

ANTH 1553: Energy and Power

Brown University, Fall 2019

Professor Myles Lennon

Office hours: Thursdays 2 - 4:45, 85 Waterman (IBES), Room 312, [Sign up here](#)

Course Description

In the face of fossil fueled climate change, intractable violence over oil, the proliferation of natural gas pipelines, and plans to open up drilling on federal lands, the urgency to transform our energy infrastructure has never been greater. We can detect this urgency not simply in the growing demand for scarce, sustainable, or more efficient energy resources but also through political, geographical, raced, classed, and gendered divisions and conflicts. As contentious efforts to transition away from fossil fuels suggest, energy is a socially charged medium through which power operates in contemporary societies. Building on this idea, this course will deepen students' understanding of social power by focusing on the physical transformation of industrialized energy systems.

We will explore how debates over the future of energy are rooted not only in questions of material scarcity, efficiency, and environmental sustainability, but also in socioeconomic inequality, geopolitical instability, structural racism, indigenous sovereignty, and other social matters. This course will deepen students' understanding of the intersecting physical and political dynamics of power, and encourage students to think more comprehensively about the material and biophysical dimensions of political conflict.

“Energy and Power” will be broken up into four sections. The first section will offer conceptual frameworks for thinking about energy not only as a material force or physical transformation, but also as a medium of social power. We will then use these conceptual frameworks for making sense of energy resources that we will explore in the subsequent sections of this course, including slavery, coal, pipelines and hydroelectric dams, oil, fracked gas, power plants, the electricity grid, wind, and solar.

Texts

These books have been ordered through the Brown Bookstore. They are also on reserve at the Rockefeller Library and can be ordered through Borrow Direct.

- Huber, Mathew T. 2013. *Lifeblood: Oil, Freedom, and the Forces of Capital*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Powell, Dana. 2017. *Landscapes of Power: Politics of Energy in the Navajo Nation*. Duke University Press.

Please note that I expect you to have a copy of the day's readings with you in class, whether in electronic or paper form, and I expect you to be able to refer to page numbers so that others can follow along.

Course Requirements and Grading

Participation (20%)

This is a seminar class with the expectation of prepared, active participation, so the first and most important assignment is to read and reflect on the readings and come to class prepared to talk about them. Ongoing, engaged class participation counts for 20% of your grade. I am happy to talk about your participation grade at any point in the semester. If you are exceedingly shy, see me early.

Mid-term Paper (20%)

Students will write a 6-7 page paper that draws from the course's second section. This take-home assignment will be distributed on 10/09 and due on 10/23.

Energy Journal (20%)

Beginning in Week 3, students will keep an "auto-ethnographic" journal that tracks their own daily engagements with energy. You are strongly encouraged to draw from the readings each week in preparing your journal entries. Journal entries can entail bulleted notes, a few paragraphs, drawings, photos, or anything else that helps you reflect on energy in your day-to-day life. Journals can take the form of a traditional book or any online or electronic medium. The goal of this exercise is to think critically about a powerful force in our lives that we often don't acknowledge or think much about in the course of our everyday existence. In considering the readings each week, ask yourself: how do systems of power enable my personal relationship with energy?

Journal entries will be graded at the mid-term and the end of term. More information and suggestions will be distributed in Week 2.

Final Paper (40%)

Students will write a 16-18 page final research paper related to the course themes. You are encouraged to begin conceptualizing and researching this paper early in the semester, and to attend office hours to discuss your paper ideas.

- A one page paper proposal and a working bibliography will be due on November 11. This will comprise 10% of your final paper grade.
- The remaining 90% of the paper grade will be determined by the paper itself, which is due on December 21 by 5pm.

Other Course Policies

Late papers: Please submit all work on time. Unexcused late papers will be marked down one grade step (e.g. B to B-) each day they are late, up to a maximum of two full grade levels (i.e. A to C).

Electronic Devices: If you use a laptop or other electronic device in class, you agree to have open only note taking and/or document viewing software; use of email, chat programs, web browsers, or any other software in class is grounds for dismissal in that day and lowering of your participation grade. *Freedom* or similar internet-blocking software can reduce temptation while you are engaged in classroom conversation.

Academic Dishonesty. Participation in this class assumes your familiarity and compliance with Brown's policies on plagiarism and appropriate classroom conduct. Both mid-term and final paper assignments will include specific instructions on whether, how, and when collaboration and consultation with others is permitted. Violations will be reported to the appropriate disciplinary body. If you have questions about citations, collaboration, or anything else, please don't hesitate to ask me or to make use of other Brown resources such as the Writing Center.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Introduction to the Course

09/09: No reading.

Section One: Theorizing Energy and Power

09/16: Defining Energy

Berry, Wendell. 1986. "Energy." *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*. San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books.

Illich, Ivan. 2009 [1983]. "The Social Construction of Energy." *New Geographies* 3: 11-23.

Hornborg, Alf. 2013. "The Fossil Interlude: Euro-American Power and the Return of the Physiocrats." *Cultures of Energy: Power, Practices, Technologies*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press Inc.

Judson, Olivia P. 2017. "The Energy Expansions of Evolution." *Nature Ecology and Evolution* 1: 1-9.

Gudeman, Stephen. 2012. "Vital Energy: The Current of Relations." *Social Analysis* 56(1): 57 – 73.

09/23: Energy and Political Power

Mitchell, Timothy. 2009. "Carbon Democracy," *Economy and Society* 3: 399-432.

Baker, Shalanda. 2019. "Anti-Resilience: A Roadmap for Transformational Justice within the Energy System," *Harvard Civil Rights- Civil Liberties Law Review (CR-CL)*, Vol. 54., 1 – 48.

Nader, Laura. 2010. "The Politics of Energy: Toward a Bottom-Up Approach" (originally from 1981) and "The Harder Path - Shifting Gears" (originally from 2004), *The Energy Reader*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Hartman, Saidiya. 2008. "Chapter 9: The Dark Days." *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*.

Boyer, Dominic. 2014. "Energopower: An Introduction," *Anthropological Quarterly* 87 (2): 309 – 333.

Fairchild, Denise, and Al Weinrub. 2018. Pages 1 - 13, *Energy Democracy: Advancing Equity in Clean Energy Solutions*.

Section Two: Toward an Intersectional Approach to Energy: Race, Gender, Colonialism

09/30: Slavery

Lennon, Myles. 2017. Excerpts from "Decolonizing Energy," *Energy Research & Social Science*.

Hughes, David McDermott. 2017. *Energy Without Conscience*. Durham: Duke University Press.

- Introduction; Chapter 1; Chapter 2

Nikiforuk, Andrew. 2014. *The Energy of Slaves: Oil and the New Servitude*. Vancouver: Greystone Books.

- Prologue, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2

Hayes, Chris. 2014. "The New Abolitionism," *The Nation*.

Geiger, Julianne. 2016. "Slavery at Sea: The Ugly Underbelly of Oil Shipping," *Oilprice.com*

Mirzoeff, Nicholas. 2018. "It's not the Anthropocene, it's the White Supremacy Scene. Or, the Geological Color Line" in *After Extinction*. Minnesota University Press.

10/07: Coal, I

Daggett, Cara. 2018. Petro-masculinity: Fossil Fuels and Authoritarian Desire. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 47(1) 25 –44

Smith, Jessica. 2010. Talk about Technology: Negotiating Gender Difference in Wyoming Coal Mines. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 35(4): 893-918.

Ahmad, Nesar and Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt. 2006. Engendering Mining Communities: Examining the Missing Gender Concerns in Coal Mining Displacement and Rehabilitation in India, *Gender, Technology and Development*

Gugliotta, Angela. 2000. Class, Gender, and Coal Smoke: Gender Ideology and Environmental Injustice in Pittsburgh, 1868-1914. *Environmental History* 5(2): 165–193.

Penfold, Steven. 1994. "'Have You No Manhood In You?": Gender and Class in the Cape Breton Coal Towns, 1920-1926.' *Acadiensis* 23(2): 21-44.

10/14: Indigenous People's Day—No Class but read the following:

LaDuke, Winona. *All our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life*

- *Introduction, Chapters 3 - 5*

Listen to: An Interview with Dr. Kyle Whyte:

<https://www.senseandsustainability.net/2018/06/12/an-interview-with-dr-kyle-whyte/> (Links to an external site.)

Begin to read *Landscapes of Power* (it's long!)

10/21: Coal, II

Powell, Dana. 2017. *Landscapes of Power*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Mid-term assignment distributed today

Section Three: Materiality and Meaning

10/28: Oil

Huber, Mathew T. 2013. *Lifeblood: Oil, Freedom, and the Forces of Capital*. University of Minnesota Press.

- *Energy journals due today*

11/04: The Electricity Grid and Grid-like Entanglements

Bennett, Jane. 2010. Selections from *Vibrant Matter*. Durham: Duke University Press.

- Pages viii - x, 21 - 38

Mitchell, Timothy. 2002. Chapter 1. *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Özden-Schilling, Canay. 2015. "Economy Electric." *Cultural Anthropology* 30 (4): 578 – 588.

Mason, A., Stoilkova, M. 2012 "Corporeality of Consultant Expertise in Arctic Natural Gas Development." *Journal of Northern Studies* 6(2): 83-96.

- *11/07: Mid-term assignments due on canvas*

Section Four: Energy Justice

11/11: Gas

*****In-Class Field Trip to the Brown Central Heating Plant*****

Kinchy, Abby. 2017. "Citizen Science and Democracy: Participatory Water Monitoring in the Marcellus Shale Fracking Boom," *Science as Culture*, 26:1, 88-110

Kuffner, Alex. 2018. "Regulators approve \$180-million natural-gas plant in Providence," *Providence Journal*. <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20181018/regulators-approve-180-million-natural-gas-plant-in-providence> (Links to an external site.)

"The Gas Busters"

https://pizzatoastman.wixsite.com/gasmoney?fbclid=IwAR3y9lgpvk0OZK2iSW5NY60W3XY7duBqV-riPUp6giebZqU9iv40P_6XK0U (Links to an external site.)

Gas Busters' Facebook Post:

<https://www.facebook.com/GasbustersRI/photos/a.320987235432756/334705057394307/?type=3&theater> (Links to an external site.)

Tamburro, Cecelia. 2018. "No LNG in PVD: Utility justice in South Providence and Washington Park," *The College Hill Independent*. <https://www.theindy.org/1312> (Links to an external site.)

One-page proposal + working bibliography for final papers due today.

11/18: Wind

Burke, Matthew and Jennie Stephens. 2018. "Political power and renewable energy futures: A critical review." *Energy Research and Social Science*.

****SKIM THE TEXT ABOVE, READ THE TEXTS BELOW****

Howe, Cymene. 2014. "Anthropocenic Ecoauthority: The Winds of Oaxaca." *Anthropological Quarterly*, 87(2)

Baker, Shalanda. 2015. "Project Finance and Sustainable Development in the Global South" *International Law: Perspectives from the Global South*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Strauss, Sarah and Devon Reeser. 2013. "Siting, Scale, and Social Capital: Wind Energy Development in Wyoming" in Cultures of Energy.

Ottinger, Gwen. 2013. "The Winds of Change: Environmental Justice in Energy Transitions." Science as Culture 22 (2): 222-229.

DSA EcoSocialists "Decarbonize, Decommodify, Democratize: Lessons Learned From Providence DSA's #NationalizeGrid Campaign (Links to an external site.)"

11/25: Solar

Mulvaney, Dustin. 2019. Chapter One. *Solar Power*.

Rignal, Karen. 2016. Solar power, state power, and the politics of energy transition in pre-Saharan Morocco. *Environment and Planning*, 48(3) 540–557.

Lennon, Myles. Forthcoming. "Postcarbon Amnesia," *Science, Technology, & Human Values*.

Cross, Jamie. 2018. "The afterlives of solar power: Waste and repair off the grid in Kenya," *Energy Research and Social Science* 44: 100 - 109.

Schoolman, Anya and Ben Delman. 2018. "Building Power Through Community-Based Project Development." *Energy Democracy: Advancing Equity in Clean Energy Solutions*.

12/2: Course Wrap-up and Conclusions

Student presentations of energy journals