

An Introduction to Global Environmental Issues

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This is an up to date modern text aimed at undergraduates in the areas of geography, and environmental sciences. However, the content and coverage mean the book provides a useful source for renewing knowledge on a range of environmental issues for anybody concerned with global environmental change. Those of us working on environmental issues from a socio-economic, political or philosophical angle must maintain a grounding of knowledge in the natural sciences. The authors here likewise recognise studying natural constraints alone is inadequate for understand environmental issues and that human choices concerning the environment, economics, culture, values, politics and demography must be taken into account (p. 409).

The content is based upon exposing human impacts on the environment. Topics include climate and atmospheric change, acidic deposition, water use and pollution, nuclear weapons and energy, fossil fuels and renewable energy, and land and ocean use. A lot of factual information is presented on each topic and there is a tendency to refer to subjectivity as a complicating problem when discussing environmental management. However, the coverage goes beyond the natural science and links into law and economics, with international agreements and political problems being introduced at the chapter ends. Environmental issues are discussed in a balanced fashion with the main areas of contention brought forward. Although solutions are sometimes presented rather simplistically, e.g., the recommendation of top down political solutions (e.g. p. 440); this may be defended by the introductory nature of the book and the authors' claim that their approach aims to stimulate debate. Certainly as a teaching aid the useful summary data and information presented in boxes and tables on issues such as pollution incidents and nuclear accidents can be used to raise a range of questions about the use of the environment, politics, justice and implicit values. Thus, for philosophers or social scientists who need to understand and/or teach about environmental problems this is a useful reference source.

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