

## PIL 2070 Paper Topics

There has been considerable debate in recent media over the extent to which anthropogenic climate change is occurring and the threat it poses for humans and other life forms. Each side in this debate accuses the other of being “unscientific”. Your paper will explore the meaning and accuracy of this charge.

Select one of the following topics.

1. In Chapter 2 of *Heat*, George Monbiot describes several different types of behaviour exhibited by what he calls ‘the denial industry’. He suggests that these actions violate scientific norms and standards. In your paper, first describe the different types of behavior that Monbiot condemns. Then consider how someone who adopts Woodward and Goldstein’s views about the appropriate practice of science would defend these actions. Are climate change skeptics, as described by Monbiot, really behaving in an unscientific fashion? Or are his arguments based on a mythical view of how science is practiced?
2. Eileen Crist provides several examples of how the threat of climate change is, in her view, overstated. She argues that these exaggerations distract the public from more pressing environmental concerns. In your paper, discuss whether the practices that Crist is criticizing can be justified in light of Woodward and Goldstein’s account of science. Might the kinds of exaggerations Crist identifies play an essential functional role in the way that science operates?

**Guidelines:** Papers should consist of three sections. Section 1 provides a clear exposition of the author’s view. Make sure to express their position in your own words. Be generous, but accurate, in your presentation of the arguments. Section 2 will raise objections to the claims identified in Section 1. Here you should draw on the model of science described by Woodward and Goldstein, imagining how someone who adopts this view might contest the arguments identified in section 1. Section 3 provides your analysis of the exchange outlined in the previous 2 sections. For example, how might Monbiot or Crist respond to the objections raised in section 2? How might an advocate of Woodward and Goldstein respond in turn? Ultimately, which side in this debate provides the stronger argument?

**Important instructions.** Papers are due on March 22<sup>nd</sup> at the beginning of class. In addition to handing in a hard copy, also send an electronic version of your paper to your TA (with ‘PHIL3180 Paper’ in the subject line and your last name in the file name). No extensions will be granted without prior notification and adequate justification (e.g. medical certificate). Papers should be between 1500 and 2000 words, double spaced with normal margins. No title page required. Please put your name and student number on the front page (at the top on the right). Evidence of plagiarism will result in a zero on the assignment.