



Letters to the Editor


Academic claims unfounded

In response to Brad Salmen's article, "Four things your Macalester professors will never tell you," (Opinion, Nov 9) I would like to identify several problems. Salmen's fourth point concerned the "real" state of our planet according to Danish social scientist Bjorn Lomborg. Lomborg disagrees with environmental "doomsayers" who believe that we are destroying our environment with unsustainable practices. Salmen adds, "Somehow I doubt Lomborg's book will be assigned reading in any environmental studies class."

To begin with, the premise of the entire article is that as Macalester students, we must be critical of what our "progressive liberal" professors feed us. Therefore, I was surprised when I noticed that Salmen fails to follow his own suggestion while discussing Lomborg's book. Salmen, though sometimes critical when discussing other issues such as gender and crime, completely fails to examine Lomborg's argument in the same manner. Simply because Lomborg presents a position that conflicts with a commonly held view does not mean his argument is valid.

I would also like to point out that Lomborg was assigned reading for my Globalization and Environment class (cross-listed in the International Studies and Environmental Studies departments, taught by Brett Smith) this semester. We identified several fallacies in Lomborg's ideas, such as the fact that he relies mostly on statistical evidence and then fails to explain it. Although Lomborg downplays the human impact on our planet, even he admits that it has been significant. Not surprisingly, Lomborg has become a poster boy for right-wing politicians who wish to eliminate environmental regulations in order to prevent restrictions on large, heavily polluting corporations. I hope Salmen understands who he is supporting when he adopts this argument, and what implications it has for our future. I understand Salmen wants to prevent spoon-feeding of material by professors to students, but his article often fails to deliver because it is unfair and clearly not well researched. I also wondered whether his slightly pretentious tone results from his status as an all-knowing senior. I hope he understands that everyone here on campus isn't as ignorant as he thinks.

Amy Margolies '04

 I want to reply to the false statements and malicious insinuations made by Mr. Brad Salmen (Opinion, Nov. 9) regarding the Environmental Studies Program at Macalester College.

In his article, Mr. Salmen writes that

readings such as *The Skeptical Environmentalist* by Bjorn Lomborg, whose anti-environmentalist positions are well known, will not be used in your classes and claims that such readings will never be assigned in any environmental studies classes.

Mr. Salmen is not an Environmental Studies major and has never taken the very classes he criticizes. For example, for ENVI 88, the Environmental Studies Senior Seminar, we have used as a textbook *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Environmental Issues* by Theodore D. Goldfarb. This book contains an equal number of articles by both pro and anti-environmentalist authors. Students must read both and the class is divided into groups defending each position regardless of students' personal opinions. We follow the same methodology in ENVI 55, Environmental Analysis and Problem Solving, where students are regularly asked to defend diverse positions on environmental issues regardless of their political views. We do all this with the clear purpose of presenting all sides of the issue and making students understand other people's opinions. The final objective is to ensure that students are able to think critically and check the facts so, unlike Mr. Salmen, they do not make statements that recklessly disregard the truth while casting a veil of suspicion on the integrity of others.

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