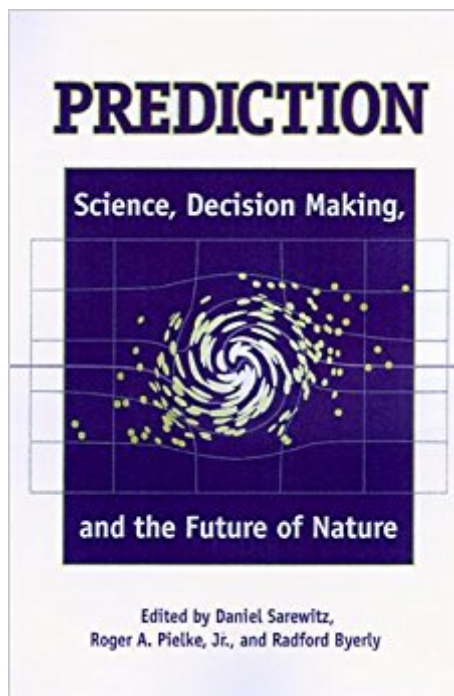




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Prediction: Science, Decision Making, And The Future Of Nature



Synopsis

The idea that predictive science can simplify the decision-making process by creating a clearer picture of the future is deeply appealing in principle, but deeply problematic in practice. "Prediction" offers a fascinating and wide-ranging look at the interdependent scientific, political, and social factors involved in using science-based predictions to guide policy making. Through ten detailed case studies, it explores society's efforts to generate reliable scientific information about complex natural systems and to use that information in making sound policy decisions. The book: provides an overview of predictive science from historical, scientific, political, and behavioral perspectives offers case studies of the use and misuse of scientific predictions on subjects ranging from asteroids to nuclear waste disposal proposes a practical analytical framework for the use of predictive science in setting policy recommends actions and policies that can increase the likelihood of effective decisions Contributors include Clark Chapman, Charles Herrick, William H. Hooke, Orrin Pilkey, Steve Rayner, Naomi Oreskes, Daniel Metlay, Stanley Changnon, Donald Gautier, Robert Moran, Joanne Nigg, and Thomas Stewart. "Prediction" is the first book to look at the numerous and varied scientific, social, and political factors involved in making and using predictions relevant to a wide range of current environmental controversies and challenges. It provides much-needed context for understanding predictions and scientific pronouncements, and is an important work for anyone concerned with interactions between science and policy making.

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Customer Reviews

This book of 18 essays is organized into six sections that undertake the following ambitious tasks: (1) providing some insight into the nature and limits of scientific prediction; (2) assessing the successes, failures, and mixed results of predictions about weather, floods, asteroid/comet impacts, and earthquakes; (3) examining how political considerations can affect predictions about beach erosion, mining impacts, and groundwater movement at a proposed nuclear waste site; (4) considering how various types of uncertainty have affected predictions about oil and gas reserves, the effects of acid rain, and climate change policy; (5) looking at some of the tensions and interactions between science-based predictions and human decision-making that raise or pose complex social and political issues; and (6) offering a synopsis of various lessons learned from the essays in the book. The book does not provide a simple or casual look at the subject of predictions. The essays are somewhat technical in nature, and are written in a style that assumes the reader has at least some training in, or experience with, science and the scientific method. But, the overall quality of the essays is good and makes it worth the reader's effort to work his or her way through the technical details. Whether or not you agree with the arguments and conclusions about scientific predictions presented by the authors of the various essays, they raise important questions about the nature of predictions, identify significant limits to predictions, make many interesting observations about the use and misuse of predictions in various fields, and point out the need for a thoughtful approach to understanding and applying scientific predictions. This book is worth reading by scientific professionals interested in the process of making scientific predictions, as well as elected officials, government personnel, and concerned citizens wanting to be better informed about how to understand and evaluate predictions made in connection with public policy issues.

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