



Lesson Plan 110105

The Global Warming Cover-Up (Target: Grades 9-12)

Objectives:

1. Provide basic background information on the causes of global climate disruption (global warming).
2. Create awareness of governmental and economic reasons for downplaying the causes of global climate disruption.
3. Create awareness of specific, recent circumstances in which the U.S. Government and industry have collaborated to discredit science supporting the causes and effects of global climate disruption.
4. Generate critical thinking about ways in which citizens, corporations and government can work together to change the causes of global climate disruption.

Materials/Sources:

1. "Global Warming Cover-Up" "Six Things" Page.
2. "Global Warming Cover-Up" News & Views Page.
3. "Global Warming Cover-Up" Notable Quotes Page.
4. "Global Warming Cover-Up" Classroom Comic
5. Computers connected to the Internet/world wide web.

Methods:

1. Distribute "Global Warming Cover-Up" Questions & Answers page to students. Have them spend 15 minutes reading and reviewing the information provided.
2. After students have read the Questions & Answers page, hand out the "Global Warming Cover-Up" News Report Page and the Classroom Comic.
3. HOMEWORK: Using the web resources on the Classroom Comics page and other searches, students will conduct online research about how climate disruption is already affecting large ecosystems, and how continued atmospheric carbon buildup will lead to greater disruptions.
4. NEXT CLASS PERIOD: Student-led discussion.
 - A. Before you start the discussion, ask for a show of hands to the following questions:
 - "How many of you think global warming is being deliberately ignored by many in our government and by many large companies?"
 - "How many of you think the global warming problem is overstated and that there is not enough information to force changes in how we live?"
 - B. Choose two students--one each that raised their hands to the questions--to lead a discussion within the class. Ask them to discuss these questions:
 1. If global climate disruption is not a problem, why would so many scientists create the global warming scenario and write so many papers about it? What would be their motivation?
 2. Who stands to gain most by downplaying the potential problems of global climate disruption?
 3. What motivation would an elected official have for dismissing the scientific evidence and the opinions of the majority of the scientific community about global warming?
 4. Why do you think our government has not taken a

more active part in reducing the burning of fossil fuel?

5. Who do you think is most responsible for our lack of concern about global climate disruption: industry, the government, or ourselves? (Why?)

B. After the discussion, ask students for their impressions of the Rustle the Leaf Classroom Comic. Ask what they think of the punchline. Ask why they think we would rather ignore global warming than force ourselves and our government to change.

Background Information for Teachers:

The Great Global Warming Cover-Up

Since taking office in 2001, the Bush Administration has executed a systematic, clearly-defined plan to allow business interests to determine U.S. environmental policy. Although it is typical for each administration to appoint people to positions that are consistent with its own views, the Bush Administration has taken such appointments to a new, low level--populating agencies charged with protecting the environment with people who do not believe in basic environmental protections. Following is an excerpt from the UK's newspaper "The Independent," in which the Bush Administration's objectives for challenging and dismantling environmental protections are reported.

Bush Sets Out Plan to Dismantle 30 Years of Environmental Laws

by Geoffrey Lean in Washington, for The Independent [UK], 12/05/2004

George Bush's new administration, and its supporters controlling Congress, are setting out to dismantle three decades of US environmental protection. In little over a month since his re-election, they have announced that they will comprehensively rewrite three of the country's most important environmental laws, open up vast new areas for oil and gas drilling, and reshape the official Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

They say that the election gave them a mandate for the measures—which, ironically, will overturn a legislative system originally established by the Republican Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford—even though Mr Bush went out of his way to avoid emphasizing his environmental plans during his campaign.

"The election was a validation of the philosophy and the agenda," said Mike Leavitt, the Bush-appointed head of the EPA. He points out that over a third of the agency's staff will become eligible for retirement over the President's four-year term, enabling him to fill it with people lenient to polluters...

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Source: <http://www.commondreams.org/headlines04/1205-02.htm>

Other Troubling News...

In the Summer of 2005, it was widely reported that the Bush Administration had specifically edited scientific reports on global warming to make the problem seem less severe and to convey the idea that science is widely divided on the issue.

During the same period, documents from the U.S. Department of Justice were made public, in which there was proof that the Bush Administration was submitting its environmental policy plans to employees of ExxonMobil for guidance.

These news reports are documented in the content of this lesson plan.

NOTE: Although it is the normal practice of GO NATURAL STUDIOS, LLC. to avoid politically-driven lesson content, the sheer power of the Bush Administration's alliances with big oil companies compels us to speak out. This lesson, instead of adding to or citing the readily-available, overwhelmingly detailed information about global climate disruption, seeks to point out one of the key reasons that U.S. citizens have largely ignored the issue.

Six Reasons People Underrate Climate Disruption

Dr. John P. Holdren, Visiting Distinguished Scientist, The Woods Hole Research Center

On Monday, October 6th, 1997, then-President Clinton and Vice President Gore hosted the "White House Conference on Climate Change: The Challenge of Global Warming" at Georgetown University. Among those speaking at the conference was Dr. John P. Holdren, Visiting Distinguished Scientist at The Woods Hole Research Center. Dr. Holdren, then head of PCAST (The President's Committee of Advisors on Science and Technology) was also one of seven prominent scientists invited to the White House to discuss issues of climate change science with the President and Vice President. Dr. Holdren's statement, made at that meeting, appears below.

I think, Mr. President, Mr. Vice President, there are at least six reasons why most people underrate the seriousness of the climate disruption problem.

I think **the first reason** that people tend to underrate this problem is that human well-being is a lot more dependent on climate than most people think. As you heard today, we're talking about the productivity of farms and forests and fisheries. We're talking about the frequency and intensity of floods and droughts and heat waves. We're talking about the geographic pattern of disease. We're talking about sea level rise and associated destruction of coastal property. And we're talking about the potential for political tension and conflict over the consequences and over who's responsible and who should pay.

The second reason people tend to underrate this problem is that climate disruption is a lot further

along than most people think. As we've seen, atmospheric carbon dioxide is already higher than it's been in the last 160,000 years. The global surface temperature, which is expected to lag behind increasing carbon dioxide concentration, is higher than it's been in the last thousand years.

The third reason that many people are more complacent than they should be is that the climate implications of future growth in population and future growth in energy consumption are a lot bigger than most people think. We're going to have in the year 2050, barring near disaster, something like 9 billion people compared to less than 6 billion today. We're going to have energy use under "business as usual" that will be three times higher than today's and CO₂ emissions that are 2 to 2H times today's worldwide.

The fourth reason is that scientific uncertainties are not grounds for complacency, in spite of what many people may think. There are uncertainties about many of the details of timing and magnitude and regional variation in the consequences of climate change, but there is no uncertainty at all that humans have significantly altered the global atmospheric concentrations of gases we know to be critical in controlling climate. And there's a solid consensus among the scientists who have studied these matters seriously that the chances of significant impacts on human well being from climate change over the next few decades are substantial.

The fifth reason that people underrate the problem is that the time lags between cause and effect and

between effect and remedy are longer than most people think. Those time lags and above all the several decades that it will take to substantially successfully transform the world's fossil fuel-dependent energy supply system mean that doing nothing is a very dangerous course of action.

The world's energy-economic system is a lot like a supertanker, very hard to steer and with very bad brakes, and we know from the science that has been reviewed here today that that supertanker is heading for a reef. Even though we can't say exactly when we're going to get to the point where that reef rips the bottom out of the supertanker, it's a bad idea in these circumstances to keep on a course of full speed ahead.

The last reason that people tend to underrate this problem is because the fate of industrialized and less developed countries is a lot more interconnected than most people think. We all live on this planet, under one atmosphere. We all live on the shores of one global ocean. Our countries are linked by flows of people, money, goods, ideas, images, drugs, and weapons. If we in the industrialized countries are to enjoy a stable and sustainable prosperity, we are only going to be able to manage that if we can achieve for the rest of the world now less fortunate a stable and sustainable prosperity as well. And the only way to do that is going to include addressing the danger of global climate disruption in a cooperative way.

Source: The Woods Hole Research Center web site.

http://www.whrc.org/resources/online_publications/essays/1997-10-UnderrateDisrupt.htm



"The Global Warming Cover-Up" News & Views

BUSH AIDE EDITED CLIMATE REPORTS

By Andrew C. Revkin
New York Times, June 8, 2005

A White House official who once led the oil industry's fight against limits on greenhouse gases has repeatedly edited government climate reports in ways that play down links between such emissions and global warming, according to internal documents.

In handwritten notes on drafts of several reports issued in 2002 and 2003, the official, Philip A. Cooney, removed or adjusted descriptions of climate research that government scientists and their supervisors, including some senior Bush administration officials, had already approved. In many cases, the changes appeared in the final reports.

The dozens of changes, while sometimes as subtle as the insertion of the phrase "significant and fundamental" before the word "uncertainties," tend to produce an air of doubt about findings that most climate experts say are robust.

Mr. Cooney is chief of staff for the White House Council on Environmental Quality, the office that helps devise and promote administration policies on environmental issues.

Before going to the White House in 2001, he was the "climate team leader" and a lobbyist at the American Petroleum Institute, the largest trade group representing the interests of the oil industry. A lawyer with a bachelor's degree in economics, he has no scientific training...

(Report edited for space)

©2005 The New York Times Company. The full story is available at: <http://foi.missouri.edu/whistleblowing/bushaideedited.html>

THE POLITICS OF DENIAL

By Bill Moyers, in a Speech to the
Society of Environmental Journalists
October 1, 2005

...President Bush has turned the agencies charged with environmental protection over to people who don't believe in it. To run the Interior Department he chose a long-time defender of polluters who has opposed laws to safeguard wildlife, habitat, and public lands. To run the Forest Service he chose a timber industry lobbyist. To oversee our public lands he named a mining industry lobbyist who believes public lands are unconstitutional. To run the Superfund he chose a woman who made a living advising corporate polluters how to evade the Superfund. And in the White House office of environmental policy the President placed a lobbyist from the American Petroleum Institute whose mission was to make sure the government's scientific reports on global warming didn't contradict the party line and the interest of oil companies. Everywhere you look, the foxes own the chicken coop...

...Mark my words: if this gang has anything to say about it, there will be no challenging journalism to come from public television while they are around; no investigative reporting on the environment; no reporting at all on conflicts of interest between government and big business; no naming of names...

(Edited for space)

The full transcript of Bill Moyers' speech is available at: <http://www.commondreams.org/views05/1007-21.htm>

HOW OIL GIANT INFLUENCED BUSH

By John Vidal, Environment Editor
The Guardian [UK], June 8, 2005

President's George Bush's decision not to sign the United States up to the Kyoto global warming treaty was partly a result of pressure from ExxonMobil, the world's most powerful oil company, and other industries, according to US State Department papers seen by the Guardian.

The documents, which emerged as [British Prime Minister] Tony Blair visited the White House for discussions on climate change before next month's G8 meeting, reinforce widely held suspicions of how close the company is to the administration and its role in helping to formulate US policy.

In briefing papers given before meetings to the US under-secretary of state, Paula Dobriansky, between 2001 and 2004, the administration is found thanking Exxon executives for the company's "active involvement" in helping to determine climate change policy, and also seeking its advice on what climate change policies the company might find acceptable.

Other papers suggest that Ms. Dobriansky should sound out Exxon executives and other anti-Kyoto business groups on potential alternatives to Kyoto...

(Edited for space)

The full article is available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/climatechange/story/0,12374,1501646,00.html>

Questions About these Reports:

1. Why would the White House condone the editing of scientific reports about global warming by a non-scientist?

2. How might White House interference in Public Broadcasting stories be damaging to U.S. citizens?

3. What role should large companies play in setting governmental policies about their specific areas of business?

"...the threat to our world comes not only from tyrants and their tanks. It can be more insidious though less visible. The danger of global warming is as yet unseen, but real enough for us to make changes and sacrifices, so that we do not live at the expense of future generations." —Margaret Thatcher British Prime Minister, 11.06.90

"Given the fact that the United States produces approximately 25 percent of the total greenhouse gases emissions, the current situation demands leadership from the United States. We should reward improvements in energy efficiency, encourage advances in energy technologies, and improve land-use practices. Deploying the power of a marketplace to pursue the least expensive answers is a unique and powerful American approach to the threat of climate change." —U.S. Senator John McCain (R-AZ)

"We can't ignore mounting scientific evidence on important issues such as climate change. The science may be provisional. All science is provisional. But if you see a risk you have to take precautionary action just as you would in any other aspect of business." —Sir John Browne, CEO, BP Amoco

"We have coastal erosion, droughts and in the last decade we have experienced an unusually high level of tropical storms. Salt water intrusion [into soils] has affected our traditional food crops, and now we are seeing flooding of low-lying areas," —Paani Laupepa, ministry of natural resources, Tuvalu, South Pacific, 10.01

"The climate system is being pushed hard enough that change will become obvious to the man in the street in the next decade." —Dr. Jim Hansen, NASA's Goddard Institute

"Small island states will be really badly affected. A lot of them will be submerged — the Maldivian islands, all those in the South Pacific and the Caribbean islands," —Rajendra Pachauri, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

"In the opinion of the panel, the warming trend in global-surface temperature observations during the past 20 years is undoubtedly real and is substantially greater than the average rate of warming during the 20th century. The disparity between surface and upper air trends in no way invalidates the conclusion that surface temperature has been rising." —National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council, 01.14.00

"For fifteen years now, some small percentage of the world's scientists and diplomats and activists has inhabited one of those strange

dreams where the dreamer desperately needs to warn someone about something bad and imminent; but somehow, no matter how hard he shouts, the other person in the dream—standing smiling, perhaps, with his back to an oncoming train—can't hear him. This group, this small percentage, knows that the world is about to change more profoundly than at any time in the history of human civilization. And yet, so far, all they have achieved is to add another line to the long list of human problems—people think about 'global warming' in the way they think about 'violence on television' or 'growing trade deficits', as a marginal concern to them, if a concern at all. Enlightened governments make smallish noises and negotiate smallish treaties; enlightened people look down on America for its blind priggishness. Hardly anyone, however, has fear in their guts." —Author Bill McKibben, *This Overheating World*

"Global warming may be bad news for future generations, but let's face it, most of us spend as little time worrying about it as we did about al Qaeda before 9/11. Like the terrorists, though, the seemingly remote climate risk may hit home sooner and harder than we ever imagined. In fact, the prospect has become so real that the Pentagon's strategic planners are grappling with it." —David Stipp, *Fortune Magazine*; Feb. 9. 2004

"In light of new evidence and taking into account the remaining uncertainties, most of the observed warming over the last 50 years is likely to have been due to the increase in greenhouse gas concentrations." —IPCC Third Assessment Report, 2001, written and reviewed by 960 of the world's scientists (123 lead authors, 516 contributing authors, 21 review editors, 300 expert reviewers) and approved by the IPCC member governments.

"There is broad agreement within the scientific community that amplification of the Earth's natural greenhouse effect by the buildup of various gases introduced by human activity has the potential to produce dramatic changes in climate. Only by taking action now can we ensure that future generations will not be put at risk." —Statement by 49 Nobel Prize winners and 700 members of the National Academy of Sciences, 1990

"A child born in a wealthy country is likely to consume, waste, and pollute more in his lifetime than 50 children born in developing nations. Our energy-burning lifestyles are pushing our planet to the point of no return. It is dawning on us at last that the life of our world is as vulnerable as the children we raise." —George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, UK

"Every generation faces a challenge. In the 1930s, it was the creation of Social Security. In the 1960s, it was putting a man on the moon. In the 1980s, it was ending the Cold War. Our generation's challenge will be addressing global climate change while sustaining a growing global economy." —Eileen Clausen, *Pew Center on Global Climate Change*

"Global warming means a horrifying future for nature. World leaders must give top priority to reducing levels of carbon dioxide." —Jennifer Morgan, *World Wide Fund for Nature*

"...This is a huge problem. If we don't deal with this within just a few years, you will have island nations flooded; you will have the agricultural balance of most countries completely changed; you will have a dramatic increase in the number of severe, unmanageable weather events...And the good news is that we can now deal with this problem—and strengthen our economic growth, not weaken it." —William Jefferson Clinton, at the *Russian Duma*, June 2000

"The warming appears to be stressing the forests by speeding moisture loss and subjecting them to more frequent insect attacks." —Gordon Jacoby, *Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory*, on trees in northern and central Alaska

"If it were only a few degrees, that would be serious, but we could adapt to it. But the danger is the warming process might be unstable and run away. We could end up like Venus, covered in clouds and with the surface temperature of 400 degrees. It could be too late if we wait until the bad effects of warming become obvious. We need action now to reduce emission of carbon dioxide." —Stephen Hawking, *Physicist*, on *Larry King Live*, Dec 25, 1999

"In the year 2065, on current trends, damage from climate change will exceed global GDP." —Andrew Dlugolecki, *General Insurance Development*

"We must move ahead boldly with clean energy technologies, and we should start preparing ourselves for the rising sea levels, changing rain patterns, and other impacts of global warming." —Klaus Topfer, *United Nations Environment Program*

"We're doing great, thank God. The American economy is flourishing. We're using more fossil fuels. We're putting more CO2 in the air. The coal plants are running at record levels. Business has never been better. We're doing great!" —Fred Palmer, *Western Fuels Association*

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Find out more about Global Warming by visiting:

<http://www.sierraclub.org/globalwarming/overview>

<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N24328071.htm>

http://www.whrc.org/resources/online_publications/warming_earth/index.htmh

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/life/feature/story/0,13026,1464050,00.html>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/climatechange/story/0,12374,1501646,00.html>

<http://www.commondreams.org/views05/1007-21.htm>

<http://www.creationcare.org/resources/climate>

<http://www.clf.org/general/index.asp?id=377>

<http://www.globalwarmingsolution.org/learn/index.html>

NOTICE: The web sites listed here display content relating to this month's Rustle the Leaf comic strip. We make no claim of responsibility for content on these web sites. The opinions and content published on these sites does not necessarily reflect the opinions of GO NATUR'L STUDIOS, LLC., or the creators and supporters of Rustle the Leaf.