

**A CRITIQUE OF THE HYPER-REALISTIC PORTRAYAL OF CLIMATE
CRISIS IN THE MOVIE *DON'T LOOK UP***



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By

JOVITTA C. S.

Register No. AB20ENG011

III B.A. English Literature

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)

Ernakulam

Cochin - 682011

Kerala

Supervisor

Dr. Tania Mary Vivera

Department of English

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)

Ernakulam

Kerala

March 2023

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project entitled “A Critique of the Hyper-realistic Portrayal of Climate Crisis in the Movie *Don't Look Up*” is the record of bona fide work done by me under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Tania Mary Vivera, Assistant Professor, Department of English.

Jovitta C. S.

Register Number: AB20ENG011

III BA English Language and Literature

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)

Ernakulam

March 2023

Ernakulam

CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that this project entitled “A Critique of the Hyper-realistic Portrayal of Climate Crisis in the Movie *Don't Look Up*” is the record of bona fide work carried out by Jovitta C S under my supervision and guidance.

Dr. Tania Mary Vivera

Department of English and Centre for Research

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)

Ernakulam

March 2023

Ernakulam

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Introduction

Global warming and climate change; terms all too familiar to the human population as warnings of approaching catastrophe. Yet, even technological advancements to prevent the further ruin of the earth seem to fall short while society largely lies oblivious or rather, ignorant. The role of media and films has transcended from solely providing entertainment and information to being one of the most effective tools for spreading awareness through global communication. Several socially relevant topics are being conveyed to a wider audience by incorporating them into movies and other aspects of social media. The hold that media has on people's minds owes to its visual appeal. By generating interest in the audience, films can strike the social mindset right where they should.

The climate crisis is a contemporary issue causing irreparable damage to the planet and ultimately all life on it. By handcuffing themselves to public spaces and vandalizing valuable artworks, climate scientists all over the globe are performing peaceful yet powerful acts to bring attention to this emergency. These protests regardless of going viral are still to receive an active response from those in power. Not only do they get treated with negligence, but people are also even going as far as mocking them for choosing such unconventional methods to relay their messages.

Such desperate attempts are the central subject in the hyper-realistic plot line of *Don't Look Up* (2021). The story revolves around two astronomers, PhD candidate Kate Dibiasky and her professor Dr. Randall Mindy, who discover a comet heading towards

Earth. The movie explores the political and societal ramifications of the discovery, as the characters try to convince the world of the impending disaster.

The project aims to examine and comprehend how the issue of climate change has been dealt with in the movie by employing hyper-realism and post-truth traits. The opening chapter of the project provides a summary of the movie and a detailed analysis of its main themes. The film not only convinces the audience of the actuality of the situation but also causes them to reflect on their own reactions if such a catastrophe does occur. The film discusses a meteor hit, which humanity has not yet witnessed, but is captured in a way that makes it seem more real than reality. *Don't Look Up* in a way, "replaces what is real". This hyper-real characteristic of the movie and how it has been achieved is covered in the second chapter. Even with the presentation of undeniable evidence, we see how the disastrous information is sugarcoated and eclipsed by media and politicians. We analyse this factor in Chapter three by employing the post-truth theory to the text at hand. The term "post-truth" does not always mean that facts are not important, but rather that they can always be selectively chosen and presented in a way that supports one version of the truth over another. It is a demonstration of worry by those who are concerned about the idea of truth and believe it is being attacked.

The main characters of the astronomers, played by renowned Hollywood actors Jennifer Lawrence and Leonardo DiCaprio, are the manifestation of the contemporary climate scientists who are pleading for reflection upon the planet-destroying activities of human civilisation.

Peter Kalmus is a climate scientist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Lab. He is one among the number of scientists in various countries risking their career, freedom and even their lives

to create a strong statement on this cataclysmic concern. The final chapter examines an online article by Kalmus on the movie. Ultimately, the study of the movie *Don't Look Up* is a reflection on the tragic reality; the failure of humanity in recovering from their detrimental deeds and the irresponsible attitude towards humanity's impending doom.

Chapter 1

To Look Up, or Not to Look Up, That Is The Question

Don't Look Up is a satirical science fiction comedy-drama film released in 2021. The movie, directed by Adam McKay, features an all-star cast, including Leonardo DiCaprio, Jennifer Lawrence, Meryl Streep, and Jonah Hill. The plot travels with Kate Dibiasky, a graduate student studying astronomy at Michigan State University who discovers an unidentified comet that Dr. Randall Mindy, her professor, calculates will impact the Earth in six months, resulting in the extinction of all life. Kate, Randall, and Head of NASA's Planetary Defense Coordination Office Dr. Clayton "Teddy" Oglethorpe travel to the White House to present their findings but are met with indifference from U.S. President Janie Orlean and her staff, including her son, Chief of Staff, Jason.

Attempts to inform the public through a TV program fail, but Kate's on-camera breakdown goes viral. Orlean uses the threat of the comet to divert attention from a sex scandal, and the media finally spreads the news. A spaceship is launched to hit and divert the comet, but the mission is canceled mid-flight when Peter Isherwell, CEO of a billionaire tech company - BASH and a platinum level funder of Orlean, discovers that the comet contains trillions of dollars' worth of scarce minerals. The White House plans to crush the comet and commercially exploit its fragments, causing Kate and Teddy to abandon the mission, while Randall becomes a voice advocating for its commercial potential and begins an affair with talk show host Brie Evantee.

The world becomes divided into those who want the comet destroyed, those who deny its existence, and those who decry unjustified alarm. Meanwhile, Kate returns home and starts a relationship with Yule, a rebel youngster and gamer with a stronger sense of faith than he gives off. As his infidelity is revealed, Randall eventually loses his composure and speaks out against Orlean's leadership before making amends with Kate. Orlean and Isherwell's plan to recover the comet's materials fails, and they flee in a spaceship, leaving Jason behind. Before leaving, Orlean offers Randall a place on the ship, but he declines, choosing to spend his remaining time with Kate, Teddy, Yule, and his family.

The comet hits the planet, killing everyone. In a mid-credits scene, the presidential ship, carrying the titans of various industries, lands on a lush alien planet, but its passengers are immediately attacked and killed by unidentified wild animals. In a post-credits scene, Jason is seemed to have survived but instead of being completely horrified that everything around him has been destroyed, his first thought is to document the aftermath of the extinction on his phone, wondering if his mother will return.

The central theme of *Don't Look Up* is the danger of ignoring science and truth in the face of politics and greed. The movie portrays a society that is more interested in celebrity gossip, social media, and political ideologies rather than accepting the reality of an approaching comet that could wipe out the human race. Dr. Teddy Oglethorpe, Kate and Randall represent the scientists who discover the truth and try to convince the world of the impending disaster. However, they are met with indifference, skepticism, and outright denial from the public and the government. Meryl Streep's character, President Janie Orlean, is a parody of contemporary politics, where politicians prioritize their own

image and re-election over the greater good. By diverting attention from her own scandals and focusing on the space mission, the fictitious president is able to manipulate the media and the public perception of her leadership. This highlights the dangers of leaders who are more concerned with their own interests than the well-being of their constituents, and the importance of holding those in power accountable for their actions.

Jonah Hill's character, Jason Orlean, is a parody of nepotism and privilege, as he is appointed as the President's Chief of Staff despite having no qualifications. The characters of Dr. Jocelyn Calder, the Administrator of NASA, who dilutes and attempts to discredit the critical findings, and Peter Isherwell, the billionaire CEO of the fictitious tech company BASH, are also manifestations of political corruption.

The movie *Don't Look Up* satirizes the issue of corruption in politics, specifically how politicians prioritize short-term gains and their own interests over long-term planning and the greater good. President Orlean and Jason are depicted as manipulative and self-serving, using the threat of the comet as an opportunity to boost the economy and their approval ratings. They prioritize public relations and their own image over taking the necessary actions to protect the planet and its inhabitants. The president's administration also engages in various corrupt practices, such as suppressing information about the comet and manipulating the media to spread misinformation. They even attempt to discredit Kate and Randall, the two astronomers who discovered the comet, as a way to silence them and maintain their own power.

Furthermore, the movie highlights how corporate interests and wealthy donors can influence politicians' decisions. For example, billionaire Peter Isherwell (Mark Rylance) funds the president's mission to land on the comet and mine its resources, which

is presented as a dangerous and ultimately futile endeavour. Overall, the movie portrays a bleak and cynical view of politics, suggesting that the system is corrupt and broken, with politicians more concerned with maintaining their own power and wealth than serving the greater good.

Another theme explored in the movie is the role of the media in shaping public opinion. The movie portrays the media as sensationalist and more interested in ratings than informing the public. The media's treatment of Kate and Randall's discovery as 'a little science experiment' is a commentary on how facts and evidence are distorted and manipulated to fit a particular narrative. They are advised by the production crew to 'keep things light and fun' as the TV show hosts Jack and Brie, as well as the audience, 'likes it that way' (*Don't Look Up* 00:35:55). The instant reach that gossips and celebrity news receive in comparison to our protagonists show how the media's prioritization of entertainment and celebrity news distracts the public from the real issues. The character of Brie (Cate Blanchett), the news anchor, exemplifies toxic positivity, as she tries to spin the news of the comet as an opportunity for personal growth and positivity.

“The film does not point fingers at democrats, republicans, white or Black folks, straights or queer folks, etc., it indicts capitalism as the superstructural system responsible for everyone’s problems.” (Gaiter, *“Don't Look Up” Exposes How Capitalism Won't Save Us*)

The character of Peter Isherwell, played by Jonah Hill, is a prime example of capitalist greed in the movie. Isherwell is a media mogul who is more concerned with his own profits and ratings than the impending disaster of the comet heading towards Earth. He uses the crisis as an opportunity to boost his own career and wealth, rather than focusing

on the safety of the planet. Using his influence as a top-donor to the President's campaign fund, he is able to leverage political support to forward his undeveloped and unauthorized plan to mine the rare metals that are allegedly present on the asteroid which are the primary materials needed in supplementing technology. He persuades the cabinet into thinking that if the USA is able to get hands on these precious sources, it will be able to boost its position as a global superpower.

“Their joint class position, political power, and personal relationship moves them to make policy decisions that center their own ephemeral interests, such as improving the President's poll ratings for reelection and furthering capitalist profit through the monopolization of the raw materials from the comet at the expense of the Earth. The administration even creates polarizing campaigns/slogans (“don't look up”) that abuse American political loyalty in order to perpetuate conflict that ensures their status and job security, benefiting from manufactured social division” (Gaiter, *“Don't Look Up” Exposes How Capitalism Won't Save Us*)

Don't Look Up also delves into the theme of hopelessness and despair in the face of impending doom. Despite the scientists' efforts to warn the world of the impending disaster, the movie shows how people are unwilling to accept the truth and would rather live in denial. The movie portrays the emotional toll that this realization takes on the scientists and their loved ones. The characters struggle with feelings of hopelessness and despair, as they come to terms with the fact that the world might end, and there is nothing they can do about it. This makes *Don't Look Up* a thought-provoking movie that explores a plethora of societal and political issues.

Chapter 2

Don't Look Up as a Hyper-realistic Script

“Instead of stories that create comforting distance from the grave danger we are in via unrealistic techno fixes for unrealistic disaster scenarios, humanity needs stories that highlight the many absurdities that arise from collectively knowing what’s coming while collectively failing to act.” (Kalmus)

Jean Baudrillard was a French philosopher, cultural critic, and sociologist who is known for his contributions to the field of postmodernism. He is particularly famous for his theory of hyperreality, which suggests that modern society has become so saturated with images, signs, and symbols that it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between reality and simulation.

According to Baudrillard, "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality" (Baudrillard 1). It is a state in which reality and its representation have merged to the point that it is impossible to tell them apart. In this state, signs and symbols have become detached from their original referents and have taken on a life of their own. They create a new reality that is more real than the original, and that is no longer dependent on the real world for its existence. Baudrillard argued that hyperreality is the result of the mass media, consumer culture, and the proliferation of technology. These forces have created a world in which images and symbols are more powerful than the things they represent. For example, “Jean Baudrillard once described Disneyland as one of the main examples of hyperreality. By presenting imaginary as more realistic than reality itself, Disneyland draws visitors into the world of escapism and happiness achieved through simulation; it

makes the troubles of the real world less relatable.” (Wang, Lina, "Reshaping Reality: From Disneyland to Dismaland"). In this way, Hyperreality is a form of simulation, in which the world is reduced to a series of images, signs, and symbols that have no connection to reality.

“He argues that in a post-modern culture dominated by TV, films, the Internet and media all that exists are simulations of reality, which aren’t any more or less ‘real’ than the reality they simulate. As such, Baudrillard points to the process of simulation in which representations of things come to replace the things being represented, and that the representations become more important than the ‘real thing’. The massed collection of these simulations has resulted in the condition of hyperreality, where we only experience prepared realities such as edited war footage or reality TV and the distinction between the ‘real’ and simulations has collapsed.” (Mohanlal Sukhadia University, “Hyperreality: JEAN BAUDRILLARD”)

Don't Look Up uses various techniques to make the movie hyper-realistic. The movie is set in a near-future world and tackles the themes of politics, society, and the role of media in shaping public opinion. The cinematography, special effects, cast, and acting, satire, and sound design create a realistic portrayal of the world, making it easier for the audience to connect with the characters and events in the movie.

“The camera is an important mechanical tool for creating hyperreality” (Susee Bharathi T, et al. 4). The cinematography foregrounds the film’s hyperreality by the use of handheld cameras and close-up shots, creating a documentary-style feel, enhancing its authenticity, factuality, and audience relatability. In addition, wide shots have been inserted to emphasize the scale and magnitude of the comet heading towards Earth. These

shots make the comet look massive and ominous, creating a sense of foreboding and urgency that sets the tone for the entire film. The colour grading in the movie is also notable, with a heavy use of blue and grey tones that create a cold, sombre, and apocalyptic atmosphere. This colour scheme is used to create an apocalyptic atmosphere in several scenes, such as when the characters are standing outside looking up at the comet, or during the tense meetings with government officials. It adds to the sense of impending doom, creating a dystopian feel to the movie.

The special effects in the movie play a crucial role in enhancing the hyperreality that the film portrays. The comet's portrayal, for instance, as a massive, glowing object that dominates the sky creates a sense of awe and fear among the characters. It looks authentic, making the audience feel as if it is a real-life event. The use of CGI and other visual effects enhances the realism of the film.

The performances of the cast can have a significant impact on the hyperreality of a film wherein the line between reality and representation becomes blurred, and the actors' performances can help to either reinforce or break down this line. *Don't Look Up* boasts of a star-studded cast, including Leonardo DiCaprio, Jennifer Lawrence, Meryl Streep, and Jonah Hill. The actors' performances are realistic, and their characters are mundane, making the audience believe in the characters' motivations and emotions. By also showing how they suffer from various mental health issues such as anxiety, the characters are curated in a way that is relatable to the audience. The movie also depicts a hyper-realistic portrayal of the media coverage surrounding the comet. The constant news updates, talking heads, and social media posts are reminiscent of real-life news coverage of major events, and create a sense of chaos and confusion. This combined with the

characters' reactions, including the debates over how to handle the crisis and the prioritization of political interests over public safety, are reminiscent of real-life political responses to crises. The panic buying and hoarding, are similar to real-life responses to major events, such as natural disasters or pandemics. But some reviewers have criticised the use of celebrity cameos in the movie, claiming that they detract from the main plot and lessen the movie's overall effect.

Satire is a powerful tool for exaggerating and distorting reality in order to comment on social, cultural, or political issues. Satire relies on exaggeration and irony to make its point, and in *Don't Look Up* this takes the form of an absurdly heightened reality in which the characters are unable to convince the public and the government to take action against an impending comet that threatens to destroy the planet. The satire in the film exaggerates the level of denial and ignorance that exists in society and the government, making it difficult for the characters to convince anyone of the impending doom. The use of satire to mock the media, lawmakers, and shallowness of society creates a sense of realism in the movie. For example, the following exchange:

President Orlean : Mmm-hmm. So how certain is this?

Dr. Randall Mindy: There's 100% certainty of impact.

President Orlean : Please, don't say 100%.

Old Aide: Can we just call it a potentiality significant event?

President Orlean: Yeah.

Kate Dibiasky: But it isn't POTENTIALLY going to happen. It IS going to happen.

Dr. Randall Mindy: Exactly, 99.78% to be exact.

Jason Orlean : Oh, great. Okay, so it's not 100%.

Dr. Teddy Oglethorpe: Well, scientists never like to say 100%.

President Orlean : Call it 70% and let's just move on.

Kate Dibiasky : But it's not even close to 70%.

President Orlean : You cannot go around saying to people that there's 100% chance that they're going to die. You know? It's just nuts. (*Don't Look Up*, 00:20:05-37)

However, while the film's satirical elements are often praised, some have argued that it struggles to balance its comedic tone with the weight of the impending disaster, leading to tonal inconsistencies throughout the film. “My guess is that *Don't Look Up's* bitterly satiric stance threatens a middle-of-the road political complacency. It intimidates the reviewers' apparent bedrock belief that our centrist, big-business establishment — be it left-leaning or right — will solve our real-life apocalypse movie: the global-warming disaster. That “profits over planet” mindset is a smugness that is killing us.” (Gewertz, “Film Review: “Don't Look Up” — A Pitch-Dark Satire that Dares to be Impudently Pessimistic”)

Sound effects and music can help to create a heightened sense of unreality, and the film's sound design takes full advantage of this to create a surreal and otherworldly atmosphere. One of the most noticeable aspects of the sound design is the use of music to underscore and heighten the emotions of the characters and the audience. The film's score, composed by Nicholas Britell, features a mix of orchestral and electronic music that helps to build tension and create a sense of urgency. The score's use of pulsing rhythms and dissonant harmonies adds to the film's apocalyptic atmosphere and reinforces the sense of

impending doom. In addition to the score, the sound design also makes use of sound effects to enhance the realism of the film. For example, the sound of the comet as it approaches Earth is a significant element of the sound design, with a deep rumble and a high-pitched whine that creates a sense of unease and fear. Dialogue is also a crucial element of the sound design in *Don't Look Up* with the characters' voices providing much of the film's emotional impact. The dialogue is clear and well-balanced, making it easy to follow the plot and connect with the characters. The lyrics to one of the songs in the movie, 'Just Look Up', performed by pop singer Riley Bina played by Ariana Grande goes:

“Look up, what he's really trying to say

Is get your head out of your ass

Listen to the goddamn qualified scientists.” (*Don't Look Up*, 01:44:16-29)

The song is thematically relevant to the plot. It starts off as a love song, then transforms into a rallying cry to listen to the scientists' message that humankind hasn't much time left on this planet. The sound design in *Don't Look Up* is masterfully executed, with the score, sound effects, lyrics and dialogue working together to create a fully immersive and emotionally resonant experience for the audience.

Chapter 3

Post Truth: Fact or Facade?

The theory of post-truth is the idea that truth no longer matters as much as feelings and beliefs in shaping public opinion and political discourse. It suggests that objective facts and evidence are less important than emotional appeals and personal beliefs in shaping public opinion, particularly in the context of modern politics and media. “Structurally, post-truth relates to an erosion of the common world due to the increasing irrelevance of factual truth in public discourse. This process can be traced to changes in the media-economy-politics complex.” (Hyvönen, *Defining Post-truth*)

According to the theory, we have entered an era in which emotions, personal opinions, and subjective interpretations of events have become more important than objective facts and evidence. In a post-truth society, people are more likely to believe things that confirm their preexisting beliefs and less likely to change their minds in the face of contradictory evidence. The rise of social media and the decline of traditional news media are often cited as contributing factors to the post-truth phenomenon, as people increasingly rely on sources that confirm their biases and beliefs. Films can be a powerful medium for shaping public opinion and influencing beliefs, and they can use emotional appeals and subjective interpretations to sway viewers' perceptions of events and issues. They contribute to the post-truth phenomenon by presenting fictional or distorted versions of reality that are believed by viewers to be true. *Don't Look Up* employs post-truth elements in its satirical portrayal of society's response to an impending global catastrophe. The movie uses humour and satire to highlight the

absurdities of modern society and its reliance on media and politics, even in the face of an impending apocalypse.

One of the key post-truth elements in the movie is the portrayal of media and political figures manipulating the truth to suit their agenda. The news anchors, played by Tyler Perry and Cate Blanchett, are shown to be more interested in ratings and personal gain than in presenting accurate information to the public. The film features several characters who represent different perspectives on the issue, including a populist character who uses inflammatory language to rally support for his cause. President Orlean is a caricature of a populist leader who prioritizes her own political gain over the well-being of the country and is depicted as being completely out of touch with reality, unwilling to listen to the warnings of scientists and experts. Throughout the film, she gives several speeches in which she uses fear-mongering and divisive language to rile up her base. For example, in one scene, she tells a crowd of supporters that "they" (meaning the scientists) wants the crowd to look up because 'they' want them to 'be afraid'. We can see that this tactic works in manipulating the minds of many as one video is played on screen at 01:40:01 showing a man saying: "They want to rob you of your freedom. And that's a fact!"

President Orlean also employs anti-intellectual rhetoric, dismissing the scientists' warnings as "fake news" and accusing them of having a political agenda. She portrays herself as the only one who can save the country and its people, and her followers believe her unquestioningly. Overall, President Orlean's populist rhetoric is used to highlight the dangers of ignoring the scientific consensus on climate change and the consequences of putting politics and personal gain ahead of the greater good.

“Post-truth politics, I contend, ought to be understood as a predicament in which political speech is increasingly detached from the factual infrastructure.” (Hyvönen, *Defining Post-truth*). This theme can be seen right from the beginning of the movie when the authorities are reluctant to accept the fact that the probability of an asteroid hit has been scientifically calculated and confirmed. The White House also straight up denies having met Dr. Mindy and Diabasky to discuss and implement plans to avert the collision. Up until the very last moment when the asteroid is directly visible to the people, President Orlean and her allies uphold and propagate the ‘Don’t Look Up’ agenda claiming that it’s all a hoax. The approval of BASH’s meteor division and diversion project, which has not been peer-reviewed, over the initial suggestions made by Dr. Oglethorpe or the peer-reviewed data offered by Dr. Mindy demonstrates the post-truth nature of contemporary culture.

The movie highlights toxic positivity in its portrayal of public opinion and the power of social media. Toxic positivity is a phenomenon where people feel compelled to maintain a positive attitude even in the face of negative or difficult situations. Brie's attitude is not only insensitive but also dangerous, as it downplays the severity of the situation and prevents people from taking necessary actions to protect themselves. Her toxic positivity is also mirrored in the behaviour of many of the film's characters, who refuse to acknowledge the reality of the comet and instead focus on maintaining their own sense of normalcy and optimism. Moreover, President Orlean's administration uses toxic positivity as a way to manipulate the public and maintain their own power. They downplay the severity of the comet and promote unrealistic solutions to the crisis, such as landing on the comet and mining its resources. Randall calls this behaviour out during an

outburst on TV when he says: “Not everything needs to sound so goddamn clever or charming or likeable all the time. Sometimes, we just need to be able to say things to one another. We need to hear things.” (Don’t Look Up, 01:30:42-52)

The volatile mindsets of the people in choosing and supporting their subjective truth is also an indicator of a population living in the post-truth era. The film also touches on the idea of people putting their faith in figures of authority or celebrity, even when they are clearly not acting in the best interest of the public. *Don't Look Up* has effectively showcased a post-modern society that is driven by consumerism and a constant desire for more to create a thought-provoking and humorous commentary on modern society's response to a global crisis.

Chapter 4

'Don't Look Away'

“In one scene, Mindy hyperventilates in a bathroom; in another, Dibiasky, on national TV, screams “Are we not being clear? We’re all 100% for sure gonna fucking die!”

I can relate.” (Kalmus)

Peter Kalmus is an American scientist and writer based in Altadena, California. He has been an outspoken advocate for climate action and has frequently spoken about the urgent need for society to address the climate crisis. Climate change is a key theme that underscores the entire plot. *Don't Look Up* highlights the challenges that climate scientists face in getting their message across to the public and policymakers. Despite their expertise and the overwhelming scientific evidence, many people are unwilling to accept the reality of climate change and the need for urgent action.

The film also portrays the obstacles that scientists face in dealing with politicians and the media, who are often more concerned with their own interests and agendas than with the truth. Kalmus in his article “*I'm a climate scientist. Don't Look Up captures the madness I see every day*” highlights how we live in a society where major newspapers continue to carry advertisements for fossil fuels, climate news is frequently overtaken by sports, entrepreneurs promote extremely risky technological advancements, and billionaires promote the absurdist notion that humans can just relocate to Mars.

Furthermore, the movie shows how climate scientists often feel overwhelmed and frustrated by the enormity of the challenge they face. They are aware of the devastating consequences of inaction, yet they struggle to make people understand the graveness and care about the issue. This can lead to feelings of hopelessness and despair, which are depicted in the film through the characters of Kate and Randall; their on-air outbursts. As the movie draws close to the climax, we see that immediately following a breakdown on TV, the shot cuts to Dr. Mindy in a car, with a black hood over his head. This shows how climate scientists are silenced and rendered powerless if they attempt to reveal the harsh truth in a way that isn't seen as appropriate by the governing powers.

“The Earth system is breaking down now with breathtaking speed. And climate scientists have faced an even more insurmountable public communication task than the astronomers in *Don't Look Up*, since climate destruction unfolds over decades – lightning fast as far as the planet is concerned, but glacially slow as far as the news cycle is concerned – and isn't as immediate and visible as a comet in the sky.” (Kalmus)

Overall, *Don't Look Up* portrays the tragic reality of climate scientists in today's world by highlighting the barriers they face in communicating the urgency of the climate crisis and the overwhelming nature of the problem they are trying to solve.

As Dr. Randall Mindy in the movie says:

“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 going to listen to what I just said because they have their own political

ideology. But, I assure you, I am not on one side or the other.” (*Don’t Look Up*, 01:31:48-01:32:08)

The film serves as a call to action to take climate change seriously and to listen to the experts who are trying to warn us of the dire consequences of inaction. It also highlights the dangers of political and media manipulation, conflicting information, unchecked capitalist greed and the power of social media in shaping public opinion.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *Don't Look Up* is a hyper-realistic portrayal of the current state of the world, where climate change is a looming threat that is often ignored or denied. The film serves as a warning of the dire consequences of inaction and the need for collective action to address climate change. The film highlights the importance of scientific expertise, credible sources of information, and the need for politicians, corporations, and the media to prioritize the safety and well-being of the planet over their own interests. The film emphasizes the importance of addressing the impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities.

The project has attempted to identify the most effective elements that have contributed to the achievement of the film's purpose by analyzing the many themes and approaches used in the movie to convey this vitally important message. This analysis has highlighted significant parallels and divergences between *Don't Look Up* and other films in the genre of apocalyptic science fiction. One key difference is the tone of the film. Many apocalyptic science fiction movies are serious and dramatic, while *Don't Look Up* uses satire to critique societal issues. While the film certainly has serious themes and messages, its overall tone is more lighthearted and satirical than many other films in the genre. However, the film's satire can sometimes feel heavy-handed, with the film struggling to balance its comedic tone with the weight of the impending disaster, causing tonal inconsistencies throughout.

Another difference is the cause of the apocalyptic threat. In *Don't Look Up* the threat is a comet hurtling toward Earth that will cause a catastrophic impact. Other apocalyptic science fiction movies have featured different causes, such as an alien invasion (*Independence Day*), a deadly virus (*28 Days Later*), or a nuclear war (*Dr. Strangelove*). This difference in the cause of the threat can lead to different themes and messages in the films. *Don't Look Up* and other apocalyptic science fiction movies resemble each other in the portrayal of human behaviour in the face of a global crisis. In both *Don't Look Up* and other films in the genre, there are characters who ignore or dismiss the threat, as well as those who take action to try to prevent or mitigate it. The films often examine how individuals and society as a whole react in the face of a crisis. Yet, the movie's conclusion comes off as being overly tidy and avoids dealing with the gravity of the movie's main message in favour of a more straightforward answer.

Ultimately, the film serves as a powerful reminder of the urgent need to act on climate change before it's too late and the importance of prioritizing the well-being of the planet and its inhabitants over individual wealth and power.

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