

# ASU SCHOOL OF LIFE SCIENCES

Hugh Hanson Ecology



Seminar Series



## Scott Denning

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Colorado State University

**Date:** Oct. 22, 2014

**Time:** 3 - 4 p.m.

**Place:** LSA 119

**Host:** Kevin Gurney

## Elephant Whispering: Effective Communication about Climate Change to the Public

A wealth of social science research has shown that public perception of climate change is very strongly colored by ideological filters in which facts are evaluated based on their fit to previously held beliefs. Scientific discourse about climate change is well received by environmentalism, which confirms the fears and competitive impulses of libertarianism. Scientists, educators, and science communicators must acknowledge the cultural context of climate change in order to lift climate discourse out of its ideological gutter. Emphasizing recent trends, current weather events and impacts, and especially argument from authority of expertise and consensus are effective with average audiences but trigger reflexive opposition from suspicious listeners. Beyond ideology, climate change is Simple, Serious, and Solvable. Effective communication of these three key ideas can succeed when the science argument is carefully framed to avoid attack of the audience's ethical identity. Simple arguments from common sense and everyday experience are more successful than data. Serious consequences to values that resonate with the audience can be avoided by solutions that don't threaten those values.

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