

# John Christy

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**John Raymond Christy** is a climate scientist at the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) whose chief interests are satellite remote sensing of global climate and global climate change. He is best known, jointly with Roy Spencer, for the first successful development of a satellite temperature record.<sup>[1]</sup>

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| John Raymond Christy                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Born</b>                                                                                                                                                         | California, USA                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Nationality</b>                                                                                                                                                  | American                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Fields</b>                                                                                                                                                       | Atmospheric Science                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Institutions</b>                                                                                                                                                 | University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Alma mater</b>                                                                                                                                                   | University of Illinois                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Thesis</b>                                                                                                                                                       | <i>An investigation of the general circulation associated with extreme anomalies in hemispheric mean atmospheric mass</i> ( <a href="http://www.worldcat.org/title/investigation-of-the-general-circulation-associated-with-extreme-anomalies-in-hemispheric-mean-atmospheric-mass/oclc/18286111">http://www.worldcat.org/title/investigation-of-the-general-circulation-associated-with-extreme-anomalies-in-hemispheric-mean-atmospheric-mass/oclc/18286111</a> ) (1987) |
| <b>Doctoral advisor</b>                                                                                                                                             | Kevin Trenberth                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Known for</b>                                                                                                                                                    | UAH satellite data                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Notable awards</b>                                                                                                                                               | 1991 Medal for Exceptional Scientific Achievement, NASA; 1996 Special Award, American Meteorological Society                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Spouse</b>                                                                                                                                                       | Babs (Joslin) Christy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Website</b>                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <div><div>nsstc.uah.edu/users/john.christy/</div><div>(<a href="http://nsstc.uah.edu/users/john.christy/">http://nsstc.uah.edu/users/john.christy/</a>)</div></div> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

## Early life and education

A native of Fresno, California, Christy became interested in the weather when he was just a kid, since he was curious why the weather in the San Joaquin Valley was so different from that of the Sierra Mountains. He has recalled that "I built my first climate datasets when I was 12, using a mechanical pencil, graph paper, and long-division (no calculators back then.) I've been a climate nerd ever since."<sup>[2]</sup> He received a B.A. in Mathematics from California State University, Fresno in 1973, and an M.S. and Ph.D. in Atmospheric Sciences from the University of Illinois in 1984 and 1987.<sup>[1]</sup> His doctoral thesis was titled, *An investigation of the general circulation associated with extreme anomalies in hemispheric mean atmospheric mass*.<sup>[3]</sup>

Prior to his scientific career, Christy taught physics and chemistry as a missionary teacher in Nyeri, Kenya from 1973 to 1975. After earning a Master of Divinity degree from Golden Gate Baptist Seminary in 1978 he served four years as a bivocational mission-pastor in Vermillion, South Dakota, where he also taught college math.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Career

He is the Distinguished Professor of Atmospheric Science and Director of the Earth System Science Center at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. He was appointed Alabama's state climatologist in 2000. For his development of a global temperature data set from satellites he was awarded NASA's Medal for Exceptional Scientific Achievement, and the American Meteorological Society's "Special Award."<sup>[1]</sup> In 2002, Christy was elected Fellow of the American Meteorological Society.<sup>[4]</sup>

Since 1989 Christy, along with Roy Spencer, has maintained an atmospheric temperature record derived from satellite microwave sounding unit measurements, commonly called the "UAH" record (see also satellite temperature record). This was once quite controversial: From the beginning of the satellite record in late 1978 into 1998 it showed a net global cooling trend, although ground measurements and instruments carried aloft by balloons showed warming in many areas. Part of the cooling trend seen by the satellites can be attributed to several years of cooler than normal temperatures and cooling caused by the eruption of the Mount Pinatubo volcano. Part of the discrepancy between the surface and atmospheric trends was resolved over a period of several years as Christy, Spencer and others identified several factors, including orbital drift and decay, that caused a net cooling bias in the data collected by the satellite instruments.<sup>[5][6]</sup> Since the data correction of August 1998 (and the major La Niña Pacific Ocean warming event of the same year), data collected by satellite instruments has shown an average global warming trend in the atmosphere. From November 1978 through March 2011, Earth's atmosphere has warmed at an average rate of about 0.14 C per decade, according to the UAHuntsville satellite record.

Christy was a lead author of a section of the 2001 report by the IPCC<sup>[7]</sup> and the U.S. CCSP report *Temperature Trends in the Lower Atmosphere – Understanding and Reconciling Differences*.<sup>[5]</sup> Christy also signed the 2003 American Geophysical Union statement on climate change.<sup>[8]</sup>

Christy has also performed detailed reconstruction of surface temperature for Central California. He found that recorded temperature changes there were consistent with an altered surface environment caused by increased irrigation for agriculture, which changed "a high-albedo desert into a darker, moister, vegetated plain."<sup>[9]</sup>

## Status and views

In a 2003 interview with National Public Radio about the 2003 American Geophysical Union (AGU) statement, he said he is "a strong critic of scientists who make catastrophic predictions of huge increases in global temperatures and tremendous rises in sea levels". He added, though, that "it is scientifically inconceivable that after changing forests into cities, turning millions of acres into irrigated farmland, putting massive quantities of soot and dust into the air, and putting extra greenhouse gases into the air, that the natural course of climate has not changed in some way."<sup>[8]</sup>

In a 2009 interview with Fortune Magazine about signing the 2003 American Geophysical Union (AGU) statement, he said: "As far as the AGU, I thought that was a fine statement because it did not put forth a magnitude of the warming. We just said that human effects have a warming influence, and that's certainly true. There was nothing about disaster or catastrophe. In fact, I was very upset about the latest AGU statement [in 2007]. It was about alarmist as you can get." <sup>[10]</sup>

In a 2007 editorial in the Wall Street Journal, he wrote: "I'm sure the majority (but not all) of my IPCC colleagues cringe when I say this, but I see neither the developing catastrophe nor the smoking gun proving that human activity is to blame for most of the warming we see." <sup>[11]</sup>

In a 2007 ruling in a trial relating to automobile emission regulation in Vermont, U.S. District Court Chief Judge William K. Sessions wrote, "Plaintiffs' own expert, Dr. Christy, agrees with the IPCC's [2001] assessment that in the light of new evidence and taking into account remaining uncertainties, most of the observed warming over the last fifty years is likely to have been due to the increase in GHG concentrations." <sup>[12]</sup> What Christy said in his testimony was, "You know, it's a statement that has lots of qualifications in it, so it's hard to disagree with." and "You saw me pause a long time because — this was six years ago. And the question was about what I thought six years ago." When then asked if he presently agreed with that IPCC assessment Christy responded, "As I answered here, because of the qualifications in that statement, I don't have significant concerns." <sup>[13]</sup>

In a 2009 written testimony to the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee, he wrote: "From my analysis, the actions being considered to 'stop global warming' will have an imperceptible impact on whatever the climate will do, while making energy more expensive, and thus have a negative impact on the economy as a whole. We have found that climate models and popular surface temperature data sets overstate the changes in the real atmosphere and that actual changes are not alarming." <sup>[14]</sup>

In 2014, Christy and his UAH colleague Richard McNider wrote an article in the Wall Street Journal in which they criticized climate models as making inaccurate predictions. He also dismissed the scientific consensus on global warming by arguing that there was a consensus about putrefaction causing scurvy, which was later acknowledged to be wrong. <sup>[15]</sup>

## Awards

- 1991: NASA Exceptional Scientific Achievement Medal (with Roy Spencer). <sup>[16]</sup>
- 1996: AMS Special Award "for developing a global, precise record of Earth's temperature from operational polar-orbiting satellites, fundamentally advancing our ability to monitor climate" (with Roy Spencer). <sup>[16]</sup>

## See also

- Roy Spencer (scientist)
- UAH satellite temperature dataset
- List of scientists opposing the mainstream scientific assessment of global warming

## Selected publications

### Articles

- Christy, John R. (November 1, 2007). "My Nobel Moment"

([http://online.wsj.com/article/SB119387567378878423.html?mod=opinion\\_main\\_commentaries](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB119387567378878423.html?mod=opinion_main_commentaries)).  
The Wall Street Journal.

- Christy, John R. (November 13, 2007). "No consensus on IPCC's level of ignorance" (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/7081331.stm>). BBC News.

## Peer-Reviewed Papers

- Spencer, Roy W.; Christy, John R. (1990). "Precise Monitoring of Global Temperature Trends from Satellites" (<http://www.sciencemag.org/content/247/4950/1558.short>). *Science* **247** (4950): 1558–1562. Bibcode:1990Sci...247.1558S (<http://adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/1990Sci...247.1558S>). doi:10.1126/science.247.4950.1558 (<https://dx.doi.org/10.1126%2Fscience.247.4950.1558>). PMID 17782811 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17782811>).
- Dutton, Ellsworth G.; Christy, John R. (1992). "Solar radiative forcing at selected locations and evidence for global lower tropospheric cooling following the eruptions of El Chichon and Pinatubo" (<http://www.agu.org/pubs/crossref/1992/92GL02495.shtml>). *Geophysical Research Letters* **19** (23): 2313–2316. Bibcode:1992GeoRL..19.2313D (<http://adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/1992GeoRL..19.2313D>). doi:10.1029/92GL02495 (<https://dx.doi.org/10.1029%2F92GL02495>).
- Christy, John R.; Spencer, Roy W.; Braswell, William D. (1999). "MSU Tropospheric Temperatures: Dataset Construction and Radiosonde Comparisons" (<http://journals.ametsoc.org/doi/abs/10.1175/1520-0426%282000%29017%3C1153%3AMTTDCA%3E2.0.CO%3B2>). *Journal of Atmospheric and Oceanic Technology* **17** (9): 1153–1170. Bibcode:2000JAOT..17.1153C (<http://adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/2000JAOT..17.1153C>). doi:10.1175/1520-0426(2000)017<1153:MTTDC>2.0.CO;2 (<https://dx.doi.org/10.1175%2F1520-0426%282000%29017%3C1153%3AMTTDCA%3E2.0.CO%3B2>).
- Christy, John R.; Spencer, Roy W.; Norris, William B.; Braswell, William D.; Parker, David E. (2003). "Error Estimates of Version 5.0 of MSU–AMSU Bulk Atmospheric Temperatures" (<http://journals.ametsoc.org/doi/abs/10.1175/1520-0426%282003%2920%3C613%3AEEOVOM%3E2.0.CO%3B2>). *Journal of Atmospheric and Oceanic Technology* **20** (5): 613–629. Bibcode:2003JAOT..20..613C (<http://adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/2003JAOT..20..613C>). doi:10.1175/1520-0426(2003)20<613:EEOVOM>2.0.CO;2 (<https://dx.doi.org/10.1175%2F1520-0426%282003%2920%3C613%3AEEOVOM%3E2.0.CO%3B2>).
- Douglass, David H.; Christy, John R.; Pearson, Benjamin D.; Singer, S. Fred (2008). "A comparison of tropical temperature trends with model predictions" (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/joc.1651/abstract>). *International Journal of Climatology* **28** (13): 1693–1701. Bibcode:2008IJCli..28.1693D

(<http://adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/2008IJCli..28.1693D>). doi:10.1002/joc.1651  
(<https://dx.doi.org/10.1002%2Fjoc.1651>).

- Douglass, David H.; Christy, John R. (2009). "Limits on CO2 Forcing From Recent Temperature Data of Earth" (<http://multi-science.metapress.com/content/x0k86v113t271601/>). *Energy & Environment* **20** (1–2): 177–189. arXiv:0809.0581 (<https://arxiv.org/abs/0809.0581>). Bibcode:2008arXiv0809.0581D (<http://adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/2008arXiv0809.0581D>). doi:10.1260/095830509787689277 (<https://dx.doi.org/10.1260%2F095830509787689277>).
- Christy, John R.; Herman, Benjamin; Pielke Sr., Roger et al. (2010). "What Do Observational Datasets Say About Modeled Tropospheric Temperature Trends Since 1979?" (<http://www.mdpi.com/2072-4292/2/9/2148>). *Remote Sensing* **2** (9): 2148–2169. Bibcode:2010RemS....2.2148C (<http://adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/2010RemS....2.2148C>). doi:10.3390/rs2092148 (<https://dx.doi.org/10.3390%2Frs2092148>).

## References

1. <sup>a b c d</sup> "Dr. John R. Christy Biography" ([http://web.archive.org/web/20120716203739/http://www.nsstc.uah.edu/atmos/christy\\_bio.html](http://web.archive.org/web/20120716203739/http://www.nsstc.uah.edu/atmos/christy_bio.html)). University of Alabama in Huntsville. Archived from the original ([http://www.nsstc.uah.edu/atmos/christy\\_bio.html](http://www.nsstc.uah.edu/atmos/christy_bio.html)) on 16 July 2012.
2. <sup>a</sup> John Christy (<http://nsstc.uah.edu/users/john.christy/>)
3. <sup>a</sup> "An investigation of the general circulation associated with extreme anomalies in hemispheric mean atmospheric mass" (<http://www.worldcat.org/title/investigation-of-the-general-circulation-associated-with-extreme-anomalies-in-hemispheric-mean-atmospheric-mass/oclc/18286111>). University of Illinois. 1987. Retrieved 2012-08-04.
4. <sup>a</sup> "List of AMS Fellows" ([http://www.ametsoc.org/memdir/fellowslist/get\\_listoffellows.cfm](http://www.ametsoc.org/memdir/fellowslist/get_listoffellows.cfm)). American Meteorological Society. Retrieved October 8, 2008.
5. <sup>a b</sup> Tom M. L. Wigley et al. (April 2006). "Temperature Trends in the Lower Atmosphere – Executive Summary" (<http://www.climate-science.gov/Library/sap/sap1-1/finalreport/sap1-1-final-execsum.pdf>). U.S. Climate Change Science Program.
6. <sup>a</sup> Roy Spencer, John Christy, Phillip Gentry (May 5, 2004). "New Climate Study Finds 'Global Warming' by Subtracting Cooling That Wasn't There" (<http://www.marshall.org/article.php?id=215>). University of Alabama in Huntsville.
7. <sup>a</sup> "Appendix III – Contributors to the IPCC WGI Third Assessment Report" (<http://www.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/tar/wg1/index.php?idp=558>). IPCC. 2001. Retrieved April 4, 2007.
8. <sup>a b</sup> David, Perlman (December 18, 2003). "Earth warming at faster pace, say top science group's leaders" (<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2003/12/18/MNGNV3PH9D1.DTL&type=printable>). San Francisco Chronicle. Retrieved April 4, 2007.

9. ^ John R. Christy, William B. Norris (February 2006). "Methodology and Results of Calculating Central California Surface Temperature Trends: Evidence of Human-Induced Climate Change?" (<http://journals.ametsoc.org/doi/abs/10.1175/JCLI3627.1>). American Meteorological Society.
10. ^ Jon Birger (May 14, 2009). "What if global-warming fears are overblown?" (<http://money.cnn.com/2009/05/14/magazines/fortune/globalwarming.fortune/?postversion=2009051412>). Fortune Magazine.
11. ^ John Christy (November 1, 2007). "My Nobel moment" (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB119387567378878423.html>). The Wall Street Journal.
12. ^ "Case No. 2:05-cv-302" ([http://www.columbia.edu/~jeh1/2007/VermontDecision\\_20070912.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/~jeh1/2007/VermontDecision_20070912.pdf)). United States District Court for the District of Vermont. September 12, 2007. pp. 44–45. Retrieved February 9, 2011.
13. ^ "Civil File No. 05-302 & 304" ([http://www.pawalaw.com/assets/docs/pavley\\_christy\\_cross.pdf](http://www.pawalaw.com/assets/docs/pavley_christy_cross.pdf)). United States District Court for the District of Vermont. May 4, 2007. pp. 46–48. Retrieved March 7, 2011.
14. ^ John Christy (November 25, 2009), *House Ways and Means Committee – Written Testimony* (<http://waysandmeans.house.gov/media/pdf/111/ctest.pdf>), U.S. House Ways and Means Committee
15. ^ Christy & McNider (19 February 2014). "McNider and Christy: Why Kerry Is Flat Wrong on Climate Change" (<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303945704579391611041331266>). *Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved 6 April 2014.
16. ^ <sup>*a*</sup> <sup>*b*</sup> "John R. Christy: Short biography" ([http://web.archive.org/web/20070307104715/http://science.nasa.gov/ssl/PAD/sppb/NSSTC-CSPAR\\_Colloquia/FAL-01/christy\\_bio.html](http://web.archive.org/web/20070307104715/http://science.nasa.gov/ssl/PAD/sppb/NSSTC-CSPAR_Colloquia/FAL-01/christy_bio.html)). NASA. Archived from the original ([http://science.nasa.gov/ssl/PAD/sppb/NSSTC-CSPAR\\_Colloquia/FAL-01/christy\\_bio.html](http://science.nasa.gov/ssl/PAD/sppb/NSSTC-CSPAR_Colloquia/FAL-01/christy_bio.html)) on March 7, 2007. Retrieved April 4, 2007.

## External links

- Homepage (<http://www.nsstc.uah.edu/atmos/christy.html>)
- "Though Scorned by Colleagues, a Climate-Change Skeptic Is Unbowed" ([http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/16/us/skeptic-of-climate-change-john-christy-finds-himself-a-target-of-suspicion.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/16/us/skeptic-of-climate-change-john-christy-finds-himself-a-target-of-suspicion.html?_r=1)), profile at New York Times, July 15, 2014
- Global Warming – Where's The Alarm? (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcGgLoPpbBw>), Presentation for the Society of American Foresters National Convention, 2010
- Written Statement of John R. Christy – Subcommittee on Energy and Power Committee on Energy and Commerce (<http://republicans.energycommerce.house.gov/Media/file/Hearings/Energy/030811/Christy.pdf>), U.S. House of Representatives, March 8, 2011
- The Gospel According to John (<http://discovermagazine.com/2001/feb/featgospel>), Discover Magazine, February 1, 2001
- "What if global-warming fears are overblown?"



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(<http://money.cnn.com/2009/05/14/magazines/fortune/globalwarming.fortune/?postversion=2009051412>), Interview with Fortune magazine, May 14, 2009

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Categories: Living people | American climatologists

| Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change lead authors | California State University, Fresno alumni

| University of Illinois alumni | University of Alabama in Huntsville faculty

| People from Fresno, California | State climatologists | Climate change skeptics (scientists)

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