

## Week 10 Assignment: Prioritizing Actions: Should Population be Discussed?

*due in section Thursday June 4 or Friday June 5, 2009*

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **ID:** \_\_\_\_\_

Self-proclaimed skeptical environmentalist Bjorn Lomborg gathered a group of experts to evaluate 32 proposals for addressing global challenges. Their 2004 report, the Copenhagen Consensus, came out in favor of action on HIV/AIDS and malaria rather than global warming. (A more recent 2008 report identifies similar types of priorities.)

Bjorn Lomborg has argued, “Doing too little about climate change is definitely wrong. But so is doing too much.” In a 2007 interview with Salon Magazine, he explained, “Doing too little is obvious, but let’s say it anyway: If you don’t do something about global warming, of course it will become a bigger problem. So obviously we need to address it and in the long term fix it. On the other hand, doing too much about it means we are focusing too much effort on climate change and forgetting all the other things that we have a responsibility to deal with, like HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and malnutrition. If we spend too much time and resources focusing on climate change, then we do the future a disservice because we say, ‘Hey, we fixed climate change but we let all the other things slide.’ ”

Lomborg may be correct to point out that the environmental and societal problems that we face span many different issues. However, Jeffrey Sachs’ response to Lomborg’s Copenhagen Consensus outlines some potential shortcomings in Lomborg’s approach. And a recent Union of Concerned Scientists report suggests that top priority actions on global warming should save us money, in disagreement with Lomborg’s assumptions that fighting global warming at present would cost substantial sums of money and therefore would be a misuse of financial resources.

The word “population” is curiously absent from both Lomborg’s and Sachs’ comments. In a carefully worded paragraph of 250 words or less, explain why population is relevant to these environmental issues, why it might not be mentioned, and how the topic of population might be addressed in the context of other environmental issues that we have considered through the course of this class.

As usual, relevant information is available from the assignment web site:

[http://www-pord.ucsd.edu/~sgille/mae124/week10\\_hw.html](http://www-pord.ucsd.edu/~sgille/mae124/week10_hw.html)