

PHY1600S - Effective Communication for Scientists

Assignment #8 – 1 March 2016

A Controversy

Choose a topic about science or scientists, education or educators that has generated controversy. I list a few examples below to give you the idea, but please choose any other topic that interests you. You are hoping to have this published in a local paper in the Op-Ed section, so your audience is the informed public.

Start with a clear, concise title, followed by your name. Introduce the topic in your opening paragraph. In the next several paragraphs, state the arguments on one side, then those on the other side; be as objective as you can in this section. Conclude with a paragraph that makes clear which side of the argument you favour.

Clarity and brevity should be your goals, and 600 words is the approximate goal (and the absolute limit!). As usual, the medium is more important than the message!

Some Possible Topics (in fact the Hot Topics list in the course):

- Are nanomaterials too dangerous to allow in "trade and commerce"?
- Can we really do risk analysis in an unbiased way?
- Is science really a social activity?
- Canada's role in combating global warming – is it sensible, is it enough?
- The moral responsibility of the scientists of the Manhattan Project who successfully produced the first atomic bomb.
- Edward Teller – hero or villain?
- Society funds the sciences more than the humanities; is that appropriate?
- The ethics of cloning OR Stem Cell research.
- Nuclear Power – a necessary evil?
- Evolution vs. Intelligent Design.
- Increasingly, research grants in the physical sciences are being guided towards applied rather than 'curiosity' research. Does this best serve society's interests?
- Genetically modified foods – a blessing or a curse?
- Is global warming anthropogenic?
- Wind power is not a useful contributor to the reduction of greenhouse gases.
- Subways vs. light-rail transit in Toronto?

Consistent with our interest in this course, spend more time writing well than researching exhaustively!