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978-1-107-10355-9 - Climate Change as Social Drama: Global Warming in the Public Sphere

Philip Smith and Nicolas Howe

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## Climate Change as Social Drama

Climate change is not just a scientific fact, nor is it merely a social and political problem. It is also a set of stories and characters that amount to a social drama. This drama, as much as hard scientific or political realities, shapes perception of the issues. Philip Smith and Nicolas Howe use the perspective of Aristotelian cultural sociology to explore this meaningful and visible surface of climate change in the public sphere. Whereas most research aims to explain barriers to awareness, here the authors switch the agenda to look at the moments when global warming actually gets attention. Chapters consider struggles over apocalyptic scenarios, explain the success of Al Gore and *An Inconvenient Truth*, unpack the deeper social meanings of the climate conference and Climategate, critique controversial advertising campaigns and climate art, and question the much touted transformative potential of natural disasters such as Superstorm Sandy.

Philip Smith is Professor of Sociology and codirector of the Yale Center for Cultural Sociology. His work explores the meaningful nature of social life as it plays out in a communicative public sphere. He is the author of *Why War?* (2005) and *Punishment and Culture* (2008) and coauthor of *Incivility: The Rude Stranger in Everyday Life* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), as well as a dozen other books and edited collections.

Nicolas Howe is Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies at Williams College, where he is also affiliated with the American Studies Program and the Department of Anthropology and Sociology. He studies the cultural and religious dimensions of American environmental politics from the perspective of human geography. He is the recipient of fellowships from the Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History at Harvard University, the Charlotte W. Newcombe Foundation, and the National Science Foundation.

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# Climate Change as Social Drama

*Global Warming in the Public Sphere*

PHILIP SMITH

*Yale University*

NICOLAS HOWE

*Williams College*



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