

Graduate Term Paper: Contrasting Scenarios for a Warmer Globe

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Please write an approximately ten page (single spaced, ~2500 words) paper that compares optimistic and pessimistic projections for the 22nd Century Earth. You may take either of two approaches: The first is to compare and contrast two different IPCC emission scenarios, for example A2 (Fragmented, slow technological development, continuously growing population) and B1 (service and information economy with population peaking in the mid-late 2100s). Another example might be A1F (Fossil-fuel dependant globalization with population peaking in the late 2100s) and A1T (Renewable-energy globalization with the same population as A1F). The second approach is to compare and contrast warmer-globe utopia with warmer-globe dystopia. In this approach, use your imagination to create scenarios outside of the IPCC framework, but don't make them too implausible.

However you choose to frame the discussion, key aspects of your papers will be the policy choices and policy failures that led to the outcomes that you describe. You might want to consider the role of unanticipated ("Black Swan") events: war, epidemic, global natural disasters, economic collapse. One way to approach the problem is to write a short history of events from now to your time horizon under each scenario. Choice of time horizon as anniversaries of past events is another way to organize your thoughts. Here are some possibilities: Calendar (2100 or 2117), political/military misadventures (2117, 2122), or economic collapses (2129). It's important to weave together, climate, agriculture, power generation, transportation, economics, natural and built environments, law, etc. How can we humans save ourselves? How might we be lost? Do we need saving?

This will be a serious paper with about a half dozen references. One or two well-chosen illustrations are OK, but they don't substitute for analysis.

Your paper will be about 25% of your grade. It will be due the week of 09-13 April.