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LP21\_04

**Name**

Kerin Krasnoff

**Title of Paper**

Examining the Role of the Climate Change Debate in Regards to Political Polarization in the United States

**Class Year**

First-Year

**Date Research Undertaken**

Fall 2020

**Citation Style Used**

MLA 8

**Affiliated Course**

Freshman Seminar: Beyond the Ballot (FYS-100H)

**Faculty Name**

Professor Angela Barney and Clayton Potter

**Student Major**

Chemistry, Environmental Studies, and Government (interests)

## Narrative Questions

- 1. Describe how you came to choose your topic, specifically noting any pre-research that you did. What sources did you use in this pre-research? To what extent did you consult with librarians, faculty, or others? How did this pre-research lead you to your topic?**

I have been interested in learning about environmental studies when coming to Connecticut College, but I never thought that I would be able to apply my interest to my first year seminar course (Beyond the Ballot) until I started the pre-research process. When looking at the library collection for inspiration, I checked out a book, titled "From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement" by Luke Cole and Sheila Foster using the OneSearch system. The book discussed the intersection of government policies and environmental justice, an idea that I knew wanted to explore more and somewhat relates to my FYS class. Moreover, the assignment for the final paper was to explore a topic that we learned in-depth. When it came time to pick a topic for my final paper, I looked at additional resources that I found on my own and from my FYS class. First, I read The Guardian article, titled "Climate Crisis More Politically Polarizing than Abortion for US Voters, Study Finds." The other source came from a political polarization lesson in my FYS class when the professor showed statistics from the Pew Research Center website. These statistics had information on voters during the 2020 election, specifically one statistic showed that climate change was one of the least important issues as well as the growing trend of political party polarization. These resources that I looked at during the pre-research period made me question the trend between political polarization and how that relates to how climate change is approached in politics. Before starting the research process, I scheduled an appointment for research consultation so that I knew how to find sources that relate to both political polarization and climate change, thus bringing me to a topic that I would be interested in writing about that follows the guidelines of the final paper. Ultimately, the pre-research led me to my topic of examining the role of the climate change debate in regards to political polarization by connecting the information I got from each resource I looked at and creating one big idea.

- 2. Describe your process of finding information for your project. Note specifically the tools you used to undertake your research, as well as the specific search strategies you used within these tools. (Note: “Ebsco,” being an umbrella vendor, is not a specific enough response when identifying tools; listing the “library database” is also an unacceptably vague answer. Specific tools include JSTOR, America: History & Life, Web of Science, etc., along with OneSearch, the new library system.)**

In relation to using the library resources, I used OneSearch and JSTOR to find information. I learned how to use OneSearch from the Moodle course that all first year seminars had access to. I found JSTOR through my research consultation appointment. Ultimately, I chose JSTOR since that was the one database that I learned to use during my appointment in order to maximize optimal results. For both databases, I advanced my search with the terms "political polarization" and "climate change." However, that soon became a problem because the resources I found weren't focused solely on the United States. After that, I added the term "United States" as well which provided correctly-targeted sources. With the advanced search option for OneSearch and JSTOR, I relied solely on peer-reviewed articles. Also, I decided to separate my research into two parts. I looked for an equal mix of peer-reviewed articles from before and after the Obama administration since climate change was an important aspect of the administration due to mixed reactions in the political climate. I made this distinction in both databases by making the start year 2009 for one search and then making the end year 2009 for a separate search. For the next part of my research, I turned to specific websites that pertain to what I was looking for which was government documents as well as other resources that would be from more recent times that reflect the modern climate change debate that has accumulated over the years in an increasingly polarized political climate. For example, I looked for the official Green New Deal report by using Congress.gov. I made sure that it was the actual report that its websites would end in .gov which proved authenticity. Also, for the articles that I used to compare with the contents of the Green New Deal- examples include, The New York Times and Fox News- I found them by going on their respective official websites and searching for "Green New Deal" to see what came up.

**3. Describe your process of evaluating the resources you found. How did you make decisions about which resources you would use, and which you wouldn't? What kinds of questions did you ask yourself about resources in order to determine whether they were worthy of inclusion?**

Most of the peer reviewed articles I looked at included an abstract. This not only summarized the gist of the article, but it also brought my attention to the key points. For sources that did not provide an abstract, I read the first two pages which provided the introduction that determined whether or not I should continue reading. Moreover, the biggest challenge I had when evaluating the sources was my predispositions well as the idea that there would be a clear-cut answer. I wrongfully assumed that the answer to how the climate change debate is related to political polarization would be simple. Therefore, I found it difficult to understand what the peer-reviewed articles were arguing despite reading through it multiple times. Throughout this tedious process I quickly realized that there was no linear answer and that I needed to change my approach in order to address the nuance. An important aspect that was crucial to note while evaluating the sources was the political atmosphere at the time the peer-reviewed sources were written. In addition, to make the connection as to how climate change was viewed in politics. I did this by seeing the amount of context provided in the sources. For example, the signing of the Kyoto Protocol in 1998 and the creation of the Tea Party in 2009 are two very different times in politics in regard to public reaction to climate policy. I felt that context was an important part of my research paper and without providing any, it would shift the topic of my research paper to become whether or not climate change is a problem which was not the essence of the paper. Ultimately, I made the decision of which sources to use by comparing which points in each of the sources had an intersection of the same idea and could be worth developing for my own paper- for example, how the use of rhetoric from politicians and the media could strongly influence public opinion on climate change. Moreover, depending on the source, I asked myself different questions. For peer-reviewed articles, I asked myself the extent to which the climate change debate and political polarization is addressed as a combined problem and not as two separate entities in the source. For other sources, I asked myself whether or not the source provided context for my argument and what I was trying to prove.