HOW DO WE MAKE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE?

Media, Democracy, & Environmental Policy

LEGITIMATE COERCION

- Heart of democracy
- How we manage our resources, manage the commons, and pass laws
- Environmental problems are usually approached through the political system, and this is what is assumed in classical environmentalism

Neoliberalism: A modified form of liberalism tending to favor free-market capitalism.

Fiduciary Duty: an obligation to act in the best interest of another party.

In terms of Capitalism: a **corporation**'s board member has a fiduciary duty to the **shareholders**

"Despite the fact that almost half of all households owned stock shares either directly or indirectly through mutual funds, trusts, or various pension accounts, the richest 10% of households controlled 84% of the total value of these stocks in 2016."

Citation: Edward N Wolff, "Household Wealth Trends in the United States, 1962 to 2016: Has Middle Class Wealth Recovered?"

This is an environmental geography class, why should we care if capitalism is antidemocratic?

Who gets a say over how we treat the environment?

In a democracy, you should. We all, collectively, have a say.

Who gets a say in how a private enterprise operates?

The bosses, board members, major shareholders.

So, what happens when the interests of private capital dominate political systems?

-Who sets the boundaries of what we get to critique in society?

-What type of critiques get taken seriously? What type of critiques are not allowed?

ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS

Who makes the laws?

Who is influencing the decision-making?

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS & BALANCE

- Concentrated or special interests – fewer members, greater ease of communication, direct financial interest in governmental action, focused issue
- Diffuse interests – shared by wide range of citizens, nonfinancial benefits, so less politically attentive

'HAIL TO THE CHIEFS'

WHAT'S THE FORCE THAT HOLDS POWERFUL INTERESTS ACCOUNTABLE?

Journalism & Media

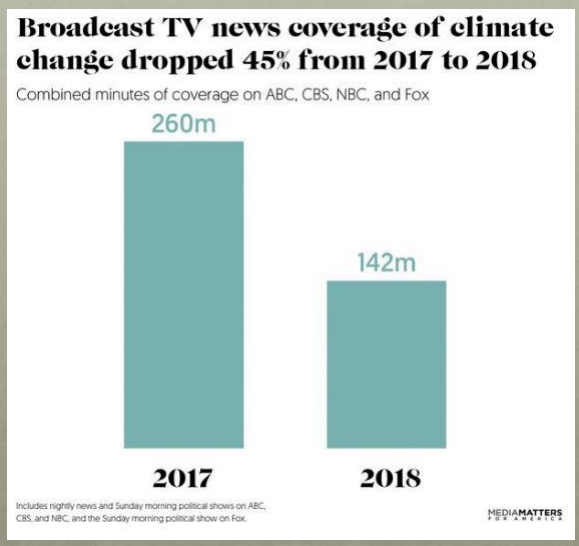
"It's not a dishonor to me—I think it's a great honor to me—that I've never been invited to the White House for dinner, and I don't want to go to the correspondents dinner—the Gridiron Club. It's not our job; our job is to be a pain-in-the-ass to these guys." –Seymour Hersh

Why does this matter…

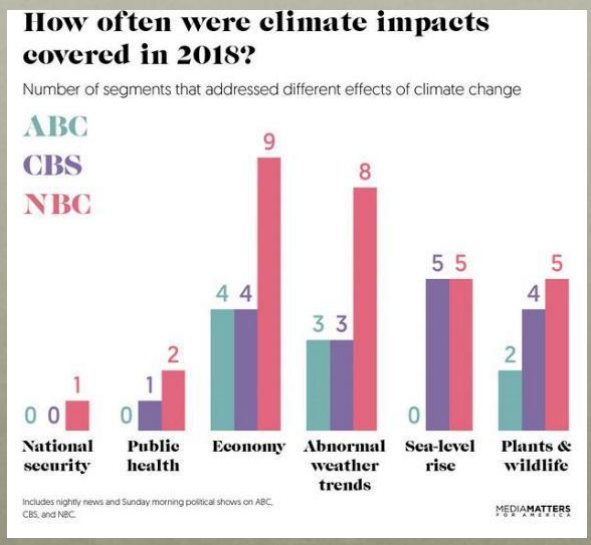
DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION & UNDERSTANDING REALITY

- What is the reality? What counts as real? What do we focus on?
- The role of science – Objectively attempt to understand and quantify the processes and nature of reality.
- The role of the arts – Subjectively seeks to understand and show us the experience and lived conditions of (a) reality.
- The role of journalism/media – Objectively report the reality of events & subjectively contextualize that reality within a larger framework.
- How are these all working right now who influences each of them?
- Rise of alternative media

HOW IS MAINSTREAM MEDIA DOING ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES?



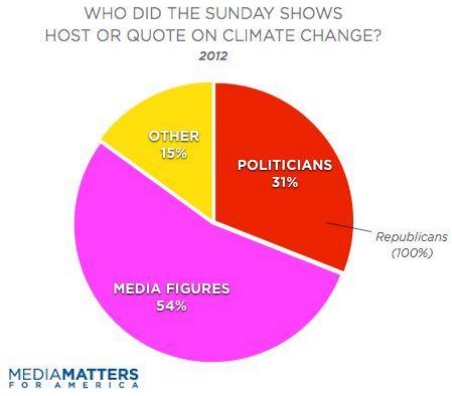
CONNECTING CLIMATE CHANGE TO ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS?



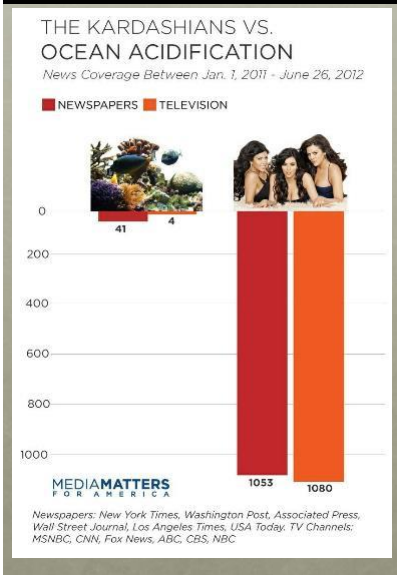
AT LEAST THE MINIMAL COVERAGE IS QUALITY COVERAGE, RIGHT?

Scientists, Democrats Shut Out Of Sunday Show Discussions On Climate Change

Sunday Shows Quoted No Democratic Politicians On Climate Change. In 2012, the Sunday shows did not quote a single Democratic politician on climate change. Most of the politicians quoted were Republican presidential candidates, including Rick Santorum, who went unchallenged when he called global warming "junk science" on ABC's *This Week*. More than half of climate mentions on the Sunday shows were Republicans criticizing those who support efforts to address climate change. This imbalance was also present, though less dramatic, on the nightly news programs, which quoted 60 percent Republicans and 40 percent Democrats on climate change.



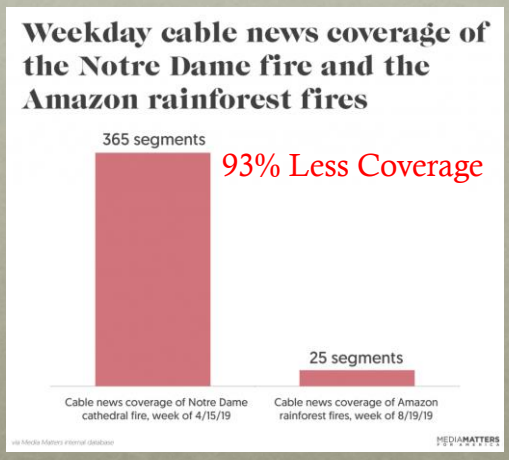
MORE EXAMPLES?



CLIMATE CRICKETS

CNN and the New York Times skip climate change in the fourth Democratic debate

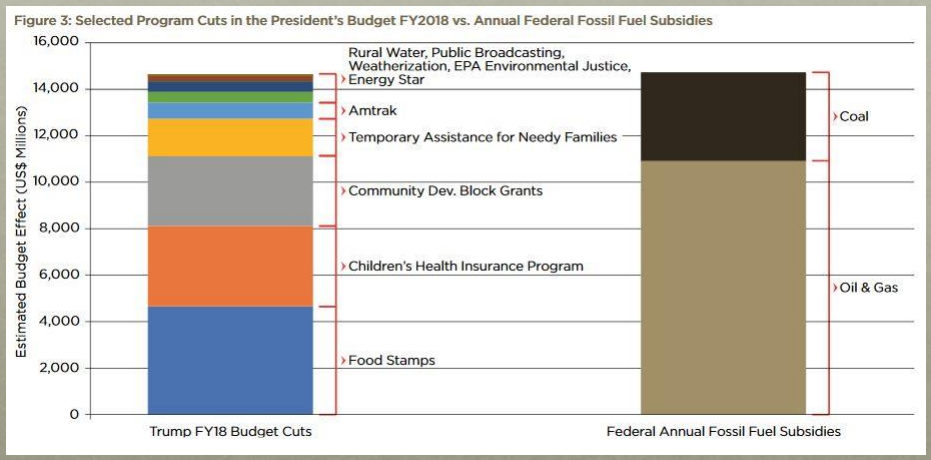
By Zoya Teirstein on Oct 16, 2019



WHAT'S THE STATE OF MODERN ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS?

In terms of fossil fuels:

$26 Billion in fossil fuel subsidies (Federal and State) in 2018



The IMF says we spend $5.3 trillion a year on fossil fuel subsidies. How is that possible?

By Brad Plumer | @bradplumer | brad@vox.com | Updated May 20, 2015, 3:50pm EDT

- $500 Billion globally on pre-tax oil subsidies
- Think about externalities
- Very hard to estimate
- Rough idea of how our current system supports fossil fuel consumption

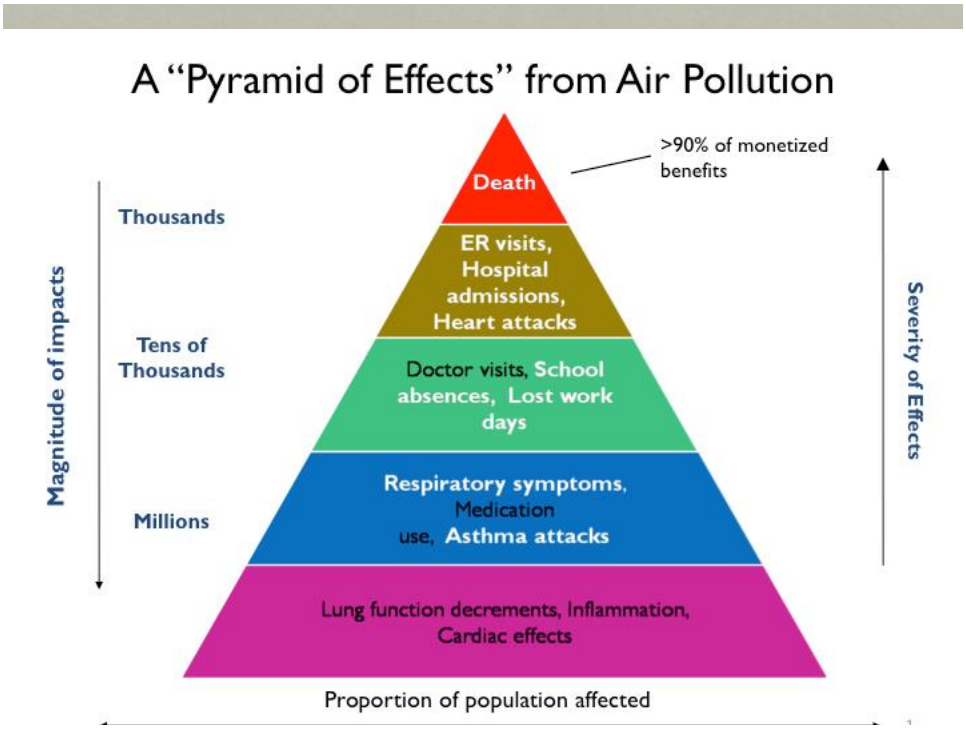
TABLE 1

Big Oil profits and priorities in 2014

Company	Q4 2014 profits (in billions)	Profit percent change from Q4 2013 to Q4 2014	Total profit for 2014 (in billions)	Profit percent change from 2013 to 2014	Stock buyback as percent of Q4 2014 profits	2014 election cycle campaign contributions and lobbying expenditures (in millions)
BP	$2.2	-21%	$12.0	-10%	32%	$14
Chevron	$3.5	-30%	$19.3	-10%	36%	$21
ConocoPhillips	-$0.04	-102%	$6.90	-25%	NA	$9
Exxon Mobil	$6.6	-22%	$32.6	0%	46%	$28
Shell	$4.2	89%	$19.0	14%	23%	$18
Total	**$16.4**	**-21%**	**$89.7**	**-4%**	**36%**	**$90**

Note: Figures are rounded.

Sources: 2013–2014 company profits reports; Center for American Progress analysis of data from OpenSecrets.org.



WHAT ARE THE COSTS/BENEFITS

Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 are providing enormous health benefits

Health benefits	2010	Cumulative through 2010
Lives saved	160,000	1,826,000
Additional work days	13,000,000	137,000,000
Additional school days	3,200,000	26,600,000
Heart attacks prevented	130,000	1,358,000
Fewer hospital admissions	86,000	841,000
Fewer cases of chronic bronchitis	54,000	575,000

Economic Policy Institute / Environmental Protection Agency

THE SERIOUSNESS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate-related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth are projected to increase with global warming of 1.5°C and increase further with 2°C.

On land, impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems, including species loss and extinction, are projected to be lower at 1.5°C of global warming compared to 2°C. Limiting global warming to 1.5°C compared to 2°C is projected to lower the impacts on terrestrial, freshwater and coastal ecosystems and to retain more of their services to humans (*high confidence*).

In model pathways with no or limited overshoot of 1.5°C, global net anthropogenic CO_2 emissions decline by about 45% from 2010 levels by 2030 (40–60% interquartile range), reaching net zero around 2050 (2045–2055 interquartile range). For limiting global warming to below 2°C CO_2 emissions are projected to decline by about 25% by 2030 in most pathways (10–30% interquartile range) and reach net zero around 2070 (2065–2080 interquartile range). Non-CO_2 emissions in pathways that limit global warming to 1.5°C show deep reductions that are similar to those in pathways limiting warming to 2°C. (*high confidence*)

Pathways limiting global warming to 1.5°C with no or limited overshoot would require rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land, urban and infrastructure (including transport and buildings), and industrial systems (*high confidence*). These systems transitions are unprecedented in terms of scale, but not necessarily in terms of speed, and imply deep emissions reductions in all sectors, a wide portfolio of mitigation options and a significant upscaling of investments in those options (*medium confidence*).

THE SERIOUSNESS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

(3) global warming at or above 2 degrees Celsius beyond preindustrialized levels will cause—

(A) mass migration from the regions most affected by climate change;

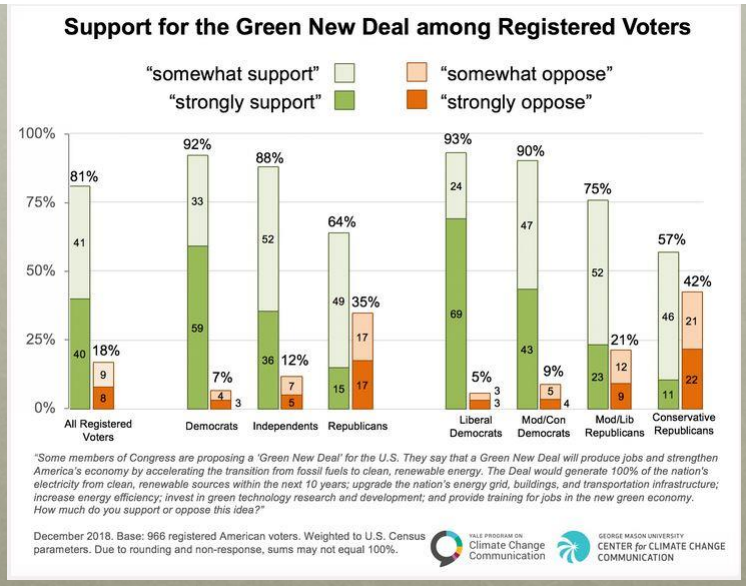
(B) more than $500,000,000,000 in lost annual economic output in the United States by the year 2100;

(C) wildfires that, by 2050, will annually burn at least twice as much forest area in the western United States than was typically burned by wildfires in the years preceding 2019;

(D) a loss of more than 99 percent of all coral reefs on Earth;

(E) more than 350,000,000 more people to be exposed globally to deadly heat stress by 2050; and

(F) a risk of damage to $1,000,000,000,000 of public infrastructure and coastal real estate in the United States; and



Yale Program on Climate Communication and the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication; Dec 14th 2018

(This is *before* the issue became widely politicized.)

WHAT'S THE STATE OF MODERN ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS?

The science is clear; sweeping and drastic changes need to be made very quickly if we hope to keep the planet habitable.

So, the question is:

How seriously is the federal government responding to this crisis?

Is climate change legislation simply a partisan issue?

WE HAD 8 YEARS OF A DEMOCRATIC ADMINISTRATION THOUGH

- Why aren't our climate problems solved already????
- What is the reality of environmental politics?