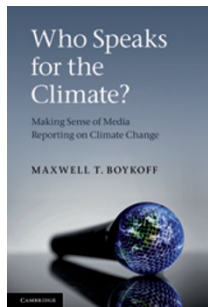


Climate in the media



Who Speaks for the Climate?
Making Sense of Media Reporting on Climate Change

by Maxwell T. Boykoff

CAMBRIDGE UNIV. PRESS: 2011. 240 PP. £17.99

More media coverage of climate change — even supremely fair and accurate portrayals — is not a panacea for driving public engagement and action on the issues, writes Maxwell Boykoff. “In fact, increased media attention to the issue often unearths more questions to be answered.” Those interested in climate change and the role of the media in public opinion and (mis)understanding will find a trove of such insights in Boykoff’s *Who Speaks for the Climate?* It’s a story entwined at least as much in the underlying worldwide revolution enveloping the mass media as in the swirling controversies shrouding growing scientific concerns over our steadily warming planet.

Boykoff’s readily accessible compendium reflects his nearly decade-long focus on media and climate, which has made his name virtually synonymous with the field. Combining research he’s done both in the United States and in Britain, where he’s been a visiting fellow at Oxford, *Who Speaks for the Climate?* provides extensive data and insightful analyses of global media coverage of the climate change and global warming issue as it evolved through the first decade of this century. However, the book offers no immediate answers as to whether the recent decline in public interest in climate change either reflects or drives trends in media coverage.

Boykoff, now an assistant professor in environmental policy research at the University of Colorado, is careful to acknowledge that reporting alone does not fully explain the public’s often fickle and sometimes nonsensical responses to the challenges posed by a warmer climate. “Media representations of climate science and policy clearly do not drive public opinion, individual action,

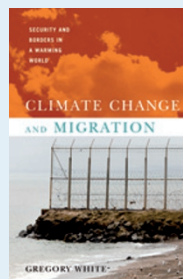
culture or societal change,” Boykoff writes. “Yet they have proven to be a key contributor — among a number of factors — that has stitched together climate science, governance and daily life.” He returns to that theme later, adding: “At best, media reporting helps address, analyse, and discuss the issues, but not answer them.”

With a focus on climate change coverage in major daily newspapers in the US, UK and India, Boykoff relates how “journalistic norms of dramatization and personalization” drive story formation on

climate issues. However, he cautions, it has now developed a more extreme direction. “It seems that mere ‘climate change’ was not going to be bad enough, and so now it must be ‘catastrophic’ to be worthy of attention,” he writes, after a discussion with climatologist Mike Hulme of the University of East Anglia.

Boykoff, whose facile writing makes for a style often more conversational than academic, addresses how the media go about determining who is, and who is not, an ‘expert’ or ‘authority’ to speak on climate change. He writes that the

ON OUR BOOKSHELF



Climate Change and Migration: Security and Borders in a Warming World

by Gregory White

OXFORD UNIV. PRESS: 2011. 240 PP. £17.99

In this new perspective on how global warming will impact international relations across every continent, Gregory White, a professor of government, looks at climate-induced migration from the tropical regions of the world. Focusing on refugees fleeing Africa for Europe, White describes the enhanced security regimes that have been introduced in the rich North Atlantic countries, and the states that serve as transit points for migrants. The book highlights the wider implications of climate change on national sovereignty, which, in many cases, leads to the state increasing its influence over society.



Capitalism and Climate Change: Theoretical Discussion, Historical Development and Policy Responses

by Max Koch

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN: 2011. 240 PP. £55.00

This book analyses the social side of climate change, following its growth in parallel with capitalism. Sociology professor Max Koch weaves political-economic theory with environmental economics, and concludes that the imperatives of capitalist development are incompatible with the Earth’s physical limits. The book looks at free-market economies, and international social, environmental and economic inequalities, and concludes that true climate change mitigation will not be possible within the current finance-driven framework of capitalism. Koch advocates a re-regulation of both economy and society.