



CLIMATE CHANGE: ALARMIST OR SKEPTIC?

THE BACKGROUND:

The Earth's climate is changing (it always has been – since the beginning of time!) and this fact is getting a great deal of media attention. As a student of science, it is up to you to make yourself more aware of issues such as climate change by analyzing the scientific evidence that supports the claims that are frequently made on the evening news, in articles in the newspaper and online, and even in everyday discussion.

In this unit, you will be presented with two very opposing viewpoints. The first viewpoint will come in the form of Al Gore's movie "*An Inconvenient Truth*". In this movie, Al Gore presents the side of the global warming alarmist: that is, the viewpoint that the Earth is warming, that humans are to blame, that horrific consequences loom just around the corner, and that it is our job to reverse this dangerous trend.

The opposing viewpoint will come in the following class period in the form of another film – this one titled "*The Great Global Warming Swindle*". In this film, the viewpoint of the skeptic is presented; that is, that the Earth is indeed warming, but the cause is far from certain, the effects of humans are inconsequential, and our ability to change the climate is virtually nil. The evidence presented in Gore's film is disputed by a number of scientists from various climate-related fields.

THE FORMAT:

- ✓ Minimum of 2 pages, maximum of 4 pages
- ✓ Preferably typed, double-spaced, 1" margins all around, standard font (Times New Roman, Georgia, etc...)
- ✓ If not typed, *neatly* hand-written single-spaced (2 pages) or double-spaced (4 pages), writing only on one side per page.
- ✓ Total: 20 points (see rubric for point breakdown)
- ✓ *If you use other sources, you **must** document parenthetically & on a works-cited page*
- ✓ Using information from other sources without giving proper credit to them will count as plagiarism and thus warrant a "zero" on the assignment.

Due: Tuesday, 05/22/07

THE OUTLINE:

Your task is to write a paper analyzing the information presented in both films following the format shown here:

- I. Background: Provide 1-2 paragraphs of background information on the history of climate change on the Earth
 - II. Alarmist Viewpoint: In 1-2 paragraphs, discuss evidence and arguments presented in "*An Inconvenient Truth*"
 - III. Skeptic Viewpoint: In 1-2 paragraphs, discuss evidence and arguments presented in "*The Great Global Warming Swindle*"
 - IV. Analysis: In 1-2 paragraphs, analyze these conflicting viewpoints by comparing and contrasting them. Close with a paragraph describing *your viewpoint* & supporting evidence after taking into account all of the information presented to you.
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Turn over for some recommendations on how to get started >

While you are required to follow the general outline shown on the front of this page, the exact format regarding how you express these concepts is up to you.

For some “starter” questions to get you going on each section, you may consider answering questions such as the following. Again, these are just starters – you are not required to answer each and every one (except the very last one).

I. **BACKGROUND:**

1. How has the Earth’s climate changed over time?
2. What does the Earth’s historical climate record say about the future of climate change?
3. What will happen to the Earth as it warms?

II. **ALARMIST VIEWPOINT:**

1. What are the major points of the movie “An Inconvenient Truth”?
2. What evidence is used to support the claims expressed in the movie?

III. **SKEPTIC VIEWPOINT:**

1. What are the major points of the movie “The Great Global Warming Swindle”?
2. What evidence is used to support the claims expressed in the movie?

IV. **ANALYSIS:**

1. Are there any points on which both of the movies agree?
2. Are there any points on which the movies disagree?
3. Which movie did you find to contain more scientific evidence / proof regarding its claims?
4. What do you think (if anything) should be done about global warming?
5. How should any proposed laws or other changes be paid for?

In the analysis section (the closing paragraph), you must respond to the following question:

After viewing these two movies, would you consider yourself an alarmist or a skeptic when it comes to global warming? Why?

Defend your answer with a discussion of evidence presented in the movies. Remember, it is not your opinion that will earn you a passing or failing grade, it is how you *defend* your opinion – you must back it up with a discussion of the scientific evidence to support your claim.

For more reading on these two movies, visit their respective websites:

Website for *An Inconvenient Truth*:
<http://www.climatecrisis.net/>

Website for *The Great Global Warming Swindle*:
http://www.channel4.com/science/microsites/G/great_global_warming_swindle/