

Scientific Workshop  
Call for Papers

## Academic Freedom and Climate Change

Université de Limoges  
13 October 2023

Understanding climate change is a scientific endeavor. But it is also deeply political. Explaining its causes, imagining ways to mitigate against it, and planning adaptations to its effects all require empirical research. Scientists across the disciplines have now been working for many decades to carry out this complex work. Doing so has required immense resources, both financial and institutional. Even when the State and public entities have been able to meet these needs, granting mechanisms rarely come without strings and frequently favor applied over fundamental research. Scientists are often asked to orient their research questions into specific “priority areas,” usually determined by elected officials. They are either incentivized or required to produce “deliverables” that have some clear “impact,” frequently construed around technology innovations with industrial applications or so-called usable knowledge that officials and the private sector can put into action for decision-making. Added to this is the ever-declining public investment in higher education and research overall, which impoverishes the broader academic landscape and harms all scientists by asking them to do more work, often administrative in nature, with fewer resources. In addition to these conditions, public funding inevitably falls short of meeting the needs of scientists studying climate change. Filling the gap is a constellation of organizations, foundations, think tanks, and other institutions, with their own missions and objectives, as well as connections to activists, political parties, banks, industries, and wealthy individuals. Furthermore, it goes without saying that climate change and its effects are one of the most significant issues of our times, creating conflict and mobilizations in all sectors of social life. It is in this fraught context that scientists attempt to ask and answer empirical questions about the climate, experiencing significant pressures, both explicit and implicit, that shape their experiences. Their capacity to conduct their research in a way that allows them to maintain scientific autonomy and rigor is, at best, a constant struggle.

Focusing on scientists conducting research related to climate change, the aim of this one-day scientific workshop is to analyze the challenges to their academic freedom. We deliberately encourage a broad definition of academic freedom. First, that freedom can be understood as the autonomy required to ask difficult, even controversial, research questions without the fear of professional retaliation, political censorship, or outside pressure. Second, it can mean the unfettered capacity to carry out research, along with unqualified material and symbolic resources to do so. Finally, discussions of academic freedom can also include an understanding that scientists are people with their own moral, political, and ideological commitments that cannot be easily untangled from the professional work of research itself. Whether or not academic freedom can and should include the fact that scientists are also citizens engaged in a political debate is also an important question.

We welcome proposals that address one or more aspects of this topic. This workshop is open to all disciplines and encourages people working on any geographic context, including but not limited to France, Europe, and the Americas. Please submit an abstract, in English or French, of no more than 500 words (excluding references) to [michael.stambolis@univ-tlse2.fr](mailto:michael.stambolis@univ-tlse2.fr). **Submission deadline: June 1, 2023.**

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