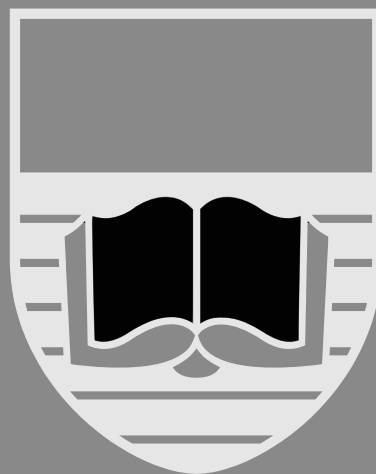




THE DEFENESTRATION OF DR CROCKFORD

Silencing dissent at the University of Victoria

Susan Crockford and Donna Laframboise



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About the authors

Susan Crockford

Dr Susan Crockford is an evolutionary biologist and has been working for 35 years in archaeozoology, paleozoology and forensic zoology. She works full time for a private consulting company she co-owns (Pacific Identifications Inc). She is the author of *Rhythms of Life: Thyroid Hormone and the Origin of Species*, *Eaten: A Novel* (a polar bear attack thriller), *Polar Bear Facts and Myths* (for ages seven and up, also available in French and German), *Polar Bears Have Big Feet* (for preschoolers), and the fully referenced *Polar Bears: Outstanding Survivors of Climate Change*,¹ as well as a scientific paper on polar bear conservation status.² She has authored several earlier briefing papers and videos for GWPF on the subjects of polar bears and walrus.^{3,4,5,6,7,8} Susan Crockford blogs at www.polarbears.com.

Donna Laframboise

Donna Laframboise is a Canadian investigative journalist. She is the author of a 2011 exposé of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *The Delinquent Teenager Who Was Mistaken for the World's Top Climate Expert*. Her 2013 book, *Into the Dustbin: Rajendra Pachauri, the Climate Report & the Nobel Peace Prize*, examines the leadership of that organization. She is a former columnist and editorial board member of the *National Post*, and a former vice president of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. She has never belonged to any political party, and has voted across the political spectrum. She currently blogs at BigPicNews.com.

¹ https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=dp_byline_sr_book_1?ie=UTF8&text=Susan+J+Crockford&search-alias=books&field-author=Susan+J+Crockford&sort=relevancerank and <https://susancrockford.com>.

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The defenestration of Dr Crockford

Susan Crockford

This summer I lost my status as Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Anthropology Department at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada (UVic), a position I had held for 15 years. This action followed my expulsion from the roster of the university's volunteer Speakers Bureau in May 2017. However, until April 2017 the university and the anthropology department proudly promoted my work, including my critical polar bear commentary, which suggests someone with influence (and perhaps political clout) intervened to silence my scientific criticism.

Journalist Donna LaFramboise has exposed this travesty in the *National Post* (16 October 2019), which you can read here. I have provided more background below.

Losing my adjunct status

An adjunct professorship is an unpaid position with a few responsibilities, but in return allows a scholar to operate as a qualified member of the academic community, for example by making applications for research funding. However, an adjunct has no rights. Adjunct status must be renewed every three years or so, at the discretion of the individual department. I was first appointed as an adjunct in the Department of Anthropology in 2004, shortly after I had successfully defended my PhD dissertation at UVic.

When I approached members of the Anthropology Department with a request to undertake an interdisciplinary PhD (in anthropology and biology) on the evolution of humans and animals, they could not have been more welcoming and supportive. Both the Anthropology and Biology departments and the Faculty of Graduate Studies enthusiastically accepted my research proposal despite the fact that it challenged all conventional thinkers about how one species transforms into another: not only historical heavyweights but contemporary experts in evolutionary theory.

My testable hypothesis that thyroid hormones (in part due to their actions on genes) provide a mechanism for evolution to work via natural selection was truly innovative and revolutionary. No one at the university suggested it was inappropriate to question accepted authorities on this topic. In fact, they applauded it.

After my book based on my dissertation was published, the university PR department promoted my participation in a 2007, two-hour *Nature* documentary ('Dogs That Changed the World'), which came with widespread media attention. I was chosen, out of all the people involved in the film, to work with the executive producer of *Nature* to promote the show via a 'satellite media tour' of TV and radio interviews taped in New York City.

Our local paper, the *Victoria Times-Colonist*, produced an above-the-fold feature on the story of my evolution research that challenged conventional wisdom, and at least one major US newspaper carried a similar story.⁹

More importantly, the university Provost Office supported me in 2012 after a letter from Greenpeace was sent to the university president suggesting I should be fired for conflict of

⁹ Dog domestication is an important component of my testable scientific theory because it's an aspect of evolution that the public can wrap their heads around. But the theory is *scientifically* powerful because it applies to virtually all species: it explains the rise of polar bears and humans from their ancestors, as well as all mammal, fish, bird, and reptile species. It may also explain the origin of invertebrate and unicellular species.

interest for having taken a small contract from a think tank called *The Heartland Institute* for some research on their *Climate Change Reconsidered II* report. The information about this contract was made public by scientist Peter Gleick, who was so obsessed with knowing who funded Heartland that he used someone else's email address to fraudulently obtain private documents. Since I was not a paid employee of UVic at the time and thus could not be fired, the issue was moot, but I was contacted by the provost because the letter to the university president had also been sent to the media.

Despite the negative international media attention the Greenpeace stunt generated, going forward I continued to give free lectures about polar bears as well as on dog domestication and speciation to the public through the university's Speakers Bureau, which I had done since 2009. In 2016, the Anthropology Department happily renewed my adjunct status application for 2016–19: my acceptance letter said the decision was unanimous. Even at that time, the department was not only fully aware of my activities with regard to the polar bear status controversy, but proudly shared that information.

For example, twice – in June 2013 and again in January 2015 – the department published announcements on their news webpage regarding opinion pieces on the status of polar bear populations I had written (see below from 2015). The 2015 *Financial Post* article also garnered a mention in the newsletter sent out to department alumni that year.

As late as 12 April 2017, the university was also on board: on that date, the University Media Relations department tweeted an announcement about an interview I had done with the CBC about the status of Newfoundland polar bears:

In addition, the university also paid me to give several expanded polar bear conservation lectures for its students and the public. I gave a two-hour lecture for the English Language Centre in 2014, again in 2017 for students whose first language was not English, and I also developed a two-part lecture series for adults, which was offered through the Continuing Education Department in April 2015.

In other words, up until mid-April 2017, both the Anthropology Department and the university at large were not only aware that my work that was critical of some aspects of polar bear science (as well as the controversy it was generating), but they were happy to tell others about it and to have their students learn about it.

As far as I am aware, there had been no complaints regarding the performance of my adjunct duties or polar bear research activities: if there were, no-one mentioned them to me.

In May 2019 my appointment was up for renewal for 2019–21, and I submitted my application by the due date. However, the department chair, April Nowell, citing a decision by the department's ARPT committee ('Appointment/Reappointment/Promotion/Tenure'), refused to renew the appointment. No reason whatsoever was given for this decision, nor was there any avenue offered for appeal (it is my understanding that all tenured faculty members vote on such ARPT decisions and the fact that 'unanimously' was not part of the announced decision, as it had been in 2016, leads me to believe not everyone on the faculty was on board with this outcome).

I did point out in my request for renewal that my position on polar bear conservation supports that of Inuit in Nunavut, who are fighting against sanctioned scientists and the Canadian government regarding the status of polar bears because their lives are threatened by an abundance of these dangerous predators. Two young Inuk men were fatally mauled by polar bears in 2018 and there have been many close calls before and since. Anthropologists

at UVic are avid champions of aboriginal rights, but apparently, that support goes out the door when it comes to polar bears.

Expulsion from the Speakers Bureau in 2017

The seeds for losing my adjunct status were planted when I was expelled from the UVic Speakers Bureau in May 2017.

It appears the impetus for that action was a lecture on polar bears I had given at the International Climate Change Conference hosted by the Heartland Institute on 23 March 2017, which was videotaped and posted online in early April. During the question and answer session after my lecture, I happened to mention that during my talks about polar bears to elementary school classes over the past year (through the university's Speakers Bureau), I had been astonished to learn that every single teacher believed that only a few hundred to a few thousand polar bears were left in the world. This was in stark contrast to reality, since the 2015 official IUCN Red List assessment of the species put the global population size at 22,000–31,000 (and I contend the figure is plausibly higher still).

I believe that someone in Victoria with political clout saw the videotaped Heartland Q&A session (posted online 5 April 2017) and that they, alone or along with others, contacted the university to complain about me talking to school children about polar bears. But this time, no one involved the media.

About two weeks after the Heartland lecture was posted online, on April 20, an email notice arrived to my in-box regarding the annual renewal of topics for the Speakers Bureau, addressed 'Dear Adjunct Faculty Member'. The email explained that this year there was a new requirement that adjunct professors had to have departmental approval to participate in this free community lecture service. When I asked for an explanation, this is what I was told (my emphasis):

With this change, we're recognizing that the nature of the relationship between adjuncts and the university can vary widely from faculty to faculty and that it is substantially different than that with employees, whether faculty or staff. By asking the head of the unit to approve the participation of their adjuncts, we're asking someone with direct knowledge of the individual and accountability to UVic to confirm that the volunteer speaker is able to represent the university on their intended topics.

Graduate students are also allowed to give such presentations to the community: did they also need permission? Were all adjunct faculty sent the same email? It all seemed very odd but I decided to go along and asked permission. My department chair, Dr Ann Stahl, refused. She said only this:

While I respect issues of academic freedom, your talks at schools have generated concern among parents regarding balance that have been shared with various levels of the university.

That is all: no further information about what these unspecified 'concerns' from 'parents' entailed, except a vague suggestion that my lectures at schools lacked unspecified 'balance' and that those 'concerns' had perhaps reached the highest echelon of the university. The chair did not request a copy of my school presentation or question me in any way about my Speakers Bureau participation. Polar bears were not specifically mentioned and I was not presented with any avenue of appeal. I suspect the details of this decision were not revealed to the rest of the department, although undoubtedly some colleagues and staff would have

been made aware that the administration was not prepared to defend my academic freedom on this issue.

Thus began an academic hanging without a trial, conducted behind closed doors. I should add as background that, although I had been speaking to adult audiences about polar bears since September 2009 (in a popular lecture called 'Polar Bears: Outstanding Survivors of Climate Change'), I did not add a presentation geared specifically towards elementary school children until September 2016. I called it 'Polar Bears: Facts and Myths', and I did so because *teachers kept asking me* to speak about polar bears to their classes. As far as I am aware, Mandy Crocker, who managed the Speakers Bureau, had no misgivings when I submitted the description of the presentation for elementary school audiences to her for approval in May 2016. Her actual words were: '*This will be a popular [topic] with the community for sure.*'

I had heard nothing from the Speakers Bureau or anyone else regarding complaints or concerns from parents or teachers of children I had spoken to in the 2016–17 school year.

The Department of Anthropology chair's refusal to allow me to participate in the Speakers Bureau meant I could no longer connect to *any* community members, even adults, about *anything*: not even my evolution research, of which the department had previously been so proud. I dared to tell children the truth – that polar bears are not currently on the verge of extinction – and for that I have been pilloried and drummed out of the university community.

The measures taken to have me removed from the Speakers Bureau are characteristic of a bureaucracy trying to cover an impropriety: the failure to inform me of complaints, the pretense that I was not being singled out for censure, and the carefully-worded correspondence. Moreover, the refusal of the female chair of my department to support me had 'pressured from above' written all over it.

I didn't know it then, but this was the beginning of the end of my academic career.

Stifling scientific criticism

It appears certain to me that the Anthropology Department bowed to pressure from the administration, who themselves bowed to pressure from outside the university community, in an attempt to stifle my legitimate criticisms in the field of polar bear conservation. This kind of bullying has been happening far too often at universities, even in Canada.

Recall that until my Heartland conference lecture was posted online in early April 2017, both the department and the university had been supportive of my work, work that was critical of accepted authorities on the topics of evolutionary theory *and* polar bear conservation status. I had been a valued adjunct professor for 15 years: *someone* from outside the university applied the pressure that turned that support on a dime. When push came to shove, UVic threw me under the bus rather than stand up for my academic freedom.

An adjunct professor is the most vulnerable member of an academic community: how a university treats its adjuncts regarding issues of academic freedom and freedom of speech is a true reflection of how they value those principles. Clearly, these are not concepts UVic holds in high regard, especially for women.

The university administration poisoned the well of departmental support I might have garnered for my adjunct renewal in 2019 when they insisted (over the Speakers Bureau expulsion two years earlier) that the department deny me the academic freedom tenured faculty enjoy.

I am sure there will be some people clapping their hands in glee at this development, like sly children do when they think they have gotten their own way through manipulation. However, the loss of adjunct status will primarily prevent me from continuing scientific research on speciation and domestication mechanisms in evolution: without an academic affiliation I will be unable to secure research funds or academic collaborations.

My scientific credentials are not diminished: they stand on my career accomplishments. What a lack of academic affiliation has not done – and cannot do – is stop me from investigating and commenting on the failures and inconsistencies of science that I see in published polar bear research papers and reflected in public statements made by polar bear specialists. I am still a *former* adjunct professor and I will not be silenced.

At the moment, I am en-route to Oslo to talk about the polar bear catastrophe that never happened – and then it's on to London, Paris, Amsterdam, and Munich for more of the same. If you'd like to help defray incidental but unavoidable travel costs not covered by the organizers over my five weeks in Europe, that would be very much appreciated. Details of how to do so can be found at <https://polarbearscience.com>.

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Punished for politically incorrect facts about polar bears

Donna Laframboise

A world-renowned expert in animal bone identification has lost her position at the University of Victoria (UVic), she believes for telling school kids politically incorrect facts about polar bears.

Zoologist Dr Susan Crockford is routinely hired by biologists and archeologists in Canada and abroad to identify the remains of mammals, birds and fish. She has helped catalog museum collections, and assisted police with forensic analyses. But UVic students will no longer benefit from her expertise, and her ability to apply for research grants has come to a screeching halt. In May, the Anthropology Department withdrew her Adjunct Professor status, depriving her of a university affiliation.

Crockford describes her expulsion as 'an academic hanging without a trial, conducted behind closed doors.' After being renewed unanimously in 2016 for a three-year term, her adjunct status was not renewed the next time around.

Crockford is the author of a popular blog, polarbearscience.com, as well as five books about these animals. *Polar Bear Facts and Myths* has been translated into four languages. She says that, contrary to the claims of environmental activists, polar bears are currently thriving and are at no risk of extinction from climate change.

Informing the public of these plain facts now appears to be unacceptable to UVic. After 15 years, Crockford was advised in May that an internal Appointment Reappointment Promotion and Tenure (ARPT) committee had 'voted not to renew your Adjunct Status.' No reasons were provided. Having undergone hip surgery in the interim, Crockford is only now going public.

When contacted by the *National Post* recently, UVic spokesman Paul Marck refused to say how many people were on the ARPT committee, how many voted against Crockford, or how many were zoologists in a position to make an informed decision about her abilities.

The position of Adjunct Professor is unpaid. In exchange for mentoring students, sitting on thesis committees, and delivering occasional lectures, adjuncts gain official academic standing and full access to library research services. When asked what safeguards ensure that adjuncts can't be excommunicated merely for expressing unpopular ideas, spokesman Marck declined to respond, citing provincial privacy legislation. In his words, the university doesn't disclose 'information about internal processes. We must respect the privacy rights of all members of our campus community.'

In this case, the university is not protecting Crockford's right to privacy. Instead, it is using a privacy smokescreen to protect members of a committee who have decided to purge an adjunct professor without reason or explanation.

Absent any other plausible explanation, Crockford has concluded that she was removed in order to suppress views on polar bears and related climate change issues and prevent her from continuing to challenge the high-profile academics who claim polar bear populations are in crisis.

G. Cornelis van Kooten, a UVic professor of economics who also holds a Canada Research Chair in environmental studies, says he is 'appalled and distressed' by the Crockford removal. When, he asks, did 'universities turn against open debate? There's now a climate of fear on campus.'

Academia is a 'publish or perish' workplace, and Crockford is an accomplished scholar.

Last year, she was co-author of a paper published in *Science*, one of the world's most prestigious scientific journals. On any campus, the number of professors whose recent work appears in that journal is small. Once again citing privacy concerns, UVic spokesman Marck declined to tell the *National Post* how many other UVic professors have met this high standard.

Crockford says she isn't entirely surprised by her expulsion, given her previous ban from the UVic Speakers Bureau. For the better part of a decade, that entity had arranged for her to deliver unpaid lectures to elementary and high school students, as well as to adult community groups. One talk concerned the early origins of domestic dogs. The other was titled *Polar Bears: Outstanding Survivors of Climate Change*.

There is every indication she was a popular speaker. But in 2017, UVic Speakers Bureau co-ordinator Mandy Crocker advised her of a policy change. The chair of the Anthropology Department now needed to confirm that Crockford was 'able to represent the university' when discussing these topics.

Crockford's 2004 dissertation broke new ground with regard to the mechanisms by which wolves evolved into domestic dogs. UVic awarded her a PhD for that research. Yet 13 years later, Dr Ann Stahl, as Chair of the Anthropology Department, banned Crockford from telling members of the public about it as a representative of the school.

In April 2017, Stahl advised: 'I will not be endorsing your request to be included in the Speakers Bureau roster for 2017–2018.' Admitting that she couldn't prevent Crockford from speaking elsewhere as a private citizen, Stahl drew the line at her doing so 'as a representative of UVic.'

Stahl said she respected 'issues of academic freedom,' but Crockford's talks at schools had 'generated concern among parents regarding balance' and that this concern had 'been shared with various levels of the university.' Stahl did not respond to a request by the *National Post* for an interview.

That was the first time Crockford was made aware of any problems. Because no one from the Speakers Bureau or the Anthropology Department has ever advised her of any specific complaint, she was never given an opportunity to defend herself.

The Speakers Bureau draws its volunteers from UVic 'faculty, staff, graduate students and retirees.' Prospective speakers complete a form on its website, which says nothing about departmental approval. There is no suggestion that presentations must be balanced, and many appear to be overtly political.

For example, Social Studies associate professor Jason Price currently delivers a lecture titled *Education and the Revolution: Climate Change and the Curriculum of Life*, to students as young as kindergarten age. Patrick Makokoro, a UVic graduate student, offers a presentation to audiences as young as 10 about social justice.

Dwight Owens, an employee of Ocean Networks Canada, an entity affiliated with UVic, has no scientific training. His BA is in Chinese language and literature. His MA is in educational technology. Nevertheless, under the auspices of the UVic Speakers Bureau, he has been giving talks about ocean chemistry and climate change for years.

The *National Post* asked UVic spokesman Marck how many people have been forbidden from participating in the Speakers Bureau, and what mechanisms are in place to vet presentations about controversial topics. Marck refused to address either of these matters. Speakers Bureau co-ordinator Crocker also declined to be interviewed.

Current and former UVic faculty members contacted by the *National Post* aren't aware of any vetting process. Currently, therefore, there is no evidence that even inexperienced

graduate students need permission to 'represent the university.' That requirement appears to have been invented solely as a means of silencing the eminently qualified, highly experienced Crockford.

Because her polar bear message conflicts with activist rhetoric, and because activists apparently complained to administrators, her career as an academic researcher has come to an abrupt end.

Jeffrey Foss, a former chair of UVic's philosophy department, says Crockford has been punished for speaking her own mind about matters of fact, which means she has been denied academic freedom and free speech. 'I'm beginning to lose faith and hope in the university system,' he says.

During the time she delivered lectures to elementary school students, Crockford says she was continually 'astonished to learn that every single teacher believed that only a few hundred to a few thousand polar bears were left.' She feels duty bound as a scientist to speak up, to point out that the global population is officially estimated to be in the range of 22,000 to 31,000 and may be much higher. 'I talk to groups about the adaptive features of polar bears that allow them to survive changes in their Arctic habitat,' she says.

This week, Crockford will begin a five-country European speaking tour. Audiences in Oslo, London, Paris, Amsterdam and Munich will hear about her research, evaluate her arguments, and draw their own conclusions.

The University of Victoria needs to explain why it has allowed an internal committee to secretly purge and thereby punish an internationally-recognized researcher, for no known reason other than the fact that some unknown accusers do not agree with her views.

This article was previously published in the Financial Post on 16 October 2019.

About the Global Warming Policy Foundation

The Global Warming Policy Foundation is an all-party and non-party think tank and a registered educational charity which, while openminded on the contested science of global warming, is deeply concerned about the costs and other implications of many of the policies currently being advocated.

Our main focus is to analyse global warming policies and their economic and other implications. Our aim is to provide the most robust and reliable economic analysis and advice. Above all we seek to inform the media, politicians and the public, in a newsworthy way, on the subject in general and on the misinformation to which they are all too frequently being subjected at the present time.

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