Movie discussion resource Don't Look Up (Netflix streaming and cinemas) Engage with culture without disengaging your faith.

Genre: Fictional 'documentary'? drama? Dark comedy? Sci-fi?

Stars: Leonardo DiCaprio, Jennifer Lawrence, Meryl Streep, Cate Blanchett (and many

more!!)

**Rating**: M (language, some sexual content, graphic nudity and drug content)

**Director**: Adam McKay

Writers: Adam McKay, David Siroto

Netflix synopsis: Kate Dibiasky (Jennifer Lawrence), an astronomy grad student, and her professor Dr. Randall Mindy (Leonardo DiCaprio) make an astounding discovery of a comet orbiting within the solar system. The problem - it's on a direct collision course with Earth. The other problem? No one really seems to care. Turns out warning humankind about a planet-killer the size of Mount Everest is an inconvenient fact to navigate. With the help of Dr. Oglethorpe (Rob Morgan), Kate and Randall embark on a media tour that takes them from the office of an indifferent President Orlean (Meryl Streep) and her sycophantic son and Chief of Staff, Jason (Jonah Hill), to the airwaves of an upbeat morning show hosted by Brie (Cate Blanchett) and Jack (Tyler Perry). With only six months until the comet makes impact, managing the 24-hour news cycle and gaining the attention of the social media obsessed public before it's too late proves shockingly comical - what will it take to get the world to just look up?

Note: Leonardo DiCaprio is one of the most active celebrities in the climate change movement. He established the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation in 1998, a non-profit organization devoted to promoting environmental awareness. Although concerned with all areas of the environment, it focuses on global warming, preserving Earth's biodiversity and supporting renewable energy. It has worked on projects in over 40 countries and has produced two short web documentaries, Water Planet and Global Warning.

#### Critics' response

Some loved it, some not. The Guardian reports that critics have described the film as a "laboured, self-conscious and unrelaxed satire", and a "toothless comedy" that comes from a "position of lofty superiority that would drive away any partisans who still need to be won over". One wonders whether the critics who panned it are those who deny the reality of climate change. The comet is after all a symbol of climate change coming to end life as we know it. Or, the fact that the media is portrayed as complicit and incompetent and shallow perhaps not surprising that the media may pan the movie?

Or is it too much of a stretch to say that if critics don't like the movie, they must hate its message, the idea that climate change is a clear and present danger to our planet. "I do not agree that I must declare that *Don't Look Up* is a great film, or else I'm contributing to "damaging" its message, and this view somehow puts me at odds with climate science" (Paul Tassi, Forbes)

=> What did you think? Discuss your own responses to the movie, as distinct from the subject of the movie.

### Elon Musk/Jeff Bezos/Mark Zuckerberg 'love child'?

Mark Rylance portrays Peter Isherwell, the chief of a revolutionary company BASH. He works on the premise that any of our world's problems can be solved with technology. Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced in the lead up to the COP26 Glasgow climate change summit that he would rely upon a "technology-driven" plan for climate change, that "new technologies would be invented in coming years to do much of the heavy lifting". Isherwell's actions in the movie contribute to everyone on earth dying in a catastrophic comet strike, while the 'chosen few' head off into space in the hope of colonizing a new planet. Isherwell's character has been compared to Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg, and others. There is an implied critique of corporations who seek wealth and self-interest at any cost. We witness their influence on governments. We see the way public good is undermined. We see how powerful political and economic interests try to determine how the rest of us will live. We see evidence of (as David Ritter states) 'unconstrained techno-optimistic capitalism' and the way it threatens the common good. *Discuss*. (And just for fun - who might some of the other characters be based on? eg Meryl Streep's President Orlean emulates Donald Trump; Jonah Hill's Jason Orlean draws inspiration from Jared Kushner, Ivanka Trump, and Donald Trump Jr.; https://www.denofgeek.com/movies/dont-look-up-who-characters-based-on/)

## The final scene before destruction

Dr Mindy says to family and friends gathered together: "We really did have everything, didn't we? I mean, when you think about it." Well, yes. We did. Leo DiCaprio came up with this line in rehearsals for the scene. The director commented, "It was just the gut-punch of all gut punches". *Discuss*.



# Passivity in the face of the climate emergency

The movie parodies collective inaction, where scientists desperately try to warn a jaded and deeply compromised world about the imminent arrival of comet that will destroy earth. The comet is obvious to everyone but people choose not to see it. Instead, there is collective obsession with pop culture and celebrities. Ariana Grande plays Riley Bina, a popstar whose relationship dramas are 'must see' television. The scientists are scheduled to speak after her. Nobody cares much about the comet, but as for that good looking scientist!! 'As activists and as climate scientists who truly understand the gravity and the seriousness and the urgency of the climate crisis - and the fact that every day counts - it's almost surreal when you walk around in the world and see people going about their normal lives like everything's completely normal'. (Daniel Bleakley, The Guardian)

"We have this very finite window of 10 years to make this transition. If we are not voting for leaders or supporting everything that has to do with climate mitigation, we are going to have a fate very similar to these characters [in the film]" (Leonardo DiCaprio).

"We have come to assume that we can continue to live in an economy that uses fossil fuels. That it's okay to drive and depend on things that burn them because we have to. We still don't understand just how urgent the situation actually is. We've been born into this assumption that this is all normal and okay and our right. But actually the scientists are screaming at us that we have to cut global emissions by over 65% compared to 2005 by 2030. Cut, not compensate. Yet no country is planning that. And almost every person will tell you why they can't. Why? Because they are unwilling to change. Yet the disasters awaiting are far worse. Like people refusing to leave a house about to be hit by a bushfire because they don't want to give up the comforts of home. Or people refusing to get onto the life rafts from a ship just about to be torn apart by an iceberg in case it doesn't really hit because they are afraid of being adrift in a life raft. We just don't get that we have to take immediate and drastic action that will hurt a lot to save the future. It is real. Like an enemy coming at our city in the night. But no one believes the Scouts' reports". (Peter McBurney Facebook post) Dr. Randall Mindy during a TV interview: I'm sorry, but not everything needs to sound so goddamn clever or charming or likeable all the time. Sometimes we need to just be able to say things to one another. We need to hear things! Look, let's establish, once again, that there is a huge comet headed towards Earth. And the reason we know that there is a comet is because we saw it. We saw it with our own eyes using a telescope. I mean, for God's sake, we took a fucking picture of it! What other proof do we need? And if we can't all agree at the bare minimum that a giant comet the size of Mount Everest, hurtling its way towards planet Earth is not a fucking good thing, then what the hell happened to us? I mean, my God, how do-- How do we even talk to each other? What've we... What've we done to ourselves? How do we fix it? We should have deflected this comet when we had the fucking chance, but we didn't do it. I don't know why we didn't do it. And now they're actually firing scientists like me for speaking out, for opposing them. And I'm sure many of the people out there aren't even gonna listen to what I just said 'cause they have their own political ideology, but I... I assure you, I am not on one side or the other. I'm just telling you the fucking truth".

Journalists and TV talk show interviews can be compromised by the priority for 'entertainment', to keep things 'light'. And if that means the 'elephant in the room' doesn't get named, doesn't get talked about, that's ok as long as the ratings are good. How do you think media and journalists are responding to the climate change emergency? How shallow and fickle is social media, and the infotainment programs that masquerade as 'news'. Discuss.

# Let's organise a massive concert to show our concern (but we're all going to die anyway!)

Ariana Grande's character sings a song with the following words (language alert):

Look up, what he's really trying to say/ Is get your head out of your ass
Listen to the goddamn qualified scientists/ We really fucked it up, fucked it up this time
It's so close, I can feel the heat big time/ And you can act like everything is alright
But this is probably happening in real time/ Celebrate or cry or pray, whatever it takes
To get you through the mess that we made/'Cause tomorrow may never come.

We all hope the power of words and actions can influence and effect change. Maybe that's optimistic. Maybe this song itself points towards the futility of efforts to raise awareness and change practices and policies? Will it in the end be the same outcome because we've acted too late? Discuss.

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