Lab 11: Talking to a climate skeptic

You’ve learned a lot of the basic science about climate science and climate change. This week’s chapter discussed some of the natural causes of climate change. You’ll run into these topics fairly frequently when you talk to someone who believes that recent global warming is due to natural causes.

I find talking to climate skeptics (which includes a lot of my family members!) to be quite challenging, and it also forces me to really think about the climate issues at hand, and critically evaluate them. So let’s take a stab this week at discussing *one* climate skeptic argument in-depth. So this week’s lab is a bit more of a research assignment. You are welcome to do this assignment individually, or with a partner.

There are some great websites that discuss some common climate skeptic arguments, and dig right into in-depth discussions. Here are a couple:

* John Cook [Skeptical Science](https://www.skepticalscience.com/) (notice: beginner / intermediate / advanced)
* New Scientist: [Climate Change: A guide for the perplexed](https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn11462-climate-change-a-guide-for-the-perplexed/)
* RealClimate: [Response to common contrarian arguments](http://www.realclimate.org/index.php/archives/2004/12/index/)
* NERC (UK): [Climate change debate summary](https://web.archive.org/web/20130318012851/http://www.nerc.ac.uk/about/consult/debate/climatechange/summary.asp)
* Brian Angliss [A Thorough Debunking](https://scholarsandrogues.com/2007/07/23/anti-global-heating-claims-a-reasonably-thorough-debunking/)

Your first job is to *open these five web pages*, and browse through the structure of their formatting. Read through the lists of contrarian arguments, and check out the depth, style and approach of the discussion. You will certainly see some of the themes occurring repeatedly on multiple sites!

Your next job is to find *one* contrarian argument that interests you.

Now you get to have a mock debate / discussion with a contrarian, about the topic that you chose. Your final product will be a Word document that summarizes the transcript of your discussion. You can make up the setting for your debate (ie. over Thanksgiving dinner, between Uncle Bob and yourself). It might be fun to write the debate out as a screenplay. If you would prefer to summarize the arguments in essay format, that’s fine too.

Please include graphics in your discussion! Nearly all of these discussions benefit from inclusion of a couple graphics. *Just be sure to include a thoughtful critique / analysis* of graphics used, either by Uncle Bob or by yourself. It’s great to use a contrarian-inspired graphic, and then compare to a more scientifically-grounded graphic.

The five sites above may have enough information for you to understand the contrarian argument, understand the scientific issue at hand, and construct a debate. If you need more information, I suggest consulting [RealClimate.org](http://www.realclimate.org/). This is a website run by a handful of climate scientists. They were overwhelmed with trying to respond to all of the contrarian arguments and pop-culture references to climate, and trying to inform, educate, and explain what is going on. So this website serves as one-stop resource for discussion about many pop-culture and contrarian arguments. It’s large, somewhat clumsy, and somewhat difficult to wade through, but with a little perseverance you will probably find some great resources.

Also feel free to consult other web pages, your text book, and other resources. Consider your resources! wisely!!!! There’s *a lot*  of junk online about climate science and climate change.

Following your debate / argument / essay / transcript, I would like you to write a brief reflective paragraph about your experience with this lab. Why did you choose the issue that you chose? What did you discover during your investigation? Were there any surprises? What was your experience with this exercise?

Final debate arguments will be graded in consideration of the following aspects:

* Demonstrates understanding of the contrarian view.
* Expresses the contrarian view legitimately (like Uncle Bob would)
* Demonstrates understanding of the nuances, angles, details, and aspects of the topic.
* Discusses the topic intelligently, from an informed standpoint.
* Presents at least one graphic (probably more!) and includes a thoughtful discussion of the graphic.
* Includes a list of resources (an informal bibliography) from which information was drawn. Please include in-line citations in your transcript / debate when reasonable (for example, with the graphics you show).
* Includes a reflective paragraph about your choice of topic and your experience with this assignment.

I hope you have fun with this assignment!