



The Human Role in Earth Evolution: Will the Anthropocene be an Event, An Era or a Transition?

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Abstract:

This lecture will examine the history of planetary change as we know it from studies of the earth and other planets, particularly the highly dramatic changes that occur during planetary evolution. The lecture will offer a taxonomy of these catastrophic changes and examine their etiology. It will highlight the role of biological phenomena in some of these catastrophic changes in the earth's past and examine the possible effects of human activities on the evolution of such changes. Finally, the lecture will consider the implications of catastrophes in planetary evolution for the prospects of advanced life elsewhere in the universe.

About the Author:

DAVID GRINSPOON studies the prospects for life on other planets. He is Curator of Astrobiology at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science, Adjunct Professor of Astrophysical and Planetary Science at the University of Colorado, and currently holds the first appointment as the Library of Congress Chair of Astrobiology. He is a long time advisor to NASA, currently is Co-Investigator for the Radiation Assessment Detector on the Curiosity Rover, and he serves as Interdisciplinary Scientist on ESA's Venus Express. He also is Contributing Editor and writes the "Cosmic Relief" column for Sky



& Telescope. His technical papers have been published in Nature, Science and numerous other publications. He is the author of several books, writes often for the press and generalist periodicals, including the Boston Globe, NY Times, LA Times, Scientific American, Natural History, The Sciences, Slate and Seed, and he has appeared widely on radio and television. He is the recipient of the Carl Sagan Medal of the American Astronomical Society and his books have won a number of awards, including the PEN Center award for non-fiction.

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