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### AL'S BANDWAGON: AN UNDERGRADUATE CLASS FORUM ON CLIMATE CHANGE

[SMAGLIK, Suzanne M.](#), Math & Science, Central Wyoming College, 2660 Peck Ave, Riverton, WY 82501, [ssmaglik@cw.edu](mailto:ssmaglik@cw.edu)

During the Spring Semester of 2007, the undergraduate class of Earth System Science (GEOL 2000) at Central Wyoming College focused their energy on the current debate on global warming. The first half of the semester was reviewing or learning the fundamental concepts of geochemistry in the context of the interconnectedness of the Geosphere, Atmosphere, Biosphere and Hydrosphere, and well as their connection with solar energy. Mathematical and chemical models, as well as ideas about historical climate change, were presented and discussed. While global warming is a subject within this course, it is rarely the main focus. However, with the media hyping up the topic, the Academy Award for Al Gore's "Inconvenient Truth," and this being a student-driven course, the topic of global warming could not be ignored.

One of the students constantly played the "devil's advocate." While this incited vigorous and detailed discussions at the beginning of the course, it soon led to domination of class topics. We decided to relegate the discussion on global warming to an Earth Week Forum, presented to the public on April 25. I created the format for this Forum borrowing from the ChemConnections Module "What Should We Do About Global Warming?" (Anthony, et. al., 2004) to help direct the students, and to keep things civilized. In fact, we used the term Forum, rather than Debate on purpose (this is Wyoming - the land of fossil fuels) and the title of the module as the title of the forum. Then, each student selected the three questions they thought most important. The eight top questions (one for each class member) were then selected for the Forum. Students volunteered and negotiated for the question of their choice and wrote a statement that would take up to 20 minutes to present. Graphs, pictures and animations were encouraged. Each essay was then assigned to another student in the class to write a response in the opposing view, whether it was their individual view or not. Electronic presentations were made of each question statement and response. The entire event lasted over two hours but all students ably participated and learned much in the process. Absences became few and students genuinely enjoyed creating and executing the process. This was a very civilized and fun approach to a controversial topic in class.

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