Climate Change in the Mind of a College Student

The scientific consensus about the causes and effects of climate change is growing but it continues to be presented as one of the greatest scientific controversies and debates of our times. 30% of Americans deny climate change is happening and that number is currently growing. What factors shape a person’s perception of climate change? A nationwide survey by Yale and George Mason Universities discovered that the American population falls into six distinct categories of climate change perception: the Alarmed, Concerned, Cautious, Disengaged, Doubtful, and Dismissive. For my capstone, I replicated their survey method at OU with a population sample of over 500 students across 8 course sections during the Fall 2015 semester. This presentation will explain which factors have an effect on a student’s perception of climate change and what the role of college education is in the communication of information about climate change.