EPSc 116a: Resources of the Earth
First Write-Up Assignment: Critical Thinking and Writing

Due: Monday, February 1st, 2016.

1. Read the attached 2-page article "When Science and Beliefs Collide" from the weekly magazine Science News. Think about it for a couple of minutes, and then read the attached set of letters to the editor. [This article was followed by more published letters to the editor than I have seen for any other single article in this magazine.]

2. Write a concise, well-organized statement no longer than the equivalent of 2 double-spaced pages (with 1-inch margins, 11-pitch type), addressing the topics below. I would appreciate it if you always would double-space your homework, so that I can read and comment on it better. If you write your homework by hand, make VERY sure that it is legible.

   a. Summarize the major points of this article, using no more than half of your allotted space. **See the statements below for guidelines on how to write a good summary.**

   b. Select one or two of the statements/observations in the article and either

      1) defend it/them

      2) refute it/them

      OR

      3) explain it/them in further detail (e.g., present additional documentation).

3. Make sure that you clearly state the issue that you are addressing AND present thoughtful, logical statements to support your opinions.

4. There is no right answer to this homework. However, there are important differences between well-reasoned opinions and unsupported opinions.

**Evaluation Criteria for Summaries**
(Modified from P. Brown's Web page “http://www.geology.wisc.edu/~pbrown/g410/paper1.html”)

A summary should be directed toward imagined readers who have not read the article being summarized. The purpose of the summary is to give these persons a clear overview of the article’s main **factual points** and, if pertinent, its **point of view**. The criteria for a summary are 1) **accuracy** of content, 2) **comprehensiveness** (completeness of coverage) and balance (appropriate reflection of emphases and prioritization), and 3) **clear sentence structure** with good transitions. These are the three required areas of competence in a well written summary.
A “6-point” summary meets all the criteria for accuracy, comprehensiveness and balance, and clear sentence structure. In such a summary, the writer should display a thorough understanding of the article. The main points in the article should appear correctly in the summary with all main points proportionately developed. The summary should be as comprehensive as possible and should read smoothly from beginning to end with appropriate transitions between ideas. The sentence structure should be clear and varied, without vagueness or ambiguity and without grammatical or spelling errors.

A “5-point” summary also should be excellent, but it can be weaker than a “six” summary in one area. For instance, it may have excellent accuracy, comprehensiveness, and balance, but show occasional problems in sentence structure. Or it may be clearly written but somewhat unbalanced or less comprehensive than a “six” summary or it may show a minor misunderstanding of the article.

A “4-point” summary is one that is good but not excellent. It should reveal a generally accurate reading of the article with a clear sense of the main points, but it will be noticeably weaker than a “six” summary in one of the areas of criteria or somewhat weaker in two areas.

A “3-point” summary must have strength in at least one area of competence, and it should still be good enough to give a reader a fairly clear and accurate overview of the article being summarized. A “three” summary is generally either seriously unbalanced or fuzzily written and lacks the clarity and precision of a top-rated summary. The sentence structure of a “three” summary frequently prevents inclusion of enough ideas for good comprehensiveness.

A “2-point” summary is weak in all areas of competence, either because it is so poorly written that the reader cannot understand the content or because the content is inaccurate or seriously disorganized.

A “1-point” summary fails in all the areas of competence.