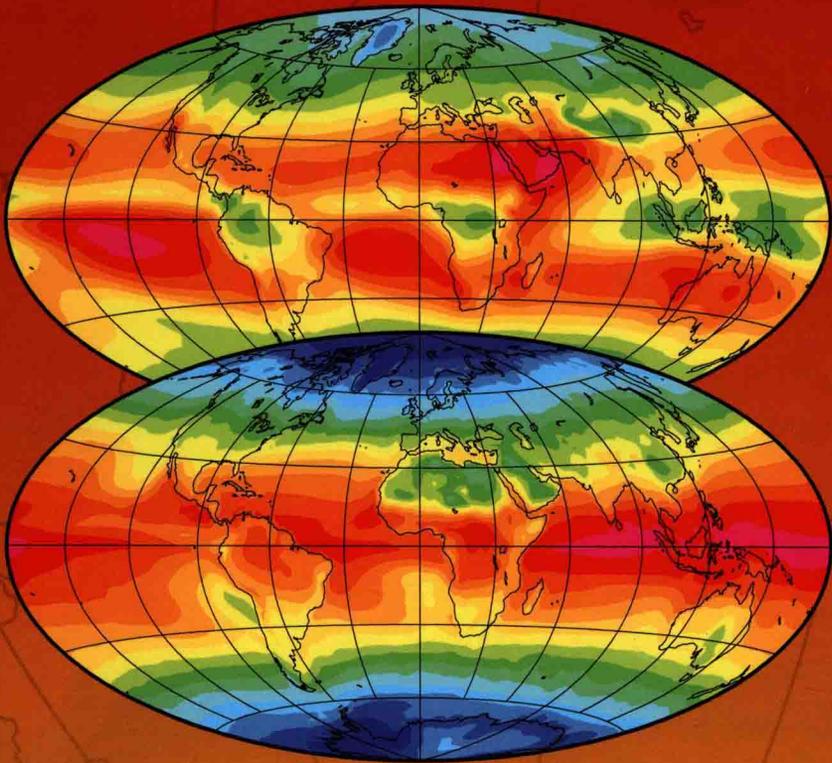


# Global Physical Climatology

Second Edition



**Dennis L. Hartmann**

# GLOBAL PHYSICAL CLIMATOLOGY

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SECOND EDITION

DENNIS L. HARTMANN

*Department of Atmospheric Sciences,  
University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA*



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GLOBAL  
PHYSICAL  
CLIMATOLOGY

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SECOND EDITION



# Preface to the Second Edition

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I had not intended that 21 years should pass between the first edition of this book and the second, but much else has intervened to command my attention and time. The timing of this second edition is nonetheless propitious, as I started in earnest just after finishing participation in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Working Group I Fifth Assessment in late 2013. So I had good familiarity with a recent summary of the state of knowledge as a starting point. Another advantage of waiting so long is that the easy availability of data sets and modern tools to manipulate them made it possible for me to make most of the new figures myself. The second edition is thus heavy with color figures of data from observations and models.

The basic outline of the book is the same as that of the first edition, except that I have added a new Chapter 8 on natural internal variability that is captured by the instrumental record. This chapter makes use of some statistical and mathematical techniques that I do not explain in detail, but I feel that by looking at the pictures and trusting me, the student will gain an intuitive sense of the structures of atmospheric and oceanic variability. The first seven chapters are suitable for a course for undergraduate science majors, and the final six chapters are more appropriate for an introductory overview course for graduate students. When I use the book to teach third-year atmospheric sciences majors, I go through the first seven chapters and mix in material from Chapters 9, 12, and 13 to add spice and relevance.

Many people contributed to the second edition. Marc L. Michelsen made many of the figures in Chapter 6 and on many occasions rescued me when my own computer skills led me into blind alleys. Bryce E. Harrop did the radiative–convective equilibrium calculations in Chapters 3 and 13. I wanted to update Manabe and Wetherald (1967) with more physical clouds, but I have to say that modern calculations are not very different from theirs. Paulo Ceppi provided me with multimodel mean data from CMIP5. Mark D. Zelinka generated some key figures in Chapter 11. I have made liberal use of figures from the IPCC Fifth Assessment, and I am grateful to the IPCC authors for producing them and the IPCC for letting me use them here. I thank all the people who created data sets and put them on the web in handy format. Some of these are acknowledged in figure captions.

A number of people have used the first edition over the years and provided feedback, and some have used the draft of second edition

and provided editorial and content suggestions. I will forget to mention some of them, and for that I apologize. David W. J. Thompson used the draft of second edition in a class and provided a particularly insightful critique of the new Chapter 8. Donald J. Wuebbles also used the draft and provided suggestions and corrections. Tsubasa Kohyama did a very careful edit of most chapters of the second edition. Hansi K. A. Singh read Chapter 7 and provided comments that improved it. Casey Wall provided useful suggestions on the later chapters. Sara Berry, Paulo Ceppi, Bryce Harrop, Tsubasa Kohyama, Daniel McCoy, and Casey Wall helped with proof correction. Many students helped me involuntarily by using the book in class, and I thank them also for the insights I gained from their work. My present and former graduate students have taught me a lot. It is also a great boon for me to work in the Department of Atmospheric Sciences at the University of Washington, where excellence is combined with collegiality to good effect.

I am grateful for continued climate research support from the federal government through the National Science Foundation, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Department of Energy. Climate research is a public good activity and without the support of the US taxpayer we would know much less about climate and the particular challenges that climate change presents to the world. Of course, other nations have also contributed greatly to what we have learned, and US citizens have benefited from their efforts too.

The dedication of the second edition remains the same as the first – to my family – who share their love and strengthen my spirit. It is also good to have great friends and colleagues. Thanks.

*Dennis L. Hartmann*  
Seattle, October 2015

# Preface to the First Edition

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The science of climatology began to evolve rapidly in the last third of the twentieth century. This rapid development arose from several causes. During this period, the view of Earth from its moon made people more aware of the exceptional nature of their planetary home at about the same time that it became widely understood that humans could alter our global environment. Scientific and technological developments gave us new and quantitative information on past climate variations, global observations of climate parameters from space, and computer models with which we could simulate the global climate system. These new tools together with concern about global environmental change and its consequences for humanity caused an increase in the intensity of scientific research about climate.

Modern study of the Earth's climate system has become an interdisciplinary science incorporating the atmosphere, the ocean, and the land surface, which interact through physical, chemical, and biological processes. A fully general treatment of this system is as yet impossible, because the understanding of it is just beginning to develop. This textbook provides an introduction to the physical interactions in the climate system, viewed from a global perspective. Even this endeavor is a difficult one, since many earth science subdisciplines must be incorporated, such as dynamic meteorology, physical oceanography, radiative transfer, glaciology, hydrology, boundary-layer meteorology, and paleoclimatology. To make a book of manageable size about such a complex topic requires many difficult choices. I have endeavored to provide a sense of the complexity and interconnectedness of the climate problem without going into excessive detail in any one area. Although the modern approach to climatology has arisen out of diverse disciplines, a coherent collection of concepts is emerging that defines a starting point for a distinct science. This textbook is my attempt to present the physical elements of that beginning with occasional references to where the chemical and biological elements are connected.

This book is intended as a text for upper-division undergraduate physical science majors and, especially in the later chapters, graduate students. I have used the first seven chapters as the basis for a 10-week undergraduate course for atmospheric sciences majors. A graduate course can be fashioned by supplementing the text with readings from the current literature. Most climatology textbooks are descriptive and written from the perspective of geographers, but this one is written from the perspective of a physicist. I have attempted to convey an intuition for the workings

of the climate system that is based on physical principles. When faced with a choice between providing easy access to an important concept and providing a rigorous and comprehensive treatment, I have chosen easy access. This approach should allow students to acquire the main ideas without great pain. Instructors may choose to elaborate on the presentation where their personal interests and experience make it desirable to do so.

This book could not have been produced without the assistance of many people. It evolved from 15 years of teaching undergraduate and graduate students, and I thank the ATMS 321 and ATMS 571 students at the University of Washington who have endured my experimentation and provided comments on early drafts of this book. Professor Steve Esbensen and his AtS 630 class at Oregon State University provided commentary on a near final draft of Chapters 1–7 in the spring of 1993. Valuable comments and suggestions on specific chapters were also provided by David S. Battisti, Robert J. Charlson, James R. Holton, Conway B. Leovy, Gary A. Maykut, Stephen G. Porter, Edward S. Sarachik, J. Michael Wallace, and Stephen G. Warren. The encouragement and advice given by James R. Holton were critical for the completion of this book. Many people contributed graphics, and I am particularly grateful for the special efforts given by Otis Brown, Frank Carsey, Jim Coakley, Joey Comiso, Scott Katz, Gary Maykut, Pat McCormick, Robert Pincus, Norbert Untersteiner, and Stephen Warren.

Grace C. Gudmundson applied her professional editorial skills to this project with patience, dedication, and good humor. Her efforts greatly improved the quality of the end product. Similarly, Kay M. Dewar's artistic and computer skills produced some of the more appealing figures. Marc L. Michelsen's genius with the computer extracted data from many digital archives and converted them into attractive and informative computer graphics. Luanna Huynh and Christine Rice were especially helpful with the appendices and tables.

My efforts to understand the climate system have been generously supported over the years by research grants and contracts from the US government. I am particularly happy to acknowledge support from the Climate Dynamics Program in the Atmospheric Sciences Division of the National Science Foundation, and the Earth Radiation Budget Experiment and Earth Observing System programs of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. I also thank all of my colleagues from whom I have learned, who have shared their ideas with me, and who have given me the respect of serious argument.

This book is dedicated to my family, especially my wife, Lorraine, and my children, Alan and Jennifer, whose love and sacrifice were essential to its completion. I hope this book will help to explain why I spend so many evenings and weekends in my study. I thank my parents, Alfred and Angeline, for a good start in life and support along the way toward happy employment.

*Dennis L. Hartmann*

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# Introduction to the Climate System

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## 1.1 ATMOSPHERE, OCEAN, AND LAND SURFACE

*Climate* is the synthesis of the weather in a particular region. It can be defined quantitatively by using the expected values of the meteorological elements at a location during a certain month or season. The expected values of the meteorological elements can be called the climatic elements and include variables such as the average temperature, precipitation, wind, pressure, cloudiness, and humidity. In defining the climate, we usually employ the values of these elements at the surface of Earth. Thus, one can characterize the climate of Seattle by stating that the average annual mean precipitation is 38 in. and the annual mean temperature is 52°F. However, one might need a great deal more information than the annual means. For example, a farmer would also like to know how the precipitation is distributed through the year and how much rain would fall during the critical summer months. A hydroelectric plant engineer needs to know how much interannual variability in rainfall and snow accumulation to expect. A homebuilder should know how much insulation to be installed and the size of the heating or cooling unit needed to provide for the weather in the region. Sailors might like to know that the wind blows in the winter, but not so much in the summer.

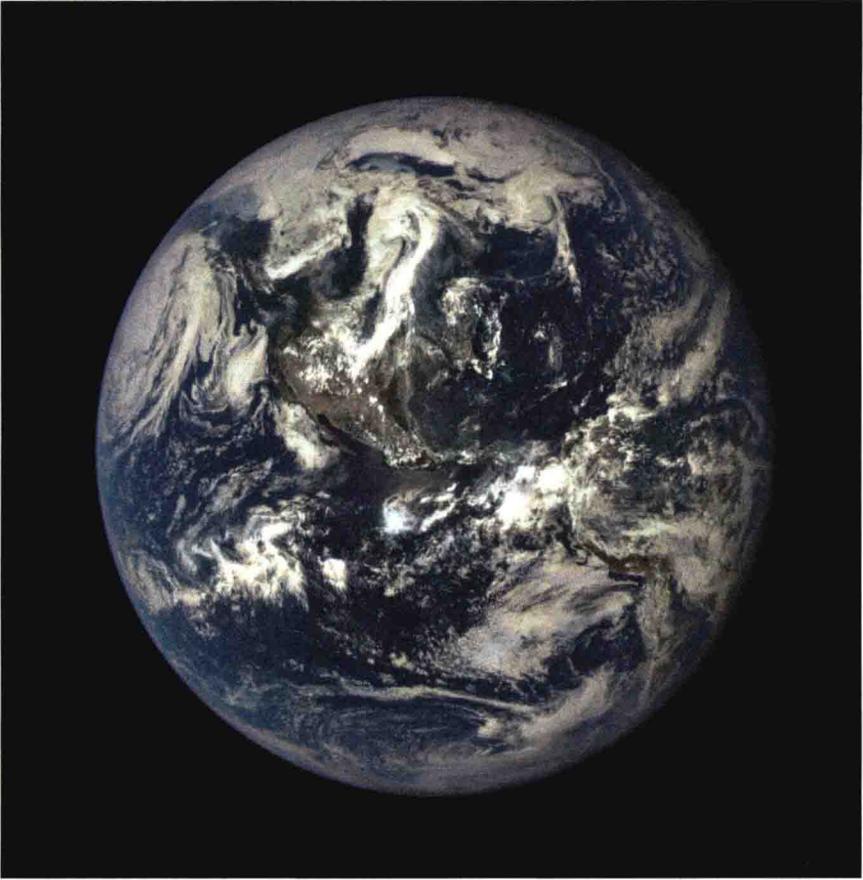
The importance of climate is so basic that we sometimes overlook it. If the climate were not more or less as it is, life and civilization on this planet would not have developed as they have. The distribution of vegetation and soil type over the land areas is determined primarily by the local climate. Climate affects human lives in many ways; for example, climate influences the type of clothing and housing that people have developed. In the modern world, with the great technological advances of the past century, one might think that climate no longer constitutes a force capable of changing the course of human history. It is apparent, on the contrary,

that we are as sensitive now as we have ever been to climate fluctuations and climate change.

Because food, water, and energy supply systems are strained to meet demand and are optimized to the current average climatic conditions, fluctuations or trends in climate can cause serious difficulties for humanity. Moreover, since the population has grown to absorb the maximum agricultural productivity in much of the world, the absolute number of human lives at risk of starvation during climatic anomalies has never been greater. In addition to natural year-to-year fluctuations in the weather, which are an important aspect of climate, we must be concerned with the effects of human activities in producing long-term trends in the climate. It is now clear that humans are affecting the global climate, and this influence is growing. The actions of humankind that can change the global climate include altering the composition of the atmosphere and the nature of Earth's surface.

The surface climate of Earth varies greatly with location, ranging from the heat of the tropics to the cold of the polar regions, and from the drought of a desert to the moisture of a rain forest. Nonetheless, the climate of Earth is favorable for life, and living creatures exist in every climatic extreme. The climate of a region depends on latitude, altitude, and orientation in relation to water bodies, mountains, and the prevailing wind direction. In this book, we are concerned primarily with the global climate and its geographic variation on scales of hundreds to thousands of kilometers. In order to focus on these global issues, climate variations on horizontal spatial scales smaller than several tens of kilometers are given only minimal discussion.

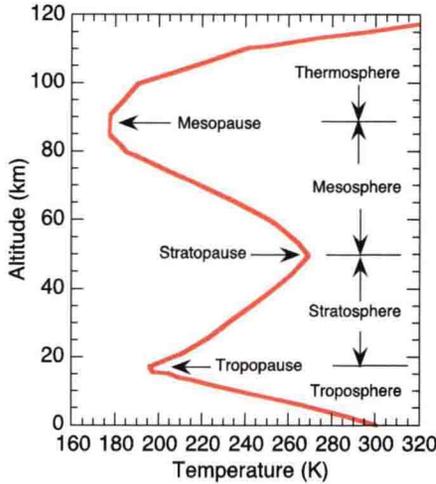
The climate of Earth is defined in terms of measurable weather elements. The weather elements of most interest are temperature and precipitation. These two factors together largely determine the species of plants and animals that survive and prosper in a particular location. Other variables are also important, of course. The *humidity*, the amount of water vapor in the air, is a critical climate factor that is related closely to the temperature and precipitation. Condensation of water in the atmosphere produces clouds of water droplets or ice particles that greatly change the radiative properties of the atmosphere. The occurrence of clouds is important in itself for aviation and other activities, but clouds also play a role in determining both precipitation and surface temperature. Cloudiness influences the transmission of terrestrial radiation through the atmosphere and the amount of solar radiation that reaches the surface. The mean wind speed and direction are important considerations for local climate, air-pollution dispersion, aviation, navigation, wind energy, and many other purposes. The climate system of Earth determines the distribution of energy and water near the surface and consists primarily of the atmosphere, the oceans, and the land surface. The workings of this global system are the topic of this book (Fig. 1.1).



**FIGURE 1.1** Earth as seen on July 6, 2015 by the NASA Earth Polychromatic Imaging Camera aboard the NOAA Deep Space Climate Observatory spacecraft one million miles from Earth.

## 1.2 ATMOSPHERIC TEMPERATURE

Temperature is the most widely recognized climatic variable. The global average temperature at the surface of Earth is about 288 K, 15°C, or 59°F. The range of temperatures encountered at the surface is favorable for the life forms that have developed on Earth. The extremes of recorded surface temperature range from the coldest temperature of  $-89.2^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $-128.6^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) at Vostok, Antarctica to the warmest temperature of  $56.7^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $134^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) at Furnace Creek Ranch in Death Valley, California. These temperature extremes reflect the well-known decrease of temperature from the tropics, where the warmest temperatures occur, to the polar regions that are much colder. Both the warm temperature in Death Valley and the cold temperature at Vostok also



**FIGURE 1.2** The main zones of the atmosphere defined according to the temperature profile of the standard atmosphere profile at 15°N for annual-mean conditions. Data from *U.S. Standard Atmosphere Supplements (1966)*.

result partly from the decrease of temperature with altitude because Death Valley is below sea level and Vostok is 3450 m above sea level.

An important feature of the temperature distribution is the decline of temperature with height above the surface in the lowest 10–15 km of the atmosphere (Fig. 1.2). This rate of decline, called the *lapse rate*, is defined by

$$\Gamma \equiv -\frac{\partial T}{\partial z} \quad (1.1)$$

where  $T$  is the temperature and  $z$  is altitude and the deltas indicate a partial derivative. The global mean tropospheric lapse rate is about  $6.5 \text{ K km}^{-1}$ , but the lapse rate varies with altitude, season, and latitude. In the upper *stratosphere*, the temperature increases with height up to about 50 km. The increase of temperature with height that characterizes the stratosphere is caused by the absorption of solar radiation by ozone. Above the stratopause at about 50 km the temperature begins to decrease with height in the *mesosphere*. The temperature of the atmosphere increases rapidly above about 100 km because of heating produced by absorption of ultraviolet radiation from the sun, which dissociates oxygen and nitrogen molecules and ionizes atmospheric gases in the *thermosphere*.

The decrease of temperature with altitude in the *troposphere* is crucial to many of the mechanisms whereby the warmth of the surface temperature of Earth is maintained. The lapse rate in the troposphere and the mechanisms that maintain it are also central to the determination of