

Michael Oppenheimer Biography Notes

From families at home to massive corporate businesses and industries, in 2008 everyone seems to be “going green.” Many members of the academic and scientific community have been studying the effects of global warming and climate change.

Currently the Albert G. Milbank Professor of Geosciences and International Affairs in the Woodrow Wilson School and the Department of Geosciences at Princeton University, Dr. Michael Oppenheimer’s environmental background has placed him in high demand. Dr. Oppenheimer is the Director of the Program in Science, Technology and Environmental Policy at the Woodrow Wilson School and Faculty Associate of the Atmospheric and Ocean Sciences Program, Princeton Environmental Institute and the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies.

This impressive list of positions is a result of Dr. Oppenheimer’s equally interesting career. After graduating from the University of Chicago (1970) with his Ph.D. in chemical physics, Dr. Oppenheimer worked as both a Research Fellow at the Harvard College Observatory and as a Physicist at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. Beginning in 1981, Dr. Oppenheimer gained considerable recognition as a Chief Scientist and Manager of the Global/Regional Air Program with the non-governmental environmental organization of Environmental Defense.

Dr. Oppenheimer’s research interests deal directly with science and policy of the atmosphere, particularly climate change and its impacts. Dr. Oppenheimer drew attention to the dangerous realities of global warming by helping to organize two workshops associated with the United Nations that aided in negotiations of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (signed at the 1992 Earth Summit) and the Kyoto Protocol. His research was also vital in the passage of amendments to the national Clean Air Act in 1990.

However, Dr. Oppenheimer received his most prestigious award in 2007. Dr. Oppenheimer is a long-time participant in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and also lead author of the IPCC’s Fourth Assessment Report. The IPCC and former Vice-President Al Gore were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 for their studies on global climate change, which have helped lay the needed foundations to address these problems.

Dr. Oppenheimer is the author of approximately 100 articles published in academic journals. He has been involved with a large number of committees, including the NASA Advisory Committee on the Atmospheric Effects of Stratospheric Aircraft, the Environmental Advisory Committee to New York Governor Mario Cuomo, and a member of the Executive Committee for the Cooperative Institute for Climate Science affiliated with Princeton University and NOAA Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory, just to name a few.

Quick Facts (Education and work History):

- 1970 Ph.D. in Chemical Physics from University of Chicago
- 1971-73 Research Fellow, Harvard College Observatory
- 1971-81 Physicist, Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics
- 1981-96 Senior Scientist, Environmental Defense
- 1995 -2002 Manager, Global / Regional Air Program, Environmental Defense
- 1996 -2002 Chief Scientist, Environmental Defense
- 2002 - Albert G. Milbank Professor of Geosciences and International Affairs in the Woodrow Wilson School and the Department of Geosciences at Princeton University
- Director of the Program in Science, Technology and Environmental Policy at the Woodrow Wilson School (Princeton University)
- Faculty Associate of the Atmospheric and Ocean Sciences Program, Princeton Environmental Institute and the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies

Quick Facts (Committees and Boards):

- 1982-90 Board of Directors, National Clean Air Committee
- 1987-88 E.P.A. Visibility Committee
- 1989-93 NASA Advisory Committee on the Atmospheric Effects of Stratospheric Aircraft
- 1991-94 Environmental Advisory Committee to New York Governor Mario Cuomo
- 1993-95 NASA Advisory Committee on the Atmospheric Effects of Aviation
- 2001-05 Environment Jury, Heinz Awards, Heinz Foundation
- 2004-07 Lead Author, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Fourth Assessment Report
- 2007- Advisory Board, African Rainforest Conservancy
- 2007- Panel on Alternative Liquid Transportation Fuels, National Academy of Sciences

Quick Facts (Awards):

- 1978-79 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellow
- 1989 The Henry Draper Award of the Hudson River Fishermen's Association
- 2000 League of Conservation Voters, Environmental Leadership Award for Advancing the Public Understanding of the Science of Climate Change
- 2001 Environmental Action Coalition Green Star Award
- 2007 New Species Award, African Rainforest Conservancy
- 2007 Participant in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007

(Compiled directly from Oppenheimer's website and CV by Stephanie M. Lang.)