**Debunking Climate Change Myths in the Classroom**

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**Instructor’s Notes**

These notes elaborate on some of the comments made on the cover sheet for the activity itself. There are two areas to elaborate upon:

1. Myth debunking as a teaching tool
2. Various approaches to using this activity

**Myth debunking as a teaching tool**

Summaries of work on the psychology of myth debunking (Cook and Lewandowsky, 2011) show that the human mind can respond in counter-intuitive ways to the presentation and demolition of incorrect information. For example, sometimes presenting people with myths can lead to the myth being remembered, even if it was later demonstrated to be false. **Thus, work with myth debunking should be handled with extreme caution**. Instructors intending to use myth debunking in the classroom are strongly encouraged to read Cook and Lewandowsky’s (2011) *Myth Debunking Handbook* first. A key point regarding this classroom activity is that it should be used to *test and strengthen* content knowledge that has *already been learned* by other methods; it should *not* be used to teach the content knowledge in the first place.

**Approaches to using this activity**

In my own class, I have used the climate contrarian newspaper op-ed as a final exam question. However, it could easily be used as the basis for classroom discussion, homework assignment, or group presentations. The key idea is to expose students to misinformation, demonstrate why the information is false or misleading (or, ideally, have the students identify this for themselves), and strengthen their ability to think critically about information on climate change (and ultimately on other topics). For more on myth debunking in the classroom, including other myth debunking classroom activities, see Bedford (2010).

**References**

Bedford, D. 2010. Agnotology as a teaching tool: learning climate science by studying misinformation. *Journal of Geography* 109:4, 159-165.

Cook, L. and S. Lewandowsky. 2011. The Debunking Handbook. http://www.skepticalscience.com/Debunking-Handbook-now-freely-available-download.html