



## Jordan Peterson's New Online School Will Be Rife with Climate Crisis Deniers

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Over a dozen instructors associated with a new online school called [Peterson Academy](#), created by Canadian conservative influencer [Jordan Peterson](#), have disputed the existence of a climate emergency, or opposed solutions that could address dangerous levels of warming. Their taped two-hour lectures for the venture will be part of its offerings if and when it [launches in February](#) after [several months](#) of delay.

Stephen Hicks, a professor at Rockford University in Illinois, has contributed courses on modern and postmodern philosophy. Last year Hicks rhetorically [asked on his blog](#) whether climate researchers were “over-hyping because they have a political agenda,” terming them “those chronic-doomster semi-scientists.”

Peterson Academy will also [offer a course](#) from Michael Shermer, the editor-in-chief of Skeptic Magazine, on “critical thinking and scientific reasoning.” Shermer has hosted prominent climate crisis deniers such as [Steve Koonin](#) and [Michael Shellenberger](#) on his podcast.

Canadian conservative newspaper columnist Rex Murphy, who has [referred to](#) global warming as an “anti-Western ideology,” is also on board, [with a course](#) “on poetry and Paradise Lost.”

Peterson Academy did not respond to DeSmog's request for comment.

The school is currently unaccredited by education regulators in Canada or the United States, but that has not stopped Peterson from [stating that](#) “we want to reduce the cost of a bachelor's degree to \$4,000.”

Without accreditation, the school's course credits or degrees won't be recognized by most graduate schools. “That's going to be a problem for us,” he [acknowledged](#) in an interview with The Telegraph last year.

Observers say the school's affiliations with many climate crisis deniers, combined with the lack of accreditation, seriously call into question [its slogan](#) of “education, affordable to all, taught by the best.”

Tanner Mirrlees, an associate professor at Ontario Tech University and a member of the Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism (CHBE), expressed concern to DeSmog that Peterson's virtual school will become "a Fox News model of education."

"Time will tell, but I fear Jordan Peterson's academy will become misinformation packaged as educational enlightenment and sold to unwitting students by a conservative media company that's not a real university," said Mirrlees, who studies rightwing movements and climate change.

Peterson [said last year](#) that his school has signed up 30 lecturers, and he will teach as well. DeSmog was able to identify 25 of them by reviewing audience application and feedback forms for lecture tapings that were saved on the Internet Archive.

According to DeSmog's investigation, they include icon carver and YouTuber Jonathan Pageau, who has [characterized](#) fears about climate change as "secular apocalypticism," as well as podcaster and author Michael Malice, who [has said that](#) projections of sea-level rise are "literally a religious belief."

One document reviewed by DeSmog referenced [a course](#) about "population growth, innovation and human flourishing," to be taught by Marian Tupy and Gale Pooley, co-authors of a book called *Superabundance*.

Pooley is a senior fellow with [The Discovery Institute](#), a U.S.-based conservative think tank that has questioned the scientific consensus on climate change. Last year, he [referred in his newsletter](#) to the "supposed emergency of climate change that critics have lambasted as unfounded alarmism."

"Climate has always presented challenges to human beings, but with our ability to innovate we can continue to thrive," Pooley said in response to DeSmog's inquiry about his work with Peterson Academy.

Tupy is a senior fellow with [the Cato Institute](#), a Washington, D.C.-based libertarian think tank founded in 1977 by fossil fuel billionaire [Charles Koch](#) that has long disputed the facts of climate change.

Tupy did not respond to questions from DeSmog.

Shermer told DeSmog that he has known Peterson for years, and that "Jordan emailed me personally" to teach at the academy. "I believe that AGW is real," Shermer said, referring to anthropogenic, or human-caused, global warming, "and that we should do something about it starting now."

"I do not believe, however, that AGW is an existential threat to humanity or civilization," he said. "I believe that there will always be environmental problems and that we can nearly always solve them with improved knowledge, science, and technology."

In response to DeSmog's request for comment, Hicks said that he does not cover environmental science in his courses.

“As for politics, I am liberal, while Dr. Peterson is conservative,” he said. “Other members of the faculty I know are from different parts of the political spectrum, as well as from different religious and non-religious commitments. As it should be, I think, for a good educational institution.”

Other figures who have taped lectures for the school and weighed in on climate issues, according to DeSmog's investigation, include Max Lugavere, Richard Hanania, Ben Bikman, Bret Weinstein, Heather Heying, and Brian Keating. None of these authors and podcasters responded to questions from DeSmog.

These and other Peterson Academy instructors are part of a growing group of contrarians who acknowledge that climate change is real, while promoting distrust of climate advocates and saying — falsely — that the worsening floods, heat waves and other disasters linked to climate change are being overstated, and that the effects of radically heating the planet will be relatively mild and manageable.

These arguments are [being termed](#) “the new climate denial” by watchdog organizations such as the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH). According to CCDH research, this form of softer denial has surged on YouTube over the past five years, where it is being championed [by prominent conservatives like Peterson](#).

And it seems to be having an impact on public opinion. In a survey of teenage boys commissioned by CCDH, 45 percent agreed with the statement that “politicians are exaggerating the urgency of climate policies.”

This is a demographic that Peterson [has often targeted](#) throughout his career [with videos](#) such as “Jordan Peterson's Message to Young Men.”

In late January, Peterson [posted on X](#) a [long-debunked](#) climate denial trope that “a strong case can now be made for the actual benefits of increased atmospheric CO2...[T]he greening data are of overwhelming significance compared to all counter-consequences.”

A definitive body of research has documented the negative effects of rising CO2 on crops. Scientists have found that carbon emissions [deprive](#) plants of nutrients and [lead to](#) droughts and heatwaves that wreak havoc on natural ecosystems.

Based on his research into the conservative movement's digital activism efforts, Mirrlees fears Peterson Academy will be designed to indoctrinate students.

“What Jordan Peterson is doing is very common in many conservative and far-right networks, which is leveraging populist angst about experts,” he said, “especially around issues like climate change.”