



2017 SSRI Fitzsimmons Lectures

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Confronting Climate Change: What Are the  
Challenges?

Wednesday, May 24 4:30 PM

SC 158

Earth's climate is changing. The surface temperature, sea level, atmospheric and ocean chemistry, precipitation patterns, and biota have all seen significant changes from only a century ago. While natural factors continue to play a role in the pace and direction of climate change, since the mid-20th century humans have inadvertently taken increasing control of the climate. Today humans are the primary drivers of contemporary climate change. These developments are forcing Earth's inhabitants to confront some daunting challenges in dealing with the changing climate. Cities, states and national governments around the world are faced with difficult decisions about adaptation and/or mitigation. The Paris Climate Accords of 2015, the depressed prices of carbon-based fuels, the accelerating flow of capital to renewable energy sources, and the new administration in Washington all contribute to an uncertain future.