

Intro To Climate

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Our climate has been shifting rapidly over the past years. Towns in the midwest have seen an increase in rain and storm events, while a general heat spell has been hitting the south. Fires have begun to blaze in western portions of the United States, while major hurricanes have devastated communities in the eastern areas. Has the weather lately seemed any different to you? Maybe you have heard some updates in the news? Severe shifts in weather patterns can be accounted for by climate change, and that we must talk about. While you may have heard a little about it in the news, the question still remains. What is climate change and how will it affect me?

The subject of climate change has become increasingly polarized, with definitions becoming twisted as some have assumed that scientific studies may be inaccurate or that conspiracy theories have surfaced. We, however, must step back and examine the facts and events that have led scientists to believe that this shift in recent weather patterns may turn up as devastating— and possibly irreversible without proper intervention. Let us step back and examine the overarching question of this study: what exactly is climate change? The United Nations defines it as “long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns”. This definition, although broad, can help alleviate some of the polarization that accompanies this topic. Some believe that climate change refers to an overall warming, which is incorrect (that is properly referred to as global warming and is a subset of climate change). Now, that part has been cleared up. Part of the reason for why you may feel confused or unconvinced about it may be because there is no singular cause for it. Climate change has been brought on by many different factors, many of which are anthropogenic (human-caused), and has affected a multitude of locations, populations, and research.

Stepping back, some common examples of climate change include rise in temperatures. For instance, during the last fifty years, global temperatures have risen by an average rate of 0.13 degrees Celsius per every ten years. This summer has produced record high temperatures. A major effect of temperature increase has been the melting of glaciers, leading to severe habitat loss for major species that are reliant upon glaciers. While that may not sound like a major priority (especially to major companies who are focused on producing revenue), melting glaciers will gradually cause oceans to rise, directly affecting human populations.

This is just the tip of the iceberg on the large list of anthropogenic (human-caused) problems that are impacting our environment. It is imperative to explore recent events and climate catastrophes, policy changes such as the passing of new bills to extract resources, and

new scientific studies and research that can bring more knowledge to this issue in the age of misinformation and polarization.

References:

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