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Topic: While Capitalism Thrives, the  
Tempest of the Climate  
Change shall know no Respite

Outline:

### 1- Introduction

**Thesis Statement:** The relentless pursuit of profit within the capitalist system has been a driving force behind economic growth and development. However, this pursuit, when coupled with unsustainable consumption practices, has not only contributed to the climate change but also poses a substantial challenge in the global efforts to combat its tempest, necessitating a re-evaluation of capitalism and the promotion of sustainable economic paradigm.

### 2- A Comprehensive Overview of Historical Nexus between Capitalism and Climate Change

#### 3- Capitalism: Fueling the Climate Crisis

A. Capitalism's profit-driven fossil fuel dependency

B. Capitalism's role in resource extraction



and deforestation

**C.** Consumerism's impact: Overproduction and carbon emission

**D.** Weak environmental regulations

**E.** Infinite growth on finite planet:  
~~to~~ sustainability dilemma

**F.** Greenwashing and false solutions

#### 4. The Capitalist Engine: Driving progress and Prosperity

**A.** Social Benefits: social mobility, choice, quality and consumer freedom

**B.** Economic gains: Jobs, growth, poverty reduction

**C.** Philanthropy and corporate social responsibility

**D.** Global Trade and entrepreneurship

#### 5- Balancing Profit and Planet: A Sustainable Eco-capitalism Agenda

**A.** Collaborative governance for climate resilience

**B.** Green finance initiatives and legal reforms

**C.** Carbon pricing mechanisms and public awareness,

#### 6. Conclusion ✓



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In an age defined by the unprecedented economic growth and technological advancement, the role of capitalism in shaping the world is undeniable. This economic system has been driving force behind progress, prosperity, and innovation, offering a platform for individual and societal advancement. However, there is a pressing concern that looms larger with each passing day - the undeniable connection between capitalism and climate change. According to the Intergovernmental panel on Climate Change (IPCC) special report on global warming, the global temperature rose by  $1.5^{\circ}\text{C}$  in 2023 due to the greenhouse gas emissions caused by the economic and consumption practices associated with capitalism. Climate change poses hazardous implications and on the human health and the entire ecosystem. Examination of the historical relationship between capitalism and climate change, raises



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a critical question whether both can coexist or the economic paradigm must change to protect the planet. The relentless pursuit of profit within the capitalist system has been a driving force behind economic growth and development. However, this pursuit, when coupled with unsustainable practices, has not only contributed to the climate change but also poses a substantial challenge in the global efforts to combat its tempest, necessitating a re-evaluation of capitalism and the promotion of sustainable economic paradigms. As an American environmental analyst Lester Brown states that:

"We have not inherited this Earth from our parents, we have borrowed it from our children."

The historical nexus between capitalism, an economic system based on private ownership of the means of production and their operation for profit, and climate change is characterized by a complex



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interplay of economic interests, resource exploitation, and environmental consequences. Capitalism, with its profit-driven ethos, has historically prioritized short-term economic growth and resource extraction over long term environmental sustainability.

During the industrial revolution, in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, the rapid expansion of capitalism was closely tied with the extensive use of coal, which fueled the growth of factories, transportation, and urbanization. This initial phase of capitalist development drove the economic prosperity, but it also resulted into the dramatic increase in carbon emissions, contributing to the early stage of anthropogenic climate change. Over the subsequent centuries, capitalism continued to prioritize the extraction and consumption of fossil fuels, leading to the ongoing release of green house gases into the atmosphere. Significant policy choices, such as the promotion of suburban living and



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the deregulation of ~~energy~~<sup>energy</sup> sectors, have cemented capitalism's role in climate change. The fossil fuel industry, driven by profit motives, has influenced political and economic decisions, delayed climate action and hindering the transition to renewable energy sources.

Capitalism's profit-driven orientation has fostered a significant reliance on fossil fuels, including coal, oil and natural gas, for energy production, prioritizing profitability over sustainable alternatives despite their availability. This dependence is perpetuated by industries and corporations that often prioritize short-term financial gains over long-term environmental sustainability. For example, major oil companies, such as ExxonMobil and Shell, continue to explore and extract oil reserves in ecologically sensitive areas like the Arctic, driven by the potential for



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sustainable profits. This practice not only poses environmental risks but also contributes to the carbon emissions, a primary driver of global warming. Similarly, the coal industry has maintained its presence in some regions due to its profitability, even though coal is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, slowing the transition to cleaner energy sources. This heavy reliance on fossil fuels resulted in the release of significant amounts of carbon dioxide and other green house gases, exacerbating the climate crisis and underscoring the need for a shift toward more sustainable and renewable source to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Moreover, capitalism's pursuit of profit has frequently propelled resources extraction industries, like logging, mining,



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and agriculture, to prioritize financial gains without sufficient regard for the environmental consequences, often leading to deforestation. The case of the palm oil industry in southeast Asia vividly illustrates this phenomenon, where extensive forest areas especially in countries like Indonesia and Malaysia, have been cleared palm oil plantations, contributing to the deforestation, habitat loss for critically endangered species like orangutans and the release of the significant carbon emissions. Additionally, the diamond mining industrial activities in the regions like Africa have fueled deforestation as miners clear land for diamond extraction, disregarding the environmental impacts, including soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, and disruption of local ecosystems. These cases underscore how capitalism's profit driven ethos can sometimes disregard sustainable resources management and the imperative of



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preserving natural ecosystems, leading to detrimental environmental outcomes.

Furthermore, consumerism is an economic theory that argues the interests of consumers should be the most important factor in the business transaction. It is deeply rooted in capitalist economies, drives relentless production, resulting in overconsumption and environmental consequences. The fast fashion industry, highlighted in the Ellen MacArthur foundation "A new Textile Economy" significantly contributes to global carbon emissions, with a single cotton T-shirt's production equating to driving a car for 35 miles. Moreover the rapid turnover of electronic devices generates a massive electronic waste problem, with 5.6 million metric tons produced in 2019, contributing to carbon emission through improper disposal. Planned obsolescence practices, such as non-replaceable smartphones batteries, foster a throwaway culture resulting in overproduction and unwarranted emissions.



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Food waste, driven by consumers habits leads to the squandering of one-third of all the food produced, generating emissions as rotting food produces methane, a potent green house gas. These emphasizes the severe environmental consequence of consumerism in capitalist systems, underscoring the need for more sustainable production and consumption practices.

Additionally, in certain capitalist systems, the pursuit of economic growth and business attraction has led to lax environmental regulations. For instance, in the United States, policies like the rollback of emissions standards for coal-fired power plants and relaxed vehicle fuel efficiency standards have considerably weakened environmental regulations. Repealing the clean power plant and the safer affordable fuel-efficient vehicles rule has resulted in less stringent requirements for reducing green house gases emission from power plants and vehicles. Similarly, countries such as Indonesia and Brazil struggle with weak



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enforcement of anti-deforestation laws, allowing industries like palm oil and agriculture to engage in extensive forest clearance. In Indonesia alone, about **48** football fields of forest are lost every minute due to these lax regulations. Moreover, some nations like Brazil have reduced the budgets and authority of environmental oversight agencies, limiting their capacity to reinforce regulations effectively. This information emphasizes how certain capitalist systems enable corporate activities that harm the environment, underscoring the urgent need to balance economic development and environmental protection within capitalist framework.

In addition, Capitalism's fundamental emphasis on continuous economic growth often conflicts with the finite nature of Earth's resources. Within this framework, the pursuit of short-term profit frequently takes precedence, driving the depletion of natural resources and environmental degradation.



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This relentless quest for growth has profound and lasting consequences for climate stability. A compelling case study that highlights this issue is the exploitation of Canada's **Tar sands in Alberta**, where the pursuit of short term profit from this resource intensive and environmentally damaging process has led to significant pollution, forest disruption, and substantial carbon emission, exemplifying the conflict between capitalism's growth imperative and environmental sustainability. This tension between growth and a finite planet calls for eco-friendly economic models, highlighting the deep connection to capitalism.

Moreover, Greenwashing, a deceptive practice employed by certain corporations and industries involves marketing themselves as environmentally responsible without making substantial changes to their practices. This can mislead consumers and policymakers, diverting attention and resources from effective climate solutions. A notable



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example of green washing in the 2015 Volkswagen diesel emissions scandal, where the company falsely marketed its diesel vehicles as eco-friendly, ~~ult~~ ultimately, damaging its reputation. Such deceptive practices, within the context of capitalism, hinder genuine climate efforts and highlight the importance of transparency and accountability in addressing the climate crisis within the capitalist system. False solutions, such as unproven technology and carbon offsets, can hinder collective progress in combating climate change within capitalism. Responsible and eco-conscious capitalism is essential for a sustainable and equitable future.

Before addressing the solutions of plethora of issues associated with capitalism, it is essential to recognize and appreciate the numerous benefits it brings to the modern world.

Capitalism brings significant social



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benefits. It serves as a powerful driver of social mobility, enabling individuals to rise above their socio-economic backgrounds through hardwork and innovation, as seen in the American Dreams. Entrepreneurs like Elon Musk, who co-founded pay-pal, Tesla and space-x exemplify this path to success. Additionally, capitalism fosters choice and quality by stimulating competition, leading to innovation and a wide range of quality and lower prices. The **Smartphone** industry is a prime example, with continuous innovation and a wide range of consumer choices driven by capitalist competition. Moreover, capitalism empowers consumer freedom, allowing individuals to make choices based on their preference, while businesses adapt to meet their needs. **Amazon**, for instance, offer a personalized shopping experience. These aspects of capitalism, supported by real-world examples, showcase its positive impacts on society.



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Moreover, Capitalism yields significant economic benefits. It spurs job creation on a larger scale, with tech giant Apple employing over 160,000 directly and creating millions more jobs in its supply chain and app development ecosystem. Capitalist systems consistently demonstrate strong economic growth, as seen in post-world war II western Europe. Germany and France embracing capitalism for economic recovery, experienced rapid growth that raised living standards. Capitalism's ~~for economic recovery~~ ~~experienced rapid growth~~ impact on poverty reduction is evident with data from world bank showing substantial declines in extreme poverty. Developing countries like China and India, adopting market-oriented policies, have achieved remarkable reductions in poverty. These economic advantages of capitalism are supported example and facts, showcasing its pivotal role in driving progress and prosperity.



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In addition, Philanthropy and corporate social Responsibility (CSR) are integral to capitalism, demonstrating how businesses and individuals contribute to society's well being. Bill and Melinda Gates foundation, co-founded by microsoft's Bill Gates, ~~is~~ is its prime example. Leveraging wealth from capitalism, the foundation addresses global challenges in health, education, poverty alleviation, and technology access. Their efforts significantly reduced diseases like Polio and HIV/AIDS, improve education, enhance agriculture and expand technology access. This positive aspect of capitalism gives a hope that economic success and social impact can co-exist.

Besides philanthropy and CSR, the global trade and economic interdependence, <sup>also</sup> facilitated by capitalism, promotes the international co-operation and peaceful relations. The European Union exemplifies this, uniting historically rivals through capitalist principles to create a single



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market that drives growth and stability. Capitalism encourages enter entrepreneurship and wealth generation by incentivizing innovations and risk taking. Silicon Valley is a hub of enter entrepreneurship, where companies like Google, Facebook, and Amazon started with visionary enter entrepreneurship taking calculated risks. Google's founder began in a garage, Mark Zuckerberg in a college dorm, and Jeff Bezos launched an online bookstore that became an e-commerce giant. These illustrate, how capitalism fosters wealth creation through innovative ideas and entrepreneurial endeavours.

Before drawing conclusion on the entirety of debate, it is of utmost importance to thoroughly examine a range of sustainable solutions in addressing the complex relationship between capitalism and environmental concerns.



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Collaborative governance for climate resilience is central to eco-capitalism, uniting governments, businesses and civil society to promote sustainable economic growth while addressing environmental impacts. The Paris Agreement, 2015, with 196 countries establishes emission reduction targets, encourages renewable energy adoption, and enhance the climate adaptation and mitigation. But the need is to only implement all these agreements. The European Union's trading system (EUETS) is also a successful model. Embrace emission trading, carbon pricing and sectoral caps to motivate industries to reduce emissions and invest in clean technology. By coordinating regulatory, market-based, and technological measures, world could tackle environmental challenges on both global and regional levels, fostering sustainable growth, alongside environmental responsibility.

Similarly, to advance the environmental



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sustainability, consider implementing green finance initiatives and legal reforms. Take inspiration from the Green Bond market, attracting investors by supporting eco-friendly projects like renewable energy and energy efficient buildings. Take ~~the~~ inspiration from the California's environmental policies and legal reforms, which have propelled the growth of clean energy industry and positioned the state as leader in renewable energy adoption. These measures illustrate the potential of aligning financial and regulatory strategies to foster sustainability and discourage environmentally harmful practices.

Additionally, consider the importance of carbon pricing mechanisms, like the **British Columbia Carbon Tax**, in motivating the individuals and businesses to reduce their carbon



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foot-print. Alongside these mechanisms, prioritize public awareness campaigns to educate and inspire behavioural change. Organizations like the "We Mean Business" coalition can guide businesses towards science based emission reduction target and sustainable practices. Implement clear and transparent carbon pricing system such as emissions trading and carbon taxation to provide economic incentives for emission reduction. Production of programs based on public awareness initiative would be very helpful in making capitalism a sustainable practice. These combined efforts create a powerful synergy of policy and public engagement, effectively addressing climate change and promoting sustainable eco-capitalism through informed participation, emission reduction and a transition to greener economy.

In conclusion, the symbiotic relationship between capitalism and climate



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is undeniable. While capitalism has driven economic progress and prosperity, it has also fueled the tempest of climate change through its profit driven practices and unsustainable consumption patterns.

However, as the world stands at the crossroads of environmental crisis, there is a hope for a more sustainable future. Capitalism must be re-evaluated to create a balance between profit and planet. The path to a more sustainable and equitable world lies in ability to reshape capitalism into an eco-conscious force that safeguards planet for future generations. As the renowned environmentalist and author, Bill McKibben, once said;

“Economic systems are man-made and can be redesigned to better serve human needs and the need of the natural world.”