

CAMPUS REFORM

Cornell course examines 'derangement' of 'climate denialism'

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Cornell University is offering a one-time course this fall that will seek to explain why "climate denialism is on the rise" despite the allegedly overwhelming evidence that "global warming is real."

The course description implies that "reactionary, rightwing politics" are partly to blame, along with "industry campaigns aimed at obfuscating evidence of ecological collapse."

A new seminar at Cornell University is determined to shut down "climate denialism," claiming that there is "mounting evidence" that "global warming is real."

Deranged Authority: The Force of Culture in Climate Change, worth four academic credits, is set to be taught in the Fall 2018 semester by cultural anthropologist Jennifer Carlson.

"The point of such courses...is to replace science with belief." [Tweet This](#)

The course description asserts that "climate denialism is on the rise," suggesting the increase is related to the rise of "reactionary, rightwing [sic] politics in the United States, UK, and Germany." The proposed solution to combat such denialism and assumed ignorance is "climate justice," even though over 30,000 scientists reject the theory of anthropogenic global warming.

Richard Linzden, MIT emeritus professor of meteorology and a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, found the course "an insult to the intelligence of the students."

He clarified to *Campus Reform* that many scientists do not argue against slight warming of the Earth after the Little Ice Age (the unusually cool period of the Earth around the 1700s A.D.), nor do those critical of anthropogenic climate change argue that humans have made no impact on the planet, merely that the effect has been small and largely beneficial.

"The point of such courses as are proposed for Cornell, is to replace science with belief," Linzden argued, adding that students are "encouraged to replace understanding with virtue signaling."

Course readings will focus on the question of "authority" in the field of climate science, exploring "climate research, popular environmentalist texts, and industry campaigns aimed at obfuscating evidence of ecological collapse."

The class is also influenced by Amitav Ghosh's 2016 book *Great Derangement*, which, according to the course description, "suggests that the world's collective failure to meet the

challenges of climate change stems from an ongoing crisis of culture and, more fundamentally, of the imagination.”

“More fundamentally, the course moves the question of how our own senses of environmental authority are grounded in ordinary life, shaped by our respective social positions as well as our everyday practices,” the description adds.

While the course aims to push for scientific discourse, it will also teach students to recognize indigenous “ecoauthority” so that they can “become familiar with models for ecological resiliency that do not conform to scientific or ‘expert’ discourses of climate remediation.”

The course is part of the Society for the Humanities’ general theme for the 2018-2019 school year, Authority. Courses under this theme will focus on the consequences of authority in science, law, the arts, and politics.

“In the age of a superabundance of information, what differentiates ‘real’ (authoritative) information from ‘fake news,’ and how one can be interchanged with the other as an ‘equal’ source of authority?” the description of the theme reads.

Stacey Langwick, the director of Undergraduate Studies in the Anthropology department, told *Campus Reform* that the class is a “one-time opportunity,” and “will never be taught again” because Carlson is a visiting fellow.