Class Session #1  
1 October 2019  
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# Goals for the day

## Intro to climate change science – this week and next

## Six Americas as form of introduction – will come back to it later in term

## Discussion questions

## The climate change policy debate: distinguishing positive, normative, and prescriptive claims

## Reviewing syllabus and reviewing assignments

### Inform people of response papers – assigned weeks

# Introduction to the Six Americas

## Introduce some concepts and want you to choose which group you are in as part of your introduction

## **The Alarmed** (18 percent of the U.S. adult population) are the segment most engaged in the issue of global warming. They are very convinced it is happening, human-caused, and a serious and urgent threat. The Alarmed are already making changes in their own lives and support an aggressive national response (see graphs below).

## **The Concerned** (33 percent) are also convinced that global warming is a serious problem and support a vigorous national response. Members of this group have signaled their intention to at least engage in consumer action on global warming in the near term, but they are less personally involved in the issue and have taken fewer actions than the Alarmed.

## **The Cautious** (19 percent) also believe that global warming is a problem, although they are less certain that it is happening than the Alarmed or the Concerned. They do not view it as a personal threat, and do not feel a sense of urgency to deal with it.

## **The Disengaged** (12 percent) do not know and have not thought much about the issue at all and say that they could easily change their minds about global warming.

## **The Doubtful** (11 percent) are evenly split among those who think global warming is happening, those who think it isn’t, and those who do not know. Many within this group believe that if global warming is happening, it is caused by natural changes in the environment. They believe that it won’t harm people for many decades, if at all, and they say that America is already doing enough to respond to the threat.

## **The Dismissive** (7 percent), like the Alarmed, are actively engaged in the issue, but are on the opposite end of the spectrum. Most members of this group believe that global warming is not happening, is not a threat to either people or non-human nature, and strongly believe that it does not warrant a national response.

# Self-introductions – go around the room and have each person introduce themselves via 6 Americas identification. Introduction: three questions I want you to answer

## What DON’T you know about climate change?

## What DO you know about climate change?

## What do you want to Learn?

## Make a claim about climate change

# Climate change as a policy debate and controversy involving three types of claims (Dessler and Parson, 2012, pp. 3-5)

## US Policy debate includes:

### United States Senator and former presidential candidate John McCain: “The burning of oil and other fossil fuels is contributing to the dangerous accumulation of greenhouse gases in the Earth’s atmosphere, altering our climate with the potential for major social, economic and political upheaval.”

### Former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair and Netherlands Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende: “The science of climate change has never been clearer.”

### United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon: “The heat is on. We must act” (2013) but in 2007, said: “The science is clear. Climate change is happening. The impact is real. The time to act is now.”

### US Senator James Inhofe: “Anyone who pays even cursory attention to the issue understands that scientists vigorously disagree over whether human activities are responsible for global warming, or whether those activities will precipitate natural disasters. … With all of the hysteria, all of the fear, all of the phony science, could it be that man-made global warming is the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people? It sure sounds like it.”

### Professor Richard Lindzen of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology: “Ambiguous scientific statements about climate are hyped by those with a vested interest in alarm”

## Course will cover a wide range of claims about climate change and its helpful to think theoretically about what these claims look like.

## Types of claims:

### Political controversy stems, at least in part, from competition among different types of claims that we will see over the course of the term

### Inference: claim about things we didn’t or can’t observe

### Research seeks convincing arguments that claims are true

## **Positive claims** about how the world IS

### Traits of positive claims

#### Right and wrong answers (if posed carefully)

#### Answers are universal, not relative to who is making the claim

#### Arguments about them being right and wrong can be resolved through evidence

### **Descriptive inferences**: “THAT claims” about things that happened we DIDN’T observe

#### Earth continued to rotate on its axis last night -- evidence?

#### I prepared for class: evidence=lecture notes in hand and reading from them

#### How do we know whether to believe these claims?

### **Causal inferences**: “WHY claims” about causes we CAN’T observe

#### What causes Earth to rotate on its axis? Gravity – can’t observe it but believe it to be true because it best explains the evidence

#### Why did I prepare for class?

##### Desire to provide best knowledge I can about global problem I care about

##### Fear of social embarrassment of showing up unprepared

##### Fear I would not be paid if I wasn’t prepared

##### How could we determine the difference among these?

### Evidence is powerful but is also uncertain and can be disputed

#### Evidence might be unavailable or unobtainable

#### So, there IS a truth but, in some cases, we may be unsure about what that truth is

#### Interpretations matter sometimes

## **Normative claims**: “SHOULD claims” about GOALS, about how the world should be, about what we should strive for.

### Fundamentally based in human values, that are not shared and are often contested

### “We need to protect the environment”

### “We need to ensure economic growth”

### Values can often be embedded/obscure/hard-to-see

## **Prescriptive claims:** about what we should DO

### Policy claims about actions to be taken that usually involve both positive and normative claims

### “We should adopt a carbon tax” vs. “We should adopt a cap-and-trade policy”

### Implicit claims that one policy will generate greater benefits, be more effective, etc. than some alternative.

### Many effects of a given policy

### Process of policy may matter as much as effectiveness, and this is important to politics of an issue

## The controversy arises because most statements about climate change combine ALL three types of claims

### Much value in separating positive and normative claims so that you can adjudicate the positive claims using evidence and then, separately, have arguments about the normative claims

### How are different types of claims resolved:

#### Positive claims: Use theory to make predictions of something and then see if “observations of real life” match the predictions.

#### Normative claims: Fundamentally, resolved by power (real power / voting power) while positive claims usually can be, at least conceptually, resolved by reference to evidence

#### Prescriptive claims: Use theory to make predictions of something and then see if “observations of real life” match the predictions.

## How do you know if a claim is true?

# Syllabus review

## READ THE SYLLABUS

### All readings are online, but let me know if not

### Don’t be daunted by ***large number*** of readings: total pages per class session is rather small.

### Do NOT count on me announcing all due dates. I will try to announce in class and via Canvas but your responsibility. All dates are on the Syllabus.

## Class participation

### Attendance and active class participation is required. This is a seminar class and the expectation will be that all students come in having done all the readings and taken time to think about them before class. Although that takes more work up front, the payoff in terms of what everyone learns from the class is huge. It will be a much better class if we all learn from each other, rather than all learning from the professor.

## Week 1 assignment (0%): “Plagiarism / Academic Integrity assignment” (0% of grade)

### Read the plagiarism links in the Canvas announcements and come in with any questions you have. Make sure you read my policy on plagiarism below, as well.

## Assignments

### Local Climate Change Graphs

### Short analysis paper: What drives CO2 emissions?

### Essay: Different things we believe

### First Draft of Paper due at beginning of class

### Week 3 and subsequent: TWO Response paper assignments. Each student will write TWO response papers covering the readings for two class sessions (4 weeks apart). Each student will be required to help lead discussion for that session. Response papers can be no more than 1200 words and should include

#### Section 1: Clearly identify **at least 3 claims** that arise from **at least 3 of the readings**. That is, summarize points of agreement or disagreement across at least 3 of the readings.

#### Section 2: State whether you believe these claims and why or why not? What “ingredients” make these good arguments OR what ingredients that are lacking make these poor arguments? Why are some of the articles more convincing than the others?

#### Section 3: Clearly state two lessons about making good arguments learned from these pieces.

### Final paper assignment: Final Research Paper and 2 draft assignments

#### Final research paper

#### Two paper drafts to help you build toward the final paper

#### Very open to topics.

#### Brainstorm on topics for a bit -- lots of open questions in the field

#### Not opinions. NOT Normative questions. Not Descriptive inference.

#### Must involve CAUSAL inference.

#### Past-oriented but so they are future-relevant and credible.

# Review reading assignments for next few classes