Analysis of the Global Climate Change Controversy

A Problem-Based Learning Activity

Many voices can be heard in discussions surrounding the topic of global climate change (GCC). The information that we hear regarding the causes and consequences of GCC can vary significantly depending upon which voice is speaking. Who is saying what? Why are they saying it? What solutions, if any, are they offering?

**Part 1 – Research**

This portion of the exercise is designed to help us analyze various GCC perspectives. Each team will be responsible for analyzing statements from a particular set of stakeholders (e.g. public health organizations). A list containing organizations that exemplify each set is provided. After your team has completed their analysis, prepare a PowerPoint slide that can be used to share your findings with your classmates.

*Each team’s analysis should include the following:*

* **Disclosure** – Who are the stakeholders and what are their interests in GCC?
* **Position** – What is the view of the stakeholder(s): Is global climate change a serious problem that we must contend with? Is it the result of natural cycles or is it human induced?
* **Evidence/Rationale** – What evidence or rationale do the stakeholders use to support their position? What are their thoughts regarding uncertainty?
* **Response** – What, according to the stakeholder(s), is the appropriate response to GCC?

***Team Assignments***

**Team 1:** **Ecological Organizations** – Convention on Biological Diversity, United Nations Environment Programme, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis, US Fish and Wildlife Service

**Team 2:** **Public Health Organizations** – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Public Health Institute’s Center for Public Health and Climate Change, World Health Organization (WHO), National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS)

**Team 3:** **United States Government** – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of State, Department of Energy, Department of Agriculture

**Team 4:** **Interdisciplinary Scientific Organizations** – American Association for the Advancement of Science, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), National Academy of Sciences

**Team 5:** **Businesses and Economic Organizations** – ExxonMobil, Lloyd’s of London, US Climate Action Partnership, World Trade Organization (WTO)

**Team 6:** **Political Think Tanks** – American Enterprise Institute, Heartland Institute, International Institute for Environment and Development, National Center for Policy Analysis, Pew Center on Global Climate Change, World Resources Institute

**Team 7:** **“Grassroots” and Interdisciplinary Nonprofit Organizations** – 350.org, The Climate Project, Extreme Ice Survey

**Team 8:** **Scientists Skeptical of GCC** – Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine, Science & Environmental Policy Project, Wikipedia: List of scientists opposing the mainstream scientific assessment of global warming

**Team 9:** **Faith-Based Organizations** – Cornwall Alliance, Evangelical Climate Initiative, Evangelical Environmental Network, Faith in Place, Restoring Eden (includes links to denominational statements), Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale: Climate Change Statements from World Religions

**Part II – Sharing Your Findings**

* Share the results of your team’s research with your classmates. As you listen to the findings of others, take notes using the attached table; your notes will be helpful as you respond to the personal reflection question found in Part III below.
* Some have claimed that through their commitment to balanced journalism (presenting both sides of an issue), the US press inadvertently gives the impression that experts are evenly divided over GCC. Based on your findings and those of your classmates, what is your assessment of this claim?

**Part III – Personal Reflection**

According to Gallup polls, the American public seems unsure what to think about GCC. In fact, their concern about GCC declined in 2008 (when economic concerns took precendence) and then began to rebound around 2011-2012 (coinciding with increased media coverage of severe storms and droughts). Most do not see GCC as a threat in their lifetime: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/161645/americans-concerns-global-warming-rise.aspx>.

Now that you have a better understanding of the debate, what would you say about the causes of GCC, the importance of GCC impacts on human and natural systems, and wisest societal responses to GCC? *In your response be sure to state your opinion, rationale, and assessment of the perspectives researched by the class.*

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| **Team** | **Organization** | **Disclosure** | **Position** | **Evidence/Rationale** | **Response to GCC** |
| **1** | Ecological Organizations |  |  |  |  |
| **2** | Public Health Organizations |  |  |  |  |
| **3** | United States Government |  |  |  |  |
| **4** | Interdisciplinary Scientific Organizations |  |  |  |  |
| **5** | Business and Economic Organizations |  |  |  |  |
| **6** | Political Think Tanks |  |  |  |  |
| **7** | “Grassroots” and Interdisciplinary Nonprofit Organizations |  |  |  |  |
| **8** | Scientists Skeptical of GCC |  |  |  |  |
| **9** | Faith-based Organizations |  |  |  |  |