is more like \$100 / tCO₂
 - convex damages
 - SCC should be rising in the future.

Textbook Treatment of IAMs

- The textbook gives explanations of different perspectives.
 - Some disagreement on discount rate etc. Too literal?
 - Nordhaus believes in "climate pacts."
 - Fair to many different valid perspectives.

Textbook: IAMs? Really?

- Problem is not about what "we" should do.
 - ▶ Most current debates are local and irrelevant to CC.
 - Angels on the heads of pins (incl Lomborg and Koonin.)
- Problem is also not about blame or ethical considerations
 - development today vs less climate change tomorrow.
 - book still explains the ethics, no time here.

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 - development today vs less climate change tomorrow.
 - book still explains the ethics, no time here.
- Problem is about what "we" will (and can) do.
 - ▶ No solutions, but better or worse approaches/remedies.
 - Realistic does not mean nihilistic.

Main Point of Book, Talk, Etc

Kemosabe: What do you mean by "we"?

Main Point of Book, Talk, Etc

- We need realism. This means primarily acknowledging self-interest when self-interest is strong.
 - 1st order concern!
 - only 2nd- and 3rd-order sacrifices seem viable,
 - on a worldwide basis, not just a Euro or OECD basis.
 - climate change is about global, not local emissions

- ► Even many economists get upset when I lay out the evidence and talk about self-interest.
 - What if the world comes to an end?
 - ► How can I be so callous?
 - ► Seems bizarre self-interest is at core of our discipline.
 - ► (A few economists have an extreme opposite reaction.)

1. Basic Changes

Emits = N * Emits/N = N * GDP/N * Emits/GDP (per year, where applicable)

1960	2022	2050e
9	36	43
3	4.6	4.4
0.5	17.1	29.2
0.25	3.75	6.50
	9 3 0.5	9 36 3 4.6 0.5 17.1

Population Graphs

1. CC No Longer an OECD Problem

2050-2100	OECD	Not OECD
Population	12%	88%
GDP	50%	50%
Emissions	28%	72%

Fact 1. No Longer an OECD Problem

- ▶ 2/3 of emissions today are non-OECD. 3/4 soon.
- ► It's not about luxury consumption.
 - "We" are no longer starring players.
 - ▶ USA is ultimately not primarily causing \triangle CO₂ in air.
 - ► India now matters more. (China matters, but is done.)
 - ► If Africa were to develop, much worse. (Pop growth.)
- Climate activists' main focus on shooting ourselves in the foot has little chance to curb CC and Temp.
 - ▶ they care too much about OECD, ESG, and righteousness.

Fact 2. Humanity is not the BORG.

- (Worldwide SCC = Net Cost is never applicable to us.)
 - ► Req: 1 mo rent (worldwide), 3-6 mos if OECD alone.
 - "Who" is often left badly vague even in talks.

The SCC is practically irrelevant.

- ▶ It would hurt...quite a bit.
- There will be no climate pacts.
- ► There will be no (WW) consumption renunciation.
- ► There will be no generational commitments.

Need It More Obvious?

Spend all military expenses on CC instead?

- Discuss any more obvious dreams / absurdities?
- ► I know of no free-rideable treaty with major sacrifices ever voluntarily widely (WW?) adopted?
 - painful implementation is not the same as "babble at COPs"
 - ► Montreal Ozone is *not* a counter-example.

Easy Blurps For Non-Economist Relatives

- 1. Countries have militaries for the same reason why they will not decarbonize.
- 2. Arguing about whether a nuclear war will kill 1 or 5 billion people is irrelevant.
- 3. Arguing about the optimal world choice is irrelevant.
- 4. Arguing about what can realistically be done *asap* to reduce the probability of nuclear war may not be ideal but it is the only relevant discussion.

Too obvious?

Easy Blurps for Economist Relatives

Why are you analyzing the socially optimal worldwide amount of military expenditures, as if there was one entity?

Revealed Preference

As of 2020s, three decades by now:

- ▶ World can suck out at <\$10/tCO₂ on the margin today. Who is volunteering to pay?
- Spending a lot more today due to concern about going beyond the margin seems sysiphean.
 - some research funding for better ideas seems ok
- Who wants to pay to suck out China's and India's increasing GDP emissions?

- ► Which developed country voters will say "it was our fault, let's transfer tens of billions of dollars to other countries?"
 - Who cares about the small EU?
 - ► And even EU doesn't really do it much, either.
- ► Which developing country voters will say "it was their fault, but they are now cutting back, so we shouldn't emit (our"fair" share), either?"

Hopeless Economic Misanalysis (IMHO)

- Everything hivemind renunciation related.
 - Carbon Footprints.
 - Belt-Tightening in OECD.
 - Plastic straws and garbage sorting are wealthy salon insights.
 - (PS: I am not against reducing plastic straws.)
 - United Nations COP conferences
 - ► The Montreal Ozone Protocol is not an analogy.

Do you really want to count on world-wide painful renunciation of consumption and/or vast transfer payments to reduce global emissions and global warming?

Not local, but global emissions.

Top Choices

Sector Emissions and Fuel Type Histories

Top Choices

Must have a chance to be implementable

- Of course, even the best remedies will not happen without resistance by incumbents,
- but The Force should or could ultimately prevail!
 - Economics is The Force.
 - But this is "cosmic." Government is everywhere, esp in energy (for good reasons). Ever difficult balancing.
 - (Some rich people and governments can of course shoot themselves in their feet. But 6 billion poorer people will not.)

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- 4. Must be able to sustain majority support.
- 5. Needs to work for 6-7 billion people in China, India, other Asia, and Africa.
 - Who cares about Sweden?
 - USA? UK? Imperial?

Quick Abbreviated Tour of Tech

Ask Me About Details Over Coffee (or correct my facts if wrong)

Rem 1. Clean Energy is Tantalizingly Close

Viable useful activism: subsid clean energy innovation

- ▶ But like all government X, difficult and conflicted.
- Vast international commercial opportunities for innovators.
- Clean Elec is (cosmically) tantalizingly close
 - please stop "net-zero" stupidity.
 - ▶ net-10% is good enough and much *much* cheaper.

Clean Energy is about more than CC

Fossil fuels are nasty stuff.

- ► They kill millions with their particle emissions,
- but they are why *you* (and G Thunberg) expect to live to 80, and sit in this nice room.
- ► FF time is passing now. It seems highly efficient to speed up their demise with subsidies for R&D into clean E.
 - Nordhaus' "Double Externality"

Electricity Generation in 2030/2050:

- ▶ 1 MWh of Dirty/Nuclear Energy: \$50-\$100/MWh
 - nuclear, too, even outside the US and Germany
 - ▶ I would love better nuclear, (too,) but ...
- What do you think the equivalent clean energy costs are in 2023? Expected to be in 2050?

Clean LCOEs in 2023 and 2050e

- ► In the USA in 2023, wind, solar, and Natgas all sit between \$40 and \$100 already.
 - location matters to installation.
- ▶ 1 MWh of clean energy in 2050e: \$15-\$20/MWh
 - but only when nature cooperates,
 - ...and that ain't enough.

- ► Electricity storage is the key problem
- ► Right now, storage cost is falling below \$200/MWh.
 - Situation seems almost absurd for day-to-day experience.
 - ► Imagine if oil cost \$1/barrel to burn now, but \$10 / barrel to store until 8pm.
 - ► Imagine if dinner cost \$1 to eat now, but \$10 to pack.
- ▶ But even with today's storage costs, diurnal wind and solar power are already cheaper in *many, many* places.

Policy

- ► Help subsidize how to store 1 MWh for <\$100/MWh and then let capitalist competition do its job.
 - ok, still needs grid coordination fixes. BIG PROBLEM
 - plus, nothing about energy can be pure free markets.

Fossil Fuels for Electricity Plus

- NatGas: Most competitive fossil fuel for Elec and Heat.
 - ► Yet, solar PV is already becoming cheaper than NatGas fuel for existing plants in the United States. *Wow!*
 - ...and this was before 2022 (and Ukraine)!

- ► **Coal**: No entrepreneur in the OECD has built a new electricity coal plant in decades.
 - ► Ironically, coal is no longer a capitalist outcome!
 - ► Coal is heavy to schlepp and expensive to clean up.
 - ► Coal now lives off unions and government regulation.
 - ► China (India) are building massive new plants now.
 - Nothing in E is without government involvement!

► Oil

- will probably be uncompetitive in grid-adjacent ground transport soon
- ▶ niche: long-term off-grid transport, chemical products, etc.

(Good Question: Will FF remain the cheapest heat source.)

- ▶ PS: Please don't Believe Propaganda and Dogma.
 - ► I don't have time to dispell many here. (See book.)
 - (Who cares if windmills are buried later?)
 - (Who cares if solar PV needs size of Massachusetts?)
 - (Who cares if capitalists get richer?)
 - (Who really cares about the poor on Bangladesh's coast? Not a callous statement but a genuine question.)

Little Mass



Unlikely Solutions

- Current nuclear tech is niche, at best.
 - Safety, spent fuel, proliferation, mass production.
 - Regulatory and public hostility
 - BUT it's not mostly about US regulatory hostility.
 - See France, USSR, China, Ukraine, Korea, Japan, Mexico, etc.
 - ► Even already-built plants still incur \$40-\$50/MWh marginal cost! They are now often closing down early at \$50/MWh.
 - It's mostly about cost competitiveness (NatGas, E-Storage)
 - Promising: FOAK in Wyoming (big subsidies!). Pebble-bed reactor. Small reactors. etc. R&D = good. Install = bad.

- ► Hydrogen seems outright stupid as E-storage.
 - Had real hope and excitement, but
 even if cost declines by factor of 3, NatGas dominates
 - even if electricity were free, H is not competitive to NatGas.
 - badly corrosive on transport, too.
 - Whatever El will cost, batteries and heat storage are/will likely store El much cheaper for output as El or Ht
 - Future niche for hydrogen only in long-range transport.
 - Possible niche with epsilon E in very long run. Who knows.
 - Huge IRA subsidies in US

- ► Industrial CO₂ sequestration is outright stupid.
 - ▶ Only P.R. and "stupid government regulations" arbitrage.
 - see below for cheaper better seg alternatives

Huge IRA subsidies in US

Rem 2. Regional Fossil Fuel Taxes

- ► (Viable in many places!)
- "This stuff kills your parents and children!"
- It makes spending outdoors less desirable.
 - Clean air is a luxury good.
 - Very visible and noticeable.
 - Would you prefer 5% more income if you had to suffer Beijing-like smog and air? Not me. Not most.
 - Still tough to implement. See Delhi.

Rem 3. Smart Regreening (Everywhere)

- ► Timber is valuable. Also, hemp, seaweed, etc.
 - ▶ Wood and bamboo are amazing materials. At half price...
- Available cultivatable land is abundant worldwide.
 - But it's not in the Amazon and Indonesia.
 - Gvnmts could lease out land with credits for CO₂.
- ▶ Think $$10/tCO_2$ on the margin for $1t/CO_2$.
 - ▶ \$30/tCO₂ not for 50 GtCO₂/Yr, but for 5 GtCO₂/Yr.
 - ▶ Who cares about 30 years from now? *Care about Now!*
 - "Growing smartly" is super low-hanging fruit.
 - ► Failure is indicative of world coordination & commitment.

4. Many Other Cheap Improvements (OECD)

- ► Time-of-Day Pricing
 - ▶ Big problem is 6-10pm. So make electricity near free when it's sunny, and signal this over the networks.
 - Great for poorer energy-conscious consumers.
 - Crazy Time-of-Day Plans in many places.
- ► Improve Electrical Grid.
 - Logistical and regulatory nightmare.
- Concierge Service for Government Permits
 - ▶ 10 years to start a low-impact mine?
 - Almost impossible for many entrants.

PLEASE ENVIRONMENTALISM: STOP STUPID

- Universities: Invest in clean-energy research chairs and labs. Reduce ESG & vehicle electrification focus.
- ► Economists: Stop focus on arguments about the SCC.
- Companies: Commercialize E-gen and E-storage tech.
- Activists: Promote clean air standards worldwide. Drop anti-capitalist attitudes. Coopt capitalism.
- ► Government: Price Elec. Improve El-Grid. Coordinate. Reduce Red Tape (faster, not laxer). Lease out land.

Apologies on Wish List

- Ignores realist hindrances:
 - admittedly hypocritical ("world as it is")
 - but more feasible
- Hindrance Examples:
 - Investors and activists need to swear allegiance to ESG.
 - Necessary PR and useful customer marketing.
 - Politicians may need to hold coalitions together.
 - University administrators fear cancellation.
 - Activists want to go to the pub with like-minded.

Thanks For Listening

- What is there to argue about that truly matters right now and that has a good chance of success world-wide?
- What could environmentalists be doing more smartly?
- Much more detail and backup in our free textbook.

- Resources
 - http://climate-change.ivo-welch.info/
 - https://www.climate-change.ivo-welch.info/home/16-cribsheet.html