

S1: The Origins of Climate Denial

Season 1: The Origins of Climate Denial

In the 1970s and 1980s, oil companies were conducting much of the cutting-edge research on climate change. But in the 1990s their approach, both in research and messaging, changed. This is the story of that shift, and what came next.



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02:26

Ep 1: The Bell Labs of Energy

In the 1970s and early 1980s, Exxon wanted to be the Bell Labs of energy. It hired brilliant scientists who conducted cutting-edge research on everything from the "greenhouse effect" to renewable energy. At the time, there was bipartisan support around the idea of tackling global warming, and a sense that American innovation was up to the task. [Transcript](#)



The Bell Labs of Energy

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20:01

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Ep 2: The Turn

As the price of oil dipped in the early 1980s, management changed at most oil companies and the industry as a whole became more concerned with preserving its core business than expanding in new directions and being "energy companies." Then the campaigns to undermine the science began. [***Transcript***](#)



The Turn

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21:59

Ep 3: Weaponizing False Equivalence

As climate disinformation campaigns ramped up in the 1990s, oil companies and their PR firms exploited weaknesses in the U.S. media system and propped up "contrarian" scientists to push the narrative of scientific uncertainty and shift how journalists covered the issue. [***Transcript***](#)



Weaponizing False Equivalence

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21:41

Ep 4: Exploiting Scientists' Kryptonite—Certainty

In addition to using journalists' views on their own objectivity against them, oil companies exploited various weaknesses in science, namely scientists' tendency

toward not prioritizing or valuing good communication skills, and their absolute refusal to be certain about anything. [Transcript](#)



Exploiting Scientists' Krypto...

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17:17

Ep 5: Aggressive Think Tanks, Shouty Pundits, and a New Religious Argument

To make media manipulation and lobbying truly effective, oil companies and their public relations firms also had to shift the culture, influencing everything from civil discourse to how religious groups viewed the issue of climate change. [Transcript](#)



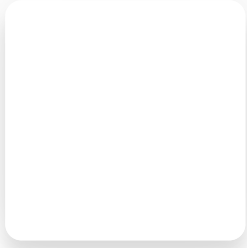
Aggressive Think Tanks, Shouty Pundits, and a ...

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21:30

Ep 6: The First Step to Influencing Policy—Setting Research Agendas

If you unravel climate policy back to its origins, eventually you get to academic research. Although oil companies dramatically reduced their own scientific research on climate in the 1990s, by the early 2000s they began funding research centers at prestigious universities throughout the country, subtly shaping the research that any eventual policy would be based upon. [Transcript](#)



The First Step to Influencing Policy: Setting Res...

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19:29

Ep 7: Campaigns So Successful They've Landed in Court

The fossil fuel industry's decades-long information war was so successful that even though oil companies themselves began publicly accepting climate science years ago, the public remains skeptical. Fewer Americans believe in the need to act on climate today than did 30 years ago, despite insurmountable evidence. Industry campaigns were so successful they've now landed oil companies in court, facing multiple suits attempting to hold them accountable for the damages inflicted by unchecked climate change. [Transcript](#)



Campaigns So Successful They've Landed in C...

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19:51

Ep 8: Winning the War

Fossil fuel industry influence campaigns ensured that we lost a critical 30 years not taking action on climate change. But all is not lost. The technology to address climate change exists, and if there's one thing history teaches us about America it's that radical social change is entirely possible here. [Transcript](#)



Winning the War

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24:09



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