

CONTRASTING NORTH AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES ON CLIMATE CHANGE



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Perspectives on climate change among European students were assessed during an ARCUS Arctic Visiting Speakers visit to Norway and Portugal (2/1-3/12/08) and are contrasted with attitudes of similar North American students.

Lecture/discussion sessions on climate change in Oslo, and Castelo de Vide, Portugal



MS students U. of Oslo

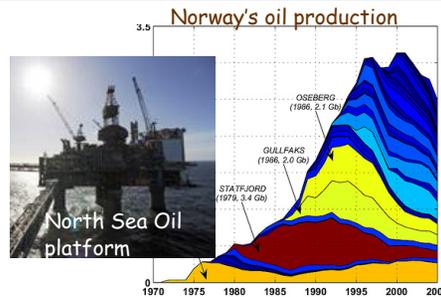
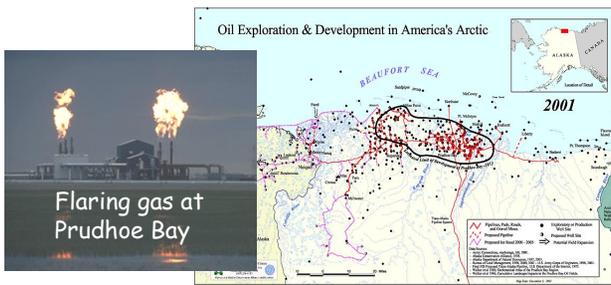


Oslo High School

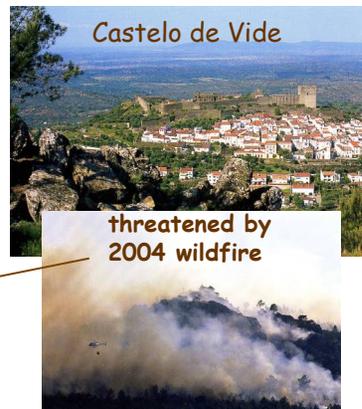


Students, foresters, residents

Alaskans & Norwegians recognize that oil supports their governments & economies, but there is a reluctance to associate oil production with climate change.



Climate change has made Interior Alaska and central Portugal comparable incendiary hot spots of the World.



What shapes attitudes toward climate change?

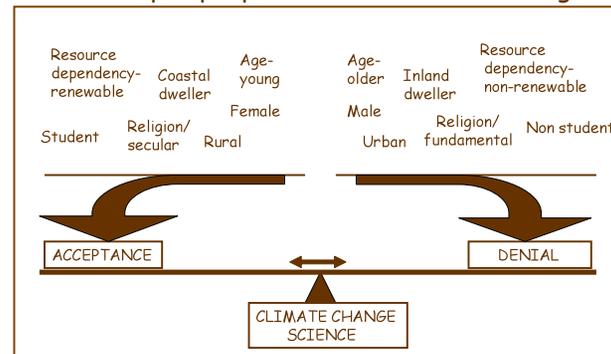


Among students females were more accepting of evidence of climate change and its consequences. Males were more questioning of climate change data. Females were more optimistic and supportive than males of global and local efforts to reduce fossil fuel emissions. In Norway, students appreciated that Norway's oil wealth provided their educational support, and like many Alaskans, they tended to think that because most of the oil was exported the county's "carbon foot print" was low. Students felt that Norway's support of sustainable development in underdeveloped countries mediated effects of oil production on climate change globally. Portugal, has no fossil fuel reserves; most students there understood the needs to develop alternative energy to mediate climate warming and to change land use policy to avoid the threat of wildfire. Norwegians and Portuguese often asked why Americans were so in denial of climate change science? The Pew Research Center found that for every 5 hours of cable television news in the U.S. only 2 minutes are devoted to science or the environment, while 40 minutes were devoted to celebrity news and crime.

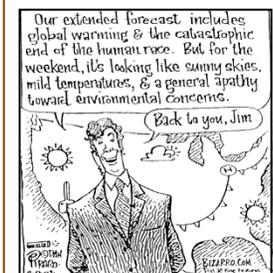
Conclusions:

Understanding of causes and consequences of climate change among European students are more advanced than in the U.S. Attitudes of individuals toward climate change vary in relation to gender, age, home community size, geography, belief system, resource dependency, education level, and politics.

What shapes peoples views on climate change?



Does complexity obscure understanding of global systems?



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