

ELIZABETH KOLBERT

Doctor of Letters

Presented by Christoph E. Geiss, Associate Professor of Physics and Environmental Science

Escorted by Margaret D. Lindsey P'12, Dean of the First-Year Program

You began your life's work by studying literature at Yale University. After being awarded a Fulbright Scholarship, you studied abroad at the Universität Hamburg, in Germany, where—in 1984—you embarked on your career in journalism as a stringer for *The New York Times*. A year later, you moved to that paper's metro desk in New York. From 1988 to 1991 you served as the *Times*' Albany bureau chief. You also contributed articles on a wide range of topics to *The New York Times Magazine*.

You remained a *Times* reporter until 1999, when you joined *The New Yorker* as a staff writer. Not surprisingly, considering your *Times* experience, your initial work at that magazine revolved around deeply researched and impeccably crafted political profiles.

Many of those, indeed, enlivened your first book, *The Prophet of Love: And Other Tales of Power and Deceit*. Published in 2004, it chronicles—through insightful portraits of such prominent figures as Hillary Clinton, Rudolph Giuliani, and Michael Bloomberg—the evolution of political influence in New York during the late 1990s, and especially in the aftermath of 9/11.

At *The New Yorker*, you have also branched out into book reviews and commentaries on many topics. But of special, and increasing, significance has been your reportage on environmental issues and, particularly, climate change, inspired by your growing conviction that climate change was an inadequately reported story, given its worldwide significance.

As if to validate that conviction, “The Climate of Man,” a three-part series about global warming that you wrote not long after completing *The Prophet of Love*, earned you the American Association for the Advancement of Science Journalism Award in 2005. The series also earned the National Academies Communication Award and National Magazine Award for Public Interest in 2006, the year you received a Lannan Literary Fellowship.

That same year, you published your second book, *Field Notes from a Catastrophe*, which was chosen by Trinity for the entire Class of 2013 to read as their first college assignment. A powerful exploration of the causes and effects of global climate change, *Field Notes* effectively redefined your career. No longer simply a first-rate reporter, you have become one of the most widely known and highly respected environmental writers of our time.

When you received the 16th annual Heinz Award, in 2010, the citation noted, in part, that “She has become a trusted resource to a growing network of concerned citizens who crave informed expertise on the environmental issues, but who lack the access she has acquired to the many disciplines researching the topic.” The Sierra Club concurred with that assessment, awarding you its David R. Brower Award, which recognizes outstanding environmental reporting, in 2011.

For your brilliant reporting, which has played an important role in raising awareness of what may be the single-most important science story of our time, and for your dedication to exemplifying and promoting the highest standards of journalism, I have the honor of presenting you, Elizabeth Kolbert, for the degree of Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*.