Eugene Rasmusson Lectures

The Department of Atmospheric & Oceanic Science has launched these annual lectures to honor Emeritus Research Professor Eugene M. Rasmusson who joined the department in May 1986. Gene is known for his seminal analysis of the atmospheric hydrologic cycle, an effort begun during his doctoral studies at MIT under Victor Starr. Gene is, however, most well known for his observational description of ENSO. His characterization of the ocean-atmosphere state in the nascent, mature, and decaying ENSO phases fostered theoretical and numerical modeling of ENSO.

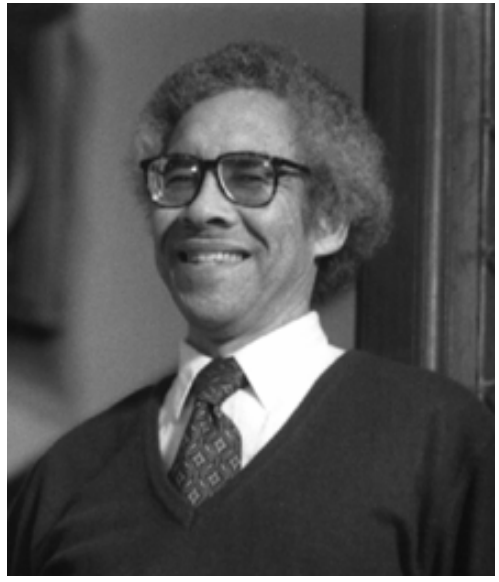
Gene has been honored with the Victor Starr lectureship at MIT, the George Benton lectureship at Johns Hopkins, and the Robert Horton lectureship at the American Meteorological Society. Gene received the Jule Charney award from the AMS in 1989. Gene is a member of the National Academy of Engineering, and an associate of the National Academy of Sciences.

Gene's community leadership (as AMS President) and scientific leadership at the National Research Council (including as CRC Chair) and NOAA has advanced climate monitoring, analysis, and prediction activities. The American Meteorological Society honored Gene with a named symposium in 2007.

2012 RASMUSSON LECTURER

Prof. George Philander

Why is Global Warming Polarizing?



Knox Taylor Professor of Geosciences
Princeton University

Member, National Academy of Sciences

29 March (Thursday), 2012
Lecture: 6:00pm; Reception: 5:00pm
Auditorium (Rm 2400), CSS Bldg.

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

DEPARTMENT OF ATMOSPHERIC & OCEANIC SCIENCE

Abstract:

Global warming is a complex controversy, unlike previous ones – Is the Earth flat or round? Is it at the center of the universe or is it a planet orbiting the Sun? – because it involves both science and ethics. Is the rise in the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide causing global warming? That question has a definite, objective answer, but the following one does not: what is the appropriate balance between our responsibilities to future generations, and our obligation to assist those suffering today? How do we prevent our subjective values from influencing our response to the scientific question?

This seminar explores an answer based on recent developments in the earth sciences which show that we are most fortunate to be in a very special place, planet Earth, at a very special time in its long and eventful history. “The greatest obstacle to progress is not ignorance, but the illusion of knowledge.”