# 1NC

## 1NC—Weather Channel Critique

### The affirmative’s call for disaster preparedness deploys a *techno-scientific discourse* to *conceal* material inequalities—this framing is *intrinsic* to their policy proposal.

Bankoff 1 — Gregory Bankoff, Senior Lecturer at the University of Auckland and Research Fellow in Disaster Studies at Wageningen University, 2001 (“Rendering the World Unsafe: ‘Vulnerability’ as Western Discourse,” *Disasters*, Volume 25, Issue 1, Available Online at http://www.geo.mtu.edu/volcanoes/06upgrade/Social-KateG/Attachments%20Used/Vulnerability.WesternDiscourse.pdf, Accessed 08-02-2011, p. 27-28)

The emergence of natural disasters as the primary discourse of the 1990s reflects not only the successful conclusion of superpower rivalry, at least from the [end page 27] Western standpoint, but also the persistence of the environment as the decisive quality in determining the condition of danger posed by this ‘other’ world. Moreover, hazard also provides a useful rationale for blaming the poverty and inequitable distribution of material goods of the people living in these regions squarely on nature. Any opprobrium that might have otherwise attached to an economic system created by and largely benefiting the West is lost amid scientific and technical discussions about purely physical phenomena. It has permitted Western governments to talk and act in international fora as if disaster, poverty, disease and the environment are entirely unrelated issues that need not be tackled concurrently but dealt with separately, according to a timetable largely determined by themselves. Nor does the formulation of vulnerability as a less environmentally deterministic measure of gauging the relative exposure of any particular population to hazard significantly alter this perspective.

All language in use is ‘everywhere and always “political”’ and is the product of cultural models shared by people belonging to specific social or ethnic groups (Gee, 1999: 1, 81). In the scientific viewpoint, the West discovered a language of knowledge that has helped maintain its influence and power over other societies and their resources. In fact, natural disasters form part of a wider historical discourse about imperialism, dominance and hegemony through which the West has been able to exert its ascendancy over most peoples and regions of the globe. But the debate is not confined simply to geographies, however loosely defined; it is also a struggle over minds and, as such, has withstood the post-war dismantling of extensive colonial structures.

### Their call for improved weather prediction is a product of their *ideological blinders*—failure to *foreground* questions of class and economics *screens out* root causes and makes the impact of disasters *worse*.

Sturken 6 — Marita Sturken, Professor of Media, Culture, and Communication at New York University, 2006 (“Weather Media and Homeland Security: Selling Preparedness in a Volatile World,” *Understanding Katrina: Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, June 11th, Available Online at http://understandingkatrina.ssrc.org/Sturken/, Accessed 08-02-2011)

However, prediction is limited in its impact. While weather prediction is now considered to be about 85 percent accurate, this does not mean that meteorologists can predict where a storm will hit. John Seabrook notes that the intense round-the-clock coverage of the approach of Hurricane Floyd in September 1999 did little to help prepare for the storm; indeed, it may have had adverse effects on preparation. He writes, “The National Weather Service’s Floyd forecast provoked the largest evacuation in American history, and it turned out that very few of the people who left their homes needed to go…it was the farmers inland who were wiped out by the flooding that followed the storm, and most people weren’t prepared for that.” 5 Similarly, the unprecedented evacuation of the Texas coast from Galveston to Houston in anticipation of Hurricane Rita, which caused massive traffic jams and resulted in several tragic accidents, including the death of over twenty elderly people in a bus accident, turned out to be unnecessary. In New Orleans, where the path of Hurricane Katrina veered east before it hit the city, early weather media stories reported that the city had been lucky in evading a direct hit. That there was a high likelihood that the levees wouldn’t hold, and that Lake Pontchartrain would empty into the city, was not a part of the prediction story.

One of the primary messages of prediction is the selling of preparedness. Thus, the technologically enhanced discourse of prediction conveys the sense that weather media viewers can be prepared, that they have the individual agency to be prepared for weather disasters. This elides, most obviously, the degree to which people throughout the world are differently impacted by weather because of class and economic differences. The prediction of a potential hurricane hit on New Orleans is useless to the residents of that city’s Ninth Ward if they have no transportation, no money, and a local government unable and unwilling to provide them with emergency transportation, just as the long range information that impending monsoons will be extreme can do little to save the lives of those in India and Bangladesh whose villages will be destroyed. Weather prediction is in fact a very limited kind of knowledge that promises protection and reassurance yet which bears no relationship to the social infrastructures that would ensure preparedness. Indeed, it could be argued that prediction not only has little impact on people’s daily lives but serves to screen out the politics of disaster.

### The alternative is to reject the affirmative’s call for *more* and *better* weather data. Contesting the *epistemology* and *methodology* that underwrites the plan is a necessary prerequisite to *effective disaster politics*—the critique *turns the case*.

Bankoff 1 — Gregory Bankoff, Senior Lecturer at the University of Auckland and Wageningen University, 2001 (“Rendering the World Unsafe: ‘Vulnerability’ as Western Discourse,” *Disasters*, Volume 25, Issue 1, Available Online at http://www.geo.mtu.edu/volcanoes/06upgrade/Social-KateG/Attachments%20Used/Vulnerability.WesternDiscourse.pdf, Accessed 08-02-2011, p. 29-30)

All this is not to deny that disasters occur, that their effects are very real, that they create livelihood-destroying and, at times, life-threatening conditions that governments, agencies and people everywhere should be concerned about and desire to prevent. But the attributes that differentiate these phenomena from the wider issues of poverty, environmental degradation, demographic growth and inequitable socio-political structures may also be cultural, part of an historical discourse that is embedded within a distinctly Western construction of knowledge. This paper has argued that ‘tropicality’, ‘development’ and ‘vulnerability’ form part of one and the same essentialising and generalising cultural discourse: one that denigrates large regions of world as dangerous — disease-ridden, poverty-stricken and disaster-prone; one that depicts the inhabitants of these regions as inferior — untutored, incapable, victims; and that it reposes in Western medicine, investment and preventive systems the expertise required to remedy these ills.

Whether disasters are natural phenomena or caused by vulnerable populations, ultimately, may not be the really significant issue here. Unmasking vulnerability’s pedigree is more than simply a matter of academic interest; it also has real practical value in terms of disaster preparedness and relief. If, as Said suggests, Western knowledge is fundamentally a means of perpetuating its cultural hegemony over the world, and if also — as Guha and others believe — no Western critique can ever fully escape the dominant consciousness within which it was formulated, then, perforce, much greater attention needs to be paid to non-Western knowledge and local environmental management practices (Forsyth, 1996; Agrawal, 1995). [end page 29]

It must be recognised that the ways we shape knowledge about the social and natural worlds largely reflects the ways in which we have shaped knowledge into disciplines; to transform the former, we need to move beyond the constraints of the latter (Ferguson, 1997: 170). As Hewitt notes, a better appreciation of what constitutes a disaster and a more effective means of responding to it will require the positive and intelligent participation of those most at risk or otherwise directly involved (1997: 358).

# 2NC/1NR

## Link/Impact

### The View From Above: Their call for more satellite weather data entrenches a *view from above* that divorces humanity from nature and desensitizes us to disaster—*turns the case*.

Sturken 6 — Marita Sturken, Professor of Media, Culture, and Communication at New York University, 2006 (“Weather Media and Homeland Security: Selling Preparedness in a Volatile World,” *Understanding Katrina: Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, June 11th, Available Online at http://understandingkatrina.ssrc.org/Sturken/, Accessed 08-02-2011)

Katrina was not only a weather event, it was a weather media event, and this has an impact on the kinds of discourses that emerged in the media and in the political arena in its wake. Weather media effectively merges conventions of news and meteorology. One of the stories always told in weather media is that technology will provide better control over the weather, which manifests in the fact that weather reporting is now primarily based on viewing weather from satellites. Thus, the image of a storm such as Katrina was initially consumed by media viewers primarily as a satellite image of an impressively large swirl of clouds as seen from a satellite orbiting the earth—weather seen from above rather than felt from below.1 So habituated are we to this convention, that we very rarely consider how unusual this view is, and how it creates a point-of-view that is specifically non-human (and depopulated, unlike the experience of a hurricane on the ground). In addition to this dependence on satellite imagery, weather media is increasingly one of dazzling computer visualization with such devices as Doppler Radar, which are used to convey the sense that weather-tracking technologies can actually help to control the weather itself. This emphasis on technology tends to screen out the most significant weather events that do not play well on television. Heat and drought, arguably some of the most devastating weather problems worldwide, tend to get underplayed in weather coverage precisely because they don’t make for good TV and are not easily seen in satellite photos. The effects of global warming, while they may remain in the news if they continue to produce spectacular storms, are not a part of the narrative of weather media.

### Technocratic Managerialism: The affirmative enframes disaster preparedness as an issue of *technology* and *bureaucratic management*—this ensures serial policy failure and collective victim blaming—*turns the case*.

Bankoff 1 — Gregory Bankoff, Senior Lecturer at the University of Auckland and Research Fellow in Disaster Studies at Wageningen University, 2001 (“Rendering the World Unsafe: ‘Vulnerability’ as Western Discourse,” *Disasters*, Volume 25, Issue 1, Available Online at http://www.geo.mtu.edu/volcanoes/06upgrade/Social-KateG/Attachments%20Used/Vulnerability.WesternDiscourse.pdf, Accessed 08-02-2011, p. 24-25)

More recently these qualities have come to be increasingly expressed in terms of a society’s vulnerability to hazard. The concept of vulnerability, however, denotes much more than an area’s, nation’s or region’s geographic or climatic predisposition to hazard and forms part of an ongoing debate about the nature of disasters and their causes. In the 1970s, some Western and Western-trained social scientists began to question the hitherto unchallenged assumption that the greater incidence of disasters was due to a rising number of purely natural physical phenomena. Attributing disasters to natural forces, representing them as a departure from a state of normalcy to which a society returns to on recovery, denies the wider historical and social dimensions of hazard and focuses attention largely on technocratic solutions.

It also establishes a conviction that societies are able to take steps to avoid or ameliorate disasters through the application of the appropriate technocratic measures properly carried out by bureaucratically organised and centrally controlled institutions. Disaster prevention, therefore, is seen as largely a matter of improving scientific prediction, engineering preparedness and the administrative management of hazard. Kenneth Hewitt argues that this technocratic approach has permitted hazard to be treated as a specialised problem for the advanced research of scientists, engineers and bureaucrats, and so be appropriated within a discourse of expertise that quarantines disaster in thought as well as in practice (1983: 9–12, 1995: 118–21). It also renders [end page 24] culpable such populations (or at least their governments) which are blamed for their lack of adequate knowledge and preparedness, that had the opportunity to reduce risk but failed to do so (Varley, 1994: 3).

### Salvation Through Prediction: The affirmative’s fetishization of prediction erases political agency—we become *witnesses* instead of *actors*.

Sturken 1 — Marita Sturken, Associate Professor of Communication at the University of Southern California, 2001 (“Desiring the Weather: El Niño, the Media, and California Identity,” *Public Culture*, Volume 13, Number 2, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via Project Muse)

The weather is the site of a production of knowledge that functions as a means to erase political agency and to substitute the activity of witnessing in its place. Watching it becomes the central experience; indeed it subsumes all other experiences. The weather viewer feels connected to the world of weather twenty-four hours a day, with the Weather Channel as a place where one is safe and protected by technology. The weather citizen is interpellated within a set of narratives that range from the duties of consumerism to the vagaries of fate. The weather, we are told, is uncontrollable, dramatic, and exciting, yet science has given us the capacity to predict it. The government and the media have it under control. Prediction, it is stated, will save us. Prediction, a form of knowledge that is shortlived and of limited capacity, is seen as a shield against the future. If only, we are asked to think, we could be prepared.

### Bare Life: Enframing certain populations as “vulnerable” condemns them to live in defenseless spaces—they are reduced to *bare life.*

Bankoff 1 — Gregory Bankoff, Senior Lecturer at the University of Auckland and Research Fellow in Disaster Studies at Wageningen University, 2001 (“Rendering the World Unsafe: ‘Vulnerability’ as Western Discourse,” *Disasters*, Volume 25, Issue 1, Available Online at http://www.geo.mtu.edu/volcanoes/06upgrade/Social-KateG/Attachments%20Used/Vulnerability.WesternDiscourse.pdf, Accessed 08-02-2011, p. 24-25)

The discourse of vulnerability, however, no less than the previous concepts of tropicality or development, also classifies certain regions or areas of the globe as more dangerous than others. It is still a paradigm for framing the world in such a way that it [end page 25] effectively divides it into two, between a zone where disasters occur regularly and one where they occur infrequently (Hewitt, 1995: 121–2). Moreover, the former has much the same geography as that of the tropics or the Third World. ‘Many people in most third world countries’, writes Terry Cannon, ‘are vulnerable in both their lack (or the inappropriateness) of preparedness measures (the level of protection), and in their livelihood level and resilience’ (Cannon, 1994: 22). But the dangerous condition is now identified as one of hazard rather than disease or poverty.7 Nor are the latter dangers superseded but neatly subsumed with the current paradigm as sub-variants. The new geography establishes defenceless spaces with its pattern of frailties and absent protection (Hewitt, 1997: 164) and spaces of vulnerability determined by lack of entitlement, enfranchisement and empowerment (Watts, 1993: 121). Moreover, these zones are often also denominated regions of misrule where a population’s vulnerability made worse by the operation of despotic or illegitimate governments (Hewitt, 1997: 165).

### That results in Western interventions—the impact is *ethnocentrism*.

Bankoff 1 — Gregory Bankoff, Senior Lecturer at the University of Auckland and Research Fellow in Disaster Studies at Wageningen University, 2001 (“Rendering the World Unsafe: ‘Vulnerability’ as Western Discourse,” *Disasters*, Volume 25, Issue 1, Available Online at http://www.geo.mtu.edu/volcanoes/06upgrade/Social-KateG/Attachments%20Used/Vulnerability.WesternDiscourse.pdf, Accessed 08-02-2011, p. 27)

The Western discourse on disasters, whether it be about abnormal natural events or about vulnerable populations, still remains what Hewitt calls ‘a socio-cultural construct reflecting a distinct, institution-centred and ethnocentric view of man and nature’ (1983: 8). Health and disease, well-being and danger are viewed as fundamentally dependent upon particular geographies. The concept of natural disasters forms part of a much wider historical and cultural geography of risk that both creates and maintains a particular depiction of large parts of the world (mainly non-Western countries) as dangerous places for us and ours. More importantly, it also serves as justification for Western interference and intervention in the affairs of those regions for our and their sakes.

### Dual Use: The affirmative’s call for more weather data from satellites is *inextricably tied up in* the military-industrial complex.

Sturken 6 — Marita Sturken, Professor of Media, Culture, and Communication at New York University, 2006 (“Weather Media and Homeland Security: Selling Preparedness in a Volatile World,” *Understanding Katrina: Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, June 11th, Available Online at http://understandingkatrina.ssrc.org/Sturken/, Accessed 08-02-2011)

The reporter-in-weather is a fixture of weather reporting, but the essence of weather media is its embrace of technology, and this is key to the preoccupation in the weather industries with prediction. Thus, the media coverage of disasters such as hurricanes, which arrive with warning (unlike earthquakes and tsunamis), tells a story of prediction as a form of control—we can predict the path of the storm, such stories go, we can chart its path, by implication, we are ready for its impact. Today, large sums of money are invested in weather prediction, and the use of computers to chart weather patterns has created an increasingly mathematical model of weather forecasting.2 The need for weather prediction comes not only from industries like farming, fishing, and construction, but also from the military, and the science of meteorology has been heavily influenced by the needs of the military and the space industry. Andrew Ross notes that the legitimation of meteorology as science corresponded with the beginning of the aeronautical industry, and “The new meteorology proved a vital military asset during the Great War.” 3 In addition, continuous satellite-generated weather forecasts created a consumer market for satellite surveillance services that would otherwise be completely funded by government and military agencies.4 In this light, weather prediction technology is not only inextricably tied to military needs, but serves to underwrite them as well.

## Alternative

### The alternative *solves the case*—rejecting the affirmative’s disaster politics is key to effective preparedness.

Bankoff 1 — Gregory Bankoff, Senior Lecturer at the University of Auckland and Wageningen University, 2001 (“Rendering the World Unsafe: ‘Vulnerability’ as Western Discourse,” *Disasters*, Volume 25, Issue 1, Available Online at http://www.geo.mtu.edu/volcanoes/06upgrade/Social-KateG/Attachments%20Used/Vulnerability.WesternDiscourse.pdf, Accessed 08-02-2011, p. 29-30)

The more a threat is perceived as chronic, the greater the integration of that conception will be within the interpretative framework as a ‘normal’ experience, what Anderson refers to as the ‘normalisation of threat’, and one which can then be transmitted to others as part of that culture’s body of knowledge (1968: 303–4). Indeed, such in-built coping mechanisms have been shown to exist whereby cultures come to terms with and deal with such recurrent extreme ecological processes (Johnston and Selby, 1978: 468).8 These adaptations, however, are not characterised by homogeneity but by their own singular ‘interpretations of hazardous uncertainty’ and by their ‘own context of geographic, topographic and cultural variety’ (Lewis, 1990: 247). Perhaps beyond the concept of a society’s vulnerability lies that of a culture’s adaptability: it is the measure of the two that ultimately determines its exposure to risk. Broadening the discursive framework beyond vulnerability may not only improve the provision and degree of disaster preparedness and relief, but may also help all of us break free from the conceptual constraints that have rendered the world ‘unsafe’ for so many millions for so long.

## They Say: “Permute”

### The alternative is mutually exclusive with the aff—

We are impact turning the way that they have enframed disasters—the critique is a disad to their call for more data from weather satellites. If we win our K, there’s no reason to vote aff.

### And, *radical* critique is key—the permutation doesn’t solve.

Bankoff 1 — Gregory Bankoff, Senior Lecturer at the University of Auckland and Research Fellow in Disaster Studies at Wageningen University, 2001 (“Rendering the World Unsafe: ‘Vulnerability’ as Western Discourse,” *Disasters*, Volume 25, Issue 1, Available Online at http://www.geo.mtu.edu/volcanoes/06upgrade/Social-KateG/Attachments%20Used/Vulnerability.WesternDiscourse.pdf, Accessed 08-02-2011, p. 29)

The problem, from the perspective of those outside the dominant culture, lies in the inability of Western theory to offer an uncompromisingly radical critique of itself ‘so long as its ideological parameters are the same as those of that very culture’ (Guha, 1997: 11). While Ranajit Guha refers specifically to the inability of liberal historiography to escape from the limits of its own capitalist ‘conceptual universe’, much the same observation holds true of all epistemology. Commitment to a particular knowledge system not only predetermines the kinds of generalisations made about the subject under investigation but also provides the means for changing the world in such a way that it maintains the interests of those who benefit most from its present condition (op. cit.: 6–7). The discourse of vulnerability, no less and no more than that of tropicality or development, belongs to a knowledge system formed from within a dominant Western liberal consciousness and so inevitably reflects the values and principles of that culture.

### And, the permutation links to our *Preparedness DA*—focusing on individual preparedness trades off with structural solutions, *flipping the case*.

Sturken 6 — Marita Sturken, Professor of Media, Culture, and Communication at New York University, 2006 (“Weather Media and Homeland Security: Selling Preparedness in a Volatile World,” *Understanding Katrina: Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, June 11th, Available Online at http://understandingkatrina.ssrc.org/Sturken/, Accessed 08-02-2011)

Government campaigns that sell the idea of individual preparedness operate to reassure citizens that the government is doing everything it can to keep the country safe. Thus, the emphasis in the DHS campaigns on how individuals should respond to a crisis elides the fact that individuals and families can do little to affect the most important security decisions of the country, such as the securing of borders and cargo. The ready.gov campaigns take place in what is largely understood to be a security vacuum on the part of the U.S. government, with DHS threat advisories mere political ploys and DHS funding distributed like political pork to government cronies. The disaster of Katrina has dramatically exposed the way that resources have been drained away from the “homeland” by the war in Iraq. The homeland, we learned from Katrina, is primarily at risk not from the weather or from foreign terrorists, but from its own failed infrastructure and its callous disregard for the rights of all citizens to the most basic of human needs.

## They Say: “Framework”

### The role of the ballot is to choose between *competing political strategies*.

The alternative is a prerequisite to effective engagement in policy debates over disaster preparedness—interrogating our epistemological and methodological assumptions is necessary to establish grounding for policy change.

### And, weather must be evaluated *critically*—purely scientific approaches ensure serial policy failure.

Berland 94 — Jody Berland, Professor in the Department of Humanities at York University, 1994 (“On reading ‘The weather’,” *Cultural Studies*, Volume 8, Issue 1, January, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via IngentaConnect, p. 111-112)

We can begin to understand how every culture defines itself differently as a human community in relation to natural and invisible forces by exploring how it explains and interacts with the weather. As we have seen, intellectual and cultural changes transformed weather from an expression of God's moods and judgements to an autonomous force appropriate to the analytical instruments and research techniques of modern science. In turn, twentieth-century science—software research, mathematics, chaos theory, advanced observational systems, statistical analysis—has worked to displace meteorology from an analytic to a mathematical science. Paradoxically, then, big science has not only built upon, but also revealed to us the inadequacies of, modern science as an instrument for organizing our relationship with weather and with nature as a complex entity. As a consequence of this paradox, the postmodern discourse on weather has become a testing ground for the moral and cognitive limitations and responsibilities of science.

For one thing, no matter how sophisticated these instruments are, we cannot (in an everyday kind of way) foretell the weather with significantly greater accuracy than fifty years ago. Our culture accommodates this disjuncture in a number of ways: through qualifying statistics ('40 per cent chance of precipitation tomorrow'); irony and humour ('you don't need a weatherman...' and diverse comments on forecasters' fallability); and widespread common-sense commitments to non-scientific philosophical explanations for the intransigency or just/unjust logic of nature ('should've known it would rain - it was nice all last week.' Alternatively: 'you just can never tell with mother nature.')

More importantly, there are other truths about our relationship with nature that are obscured by our dominant scientific regimes. The attempt to eliminate human perceptions, needs and responsibilities from the world of science is now being fruitfully challenged by work in anthropology, philosophy and cultural criticism, and the history of science. Such work points to the diverse ways in which human politics, thought processes, instruments and technologies are all implicated in the creation of the entity [end page 111] known as Nature. Supported by the wide daily dissemination of quasi- scientific scopic representations (like the weather channel), nature reveals itself to students of discourse and society as a product of current regimes of knowledge—as in fact it has always been. And yet, at the same time, nature continues to confound such regimes through its own complex intricacies and unexpected responses. Hence the proliferation of post-Frankenstein natural disaster movies and the widespread interest in chaos theory (which even makes a desultory appearance in Jurassic Park). If similar responses from the world of nature—like eroding ozone levels or global warming—remind us of the efficacy of human action, this does not mean that nature is, or can be, anthropomorphically, discursively, or in any other way, simply the product of human action or thought. Thus discourse theory and cultural studies also have their limits. Nature is an independent but not autonomous force, simultaneously affected by our actions and profoundly, sometimes irrevocably, shaping the possibilities and conditions of our lives.

If you converse with everyone about the weather, as I do, you quickly learn that just as something called 'nature' makes a special unsanctioned appearance beneath and between the cracks of modern science, so "residual" forms of knowledge and belief about the weather—whether of a classical, theistic or pantheistic nature—are thriving in the loquacious everyday world of popular culture. Here weather lingers in the figure of a difficult parent—sometimes punitive, sometimes kind, sometimes with clear purpose and sometimes without, but clearly in charge. This weather puts the forecasters to shame and unexpectedly spoils our plans without mercy. When we talk about it we often celebrate its dubious victory with a kind of collective self-deprecating vindictive irony. It is the weather, not science, who is finally in command. 'You can never tell with mother nature.'

It is unlikely that this intimate deference can—or should—survive the ecological and ontological changes now shaping the end of the century. These call for more respect, but less deference. For the weather has changed irrevocably in its meaning. It may still sometimes act in mysterious ways, but it is neither autonomous nor unresponsive to our interventions. Its images and actions really are telling us something about ourselves, and there clearly are important stakes in figuring out what that is. In other words it is not only our scientific and academic knowledge that we must scrutinize, but also our emotional and mythic bonds with the weather. If anything the weather is now (as a friend recently observed) more like a difficult child than a wilful parent—sometimes nasty, sometimes agreeable, always compelling our attention, always challenging our knowledge of it, and yet unnervingly responsive to our words and deeds. We are related to it, we do affect it, and to that extent we are responsible for its well-being. All we need now is a way to write that on to the maps, in all the diverse ways that such inscription occurs.