CONTENTS

PREFACE: WHY YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE ACKNOWLEDGMENTS		XIII
1	Climate Science Basics	1
	What is the greenhouse effect and how does it warm the Earth?	1
	Why are scientists so certain the climate system is warming?	2
	How does global warming increase sea levels and what has been observed to date?	4
	Where does most of human-caused warming go?	7
	What fraction of recent global warming is due to human causes versus natural causes?	7
	How certain are climate scientists that humans are the primary cause of recent warning?	9
	How do scientists know that recent climate change is primarily caused by human activities?	10
	Why has the climate changed in the past, before there were human-caused greenhouse gas emissions?	12
	What are the climate system's amplifying feedbacks that turn a moderate initial warming into a big ultimate warming?	14
	Is the current level of atmospheric ${\it CO}_2$ concentration unprecedented in human history?	15
	Are recent climatic changes unprecedented?	17

	not as fast as scientists predicted?	18
	Is there a difference between global warming and climate change?	19
	What are the sources of the most important human-caused pollutants that drive global warming?	20
	How does deforestation contribute to warming?	21
	What is global warming potential and why is it different for various greenhouse gases?	22
	Why does the rate of warming appear to vary from decade to decade?	23
	Has global warming slowed down or paused in recent years?	24
	Can we reach a point where emitting more CO ₂ into the air will not cause more climate change?	28
	Have we already crossed tipping points (points of no return) in the climate system?	29
2	Extreme Weather and Climate Change	31
	What is the difference between weather and climate?	31
	Which extreme weather events are being made worse by climate change and which are not?	32
	What is the role of natural climatic variation, such as the El Niño-La Niña cycle, in extreme weather?	34
	Did climate change cause Hurricanes Sandy and Harvey (and why is that the wrong question to ask)?	37
	How does climate change affect heat waves?	41
	How does climate change affect droughts?	44
	How does climate change affect wildfires?	47
	How does climate change affect the chances of deluges or severe precipitation?	50
	Does climate change mean more snow or less, worse snowstorms or weaker ones?	53
	How does climate change affect storm surge?	57
	Is climate change making hurricanes more destructive?	58
	What is Arctic amplification and how does it affect extreme weather?	61

	What is the plausible worst-case scenario for climate change this century?	140
	What do scientists mean by "irreversible impacts" and why are they such a concern with climate change?	146
4	Avoiding the Worst Impacts	151
	What is the biggest source of confusion about what humanity needs to do to avoid the worst climate impacts?	151
	What is the December 2015 Paris climate accord and why is it so important?	153
	Why did scientists and governments decide 2°C (3.6°F) was the limit beyond which climate change becomes "dangerous" to humanity?	156
	What kind of greenhouse gas emissions reductions are needed to keep warming well below 2°C?	159
	What would the economic cost of meeting the 2°C target be?	160
	What happens if we miss the 2°C target?	164
	Can we adapt to human-caused climate change?	165
	What is geoengineering and can it play a major role in reducing the impact of climate change?	169
5	Climate Politics and Policies	175
	What climate policies are governments around the world using to fight climate change?	175
	What is a carbon tax?	176
	What are cap-and-trade and carbon trading?	178
	What are China and India doing to restrict carbon dioxide emissions?	182
	What is the United States doing to restrict carbon dioxide emissions?	185
	How do different political parties view climate science and policies in the United States and around the world?	187
	Is there are a large-scale effort to spread misinformation on climate science and, if so, who funds it?	190
	What are climate science deniers?	195



6	The Role of Clean Energy	199
	What kind of changes in our energy system would a 2°C target require?	199
	What is energy efficiency and what role will it play?	201
	Will nuclear power be a major factor in the effort to minimize climate change?	206
	What role does natural gas have in the transition to a 2°C world?	209
	How much can solar power contribute to averting dangerous climate change?	212
	How big a role will wind power play in averting dangerous climate change?	216
	What is carbon capture and storage (a.k.a. carbon sequestration) and what role can it play?	218
	What is bioenergy and what is its role in cutting carbon pollution?	224
	What other carbon-free forms of energy can contribute to cutting greenhouse gas emissions?	228
	How can we reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the transportation sector?	231
	What challenges have limited the marketplace success of alternative fuels and alternative fuel vehicles to date?	234
	What role can electric vehicles play?	239
	What are hydrogen fuel cells and hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles?	244
	What are the challenges facing hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles as a climate solution?	247
	What role can energy storage play in the transition off of fossil fuels?	254
	What can the agricultural and livestock sector do to minimize climate change?	257
	What role can energy conservation play?	261
7	Climate Change and You	263
	How will climate change impact you and your family in the coming decades?	263
	How might climate change affect the future price of coastal property?	264

	How might climate change affect decisions about where to live and retire in the coming decades?	268
	What should students study today if they want to prepare themselves for working in a globally warmed world?	269
	Should climate change affect how you invest for the future?	271
	How can you reduce your carbon footprint?	272
	What role can dietary changes play in reducing your carbon footprint?	275
	What is the best way to talk to someone who does not accept the growing body of evidence on climate science?	276
	Do we still have time to preserve a livable climate with a U.S. President who rejects climate science?	280
PR	IMARY SOURCES	283
NO	NOTES	
IND	DEX	299