

# ENERGY & U.S. CAPITALISM

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AMS 370  
Spring 2019  
Unique #: 31157  
Burdine 436A  
9:30am – 11:00am T/Th

**Professor:** Betsy A. Beasley  
BUR 402  
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**Office Hours:** Tuesdays & Thursdays,  
3:30-5:00pm  
or by appointment

Does economic growth depend on production of cheap energy? Are the interests of the environment necessarily contrary to the interests of making money? Do jobs in the energy industry sustain communities or destroy workers' bodies? These are the questions at the heart of much contemporary discussion about climate change in the United States and beyond. From promoting "green jobs" to debating "clean energy," Americans are constantly grappling with the relationship between energy and the economy.

This course explores the multiple intersections between the history of energy and the history of capitalism in the twentieth century, with a particular focus on the period since 1945. Using secondary texts as well as primary documents, film, photographs, and fiction, this course will interrogate the relationship between energy – oil, coal, natural gas, solar and wind energy – and the American economy. We will focus on four primary questions: How has the production of energy shaped American economic growth? How have energy companies shaped social and cultural life at home and abroad? How do workers in the energy industry understand the costs and benefits of their jobs? And how have American consumers thought about their consumption of energy? Throughout, we will pay careful attention to how race, gender, and sexuality have intersected with the politics and the culture of energy.

## Required Materials

- Andrew Needham, *Power Lines: Phoenix and the Making of the Modern Southwest*
  - On reserve at PCL. Available as an electronic resource from UT's library. Available for purchase online (\$16 on Amazon, \$15 on Kindle) or at the UT Co-Op.
- Jennifer Haigh, *Heat & Light*
  - On reserve at PCL. Available for purchase online (\$8 on Amazon, \$8 on Kindle) or at the UT Co-Op.
- Course Packet
  - Available for purchase at **Document Solutions at the Texas Union.**

### **Course Format**

This is a discussion seminar, and we will spend most of our time discussing the assigned readings. Occasionally, I will give brief lectures to provide a historical overview and place the readings into context. However, the emphasis in each class session will be on discussion of both the assigned reading and primary materials that we will examine together in class. Because of this format, it is essential that you complete all of the assigned reading each week. If you have concerns about keeping up with the reading, please get in touch with me immediately.

The aim of this course is help you to think *historically* and *analytically*. We will work to figure out what we are able to know about the past; which sources can help us to get at that knowledge; and what the limits and silences of various types of sources might be. At the same time, we will consider how the authors we read construct arguments, and we will critically evaluate the persuasiveness of these arguments. Ultimately, you will be working out the tensions inherent in thinking through how the past can—and should—matter in the present.

### **Learning Objectives**

At the end of this course, students will:

1. have a deeper knowledge of the history of energy production, consumption, marketing, and finance, and how energy markets have influenced and been influenced by broader social and cultural forces.
2. be able to understand and articulate the ideas and perspectives of historical actors.
3. have a greater understanding of how historians construct arguments based on historical research.
4. be able to evaluate primary source evidence in relation to secondary sources.
5. be able to construct an original argument from an evaluation of primary source evidence.

### **Flags**

This course carries the **Independent Inquiry flag**. Independent Inquiry courses are designed to engage you in the process of inquiry over the course of a semester, providing you with the opportunity for independent investigation of a question, problem, or project related to your major. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from the independent investigation and presentation of your own work.

This course also carries the **Writing Flag**. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

### **Attendance and Participation**

You are expected to attend every class and to come prepared. Class sessions will primarily involve discussion of the assigned texts, and if you are absent or unprepared, you will not be participating fully in the course and it will adversely affect your grade. You are expected to be an active participant in the class, which means meaningfully contributing to classroom discussions. If you have concerns about classroom participation, please come discuss it with me – we may be able to make modified arrangements if speaking up in class is challenging for you.

You must bring the readings with you to class each day (book or course packet).

If you are going to be absent, you must notify me by email, in advance if possible. If you need to miss class for medical or religious reasons, your absence will be excused as long as you notify me. By UT-Austin policy, you must notify me of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

If you have three unexcused absences, your grade will be lowered by a half of a letter grade for each subsequent absence. Please note that excessive tardiness will also affect your grade.

Laptops may be used for notetaking only. Please do not have your cell phone out during class. (If you are expecting an emergency call or otherwise need to have your phone available during class, please let me know.)

Students adding the course after the first meeting must make up missed assignments. Please contact me immediately in person or via email to make up missed work.

I prefer to communicate by email. I will be communicating to the class via email throughout the semester, and I will be using **only** your UT email address unless you instruct me otherwise. Please make sure that your UT email address is working and that your mailbox has space. You must check your UT email daily. You are responsible for all communications sent via email.

### **Assignments and Grading**

• Attendance and Class Participation	15%	<b>ongoing</b>
• Primary Source Analysis (3-5 pages)	20%	<b>DUE 2/28 11:59p</b>
• Synthesis Essay (5-7 pages)	20%	<b>DUE 3/14 11:59p</b>
• Lead Group Discussion	5%	<b>ongoing</b>
• Final Research Project	40%	
○ Research Proposal (5%)		<b>DUE 4/2 11:59p</b>
○ Annotated Bibliography (10%)		<b>DUE 4/16 11:59p</b>
○ Research Paper (10-12 pages) (20%)		<b>DUE 5/15 NOON</b>
○ Class Presentation (5%)		<b>5/7-5/9</b>

Your attendance and class participation grade depends on your coming to class prepared and participating in discussion. We may also do occasional in-class journaling and reading response exercises that will count toward this part of your grade.

We will discuss your two short papers (the primary source analysis and the synthesis essay) in class. Your final research paper will be a 10-12 paper on a topic relevant to the history of energy and capitalism. We will discuss how to choose a topic more thoroughly in class. You must use at least two primary sources, two secondary sources (not from the course syllabus), and two in-class readings to write this paper. You will present your research to the class during the last week of the term.

All papers should be submitted electronically via the class Canvas site.

You need to secure an excuse from me **at least 3 days before the due date** if you have a *legitimate* reason to turn in work late. Unexcused late work will lose 1/3 of a letter grade per day late and will receive a failing grade after 5 days. No extensions will be granted for more than 3 days beyond the original due date except in the most extreme circumstances.

**Lateness policy for the Final Research Paper:** Your research paper is due on **May 15 by NOON**. Unless you have prior authorization from me to turn it in late, for each hour that your exam is late, you will be deducted 1/2 a grade.

### Grading Guidelines

We will discuss writing expectations clearly and thoroughly in class before the first assignment is due. In general, you should strive for the following in your essays:

- Your essay should not simply summarize the material but **analyze** it.
- You should have a clear and debatable **argument**.
- You should clearly use **evidence** from your sources.
- You should demonstrate **critical thinking** in your writing.
- Your communication should be **clear and grammatically correct**.
- You must follow Chicago style for **citations** of your sources.

#### Grade Scale:

A 4.0 (93-100)	C 2.0 (73-76)
A- 3.67 (90-92)	C- 1.67 (70-72)
B+ 3.33 (87-89)	D+ 1.33 (67-69)
B 3.0 (83-86)	D 1.0 (60-63)
B- 2.67 (80-82)	D- 0.67 (60-62)
C+ 2.33 (77-79)	F 0.00 (59 and below)

**A:** Exceptional; shows mastery of the material and fresh, original insight.

**B:** Above average mastery of material; few grammatical mistakes; interesting argument.

**C:** Adequate comprehension of material; some grammatical errors.

**D:** Failure to adequately understand material; many grammatical errors.

**F:** Lacking basic understanding of course material or failure to fulfill assignment.

### University Resources and Policies

I strongly encourage you to use the Undergraduate Writing Center, FAC 211, 471-6222, <http://www.uwc.utexas.edu>. The Undergraduate Writing Center offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT undergraduate, by appointment or on a drop-in basis.

Students who are found guilty of academic dishonesty will fail the course and be reported to Student Judicial Services. Plagiarism occurs if you represent as your own work any material that was obtained from another source, regardless of how or where you acquired it. For examples of plagiarism, see [http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/scholdis\\_plagiarism.php](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/scholdis_plagiarism.php).

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

## Course Outline

**\*\*NOTE:** The page numbers below refer to the original text (book or journal). For the page numbers in your course packet on which you can find a particular reading, refer to the packet's table of contents. \*\*

### Week 1

- T 1/22: Welcome
- Th 1/24: How to Think about Energy, Part I
  - Reading:
    - 1. "Introduction" in Raj Patel and Jason W. Moore, *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things: A Guide to Capitalism, Nature, and the Future of the Planet*, 1-43
    - 2. Margaret Atwood, "It's Not Climate Change – It's Everything Change," in Imre Szeman & Dominic Boyer, eds., *Energy Humanities: An Anthology*, 139-150

### Week 2

- T 1/29: How to Think about Energy, Part II
  - Reading:
    - 3. Frederick Buell, "A Short History of Oil Cultures: Or, the Marriage of Catastrophe and Exuberance," *Journal of American Studies* 46 (2012), 2, 273-293
- Th 1/31: Race and Labor
  - Reading:
    - 4 & 5. "The Gay Head Harpooner" and "Race, Nationality, and Gender," in Nancy Shoemaker, *Native American Whalers and the World: Indigenous Encounters and the Contingency of Race*, 21-57

### Week 3

- T 2/5: Energy and Everyday Life
  - Reading:
    - 6 & 7. "Making Night Hideous" and "Incessance," in Peter C. Baldwin, *In the Watches of the Night: Life in the Nocturnal City, 1820-1930*, 1-13, 119-137
    - 8. Peter C. Baldwin, "In the Heart of Darkness: Blackouts and the Social Geography of Light in the Gaslight Era," *Journal of Urban History* 30:5 (July 2004), 749-768.
- Th 2/7: Energy and Ecology
  - Reading:
    - 9. Andrew Hurley, "Creating Ecological Wastelands: Oil Pollution in New York City, 1870-1900," *Journal of Urban History* 20:3, May 1994, 340-364

### Week 4

- T 2/12: Dangerous Labors
  - Reading:
    - 10, 11, & 12. "A Dream of Coal-Fired Benevolence," "Dying with Their Boots On," and "Shouting the Battle Cry of Union," in Thomas G. Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War*, 20-49, 122-156, 233-286
- Th 2/14: Energy and Democracy, Part I
  - Reading:
    - 13. "Machines of Democracy" in Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy*, 12-42

## Week 5

- T 2/19: Energy and Democracy, Part II
  - Reading:
    - 14. “Refueling Capitalism: Depression, Oil, and the Making of ‘the American Way of Life’” in Matthew Huber, *Lifblood: Oil, Freedom, and the Forces of Capital*, 27-60
- Th 2/21: **BRISCOE CENTER TOUR**
  - Reading:
    - None – work on your Primary Source Analysis!

## Week 6

- T 2/26: Energy and the State
  - Reading:
    - 15. Brent Cebul, “Creative Competition: Georgia Power, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and the Creation of a Rural Consumer Economy, 1934-1955,” *Journal of American History* 105:1 (June 2018), 45-70
- Th 2/28: Energy and World War II  
**PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS DUE**
  - Reading:
    - 16. “Launching Global Capitalism,” in Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire*, 89-107.

## Week 7

- T 3/5: Energy and Empire, Part I
  - Reading:
    - 17 & 18. “Part 1: The Nearest Faraway Place,” “Arabian Frontiers,” and “American Camp,” in Robert Vitalis, *America’s Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier*, 27-88
- Th 3/7: Energy and Empire, Part II
  - Reading:
    - 19. “The Wizards of Dhahran,” in Robert Vitalis, *America’s Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier*, 88-120

## Week 8

- T 3/12: Energy and Empire, Part II
  - Reading:
    - 20. Elisabetta Bini, “Building an Oil Empire: Labor and Gender Relations in American Company Towns in Libya, 1950s-1970s,” in Touraj Atabaki, Elisabetta Bini, and Kaveh Ehsani, eds., *Working for Oil: Comparative Social Histories of Labor in the Global Oil Industry*, 313-336
- Th 3/14: Energy and Empire, Part IV  
**SYNTHESIS ESSAY DUE**
  - Reading:
    - 21. David Ekbladh, “‘Mr. TVA’: Grass-Roots Development, David Lilienthal, and the Rise and Fall of the Tennessee Valley Authority as a Symbol for U.S. Overseas Development, 1933-1973,” *Diplomatic History* 26:3 (2002), 335-374

### Week 9

- Tu 3/19: SPRING BREAK
- Th 3/21: SPRING BREAK

### Week 10

- T 3/26: Race and Power, Part I
  - Reading:
    - Andrew Needham, *Power Lines*, 1-90
- Th 3/28: Race and Power, Part II
  - Reading:
    - Andrew Needham, *Power Lines*, 91-182

### Week 11

- T 4/2: Race and Power, Part III  
**FINAL PAPER PROPOSAL DUE**
  - Reading:
    - Andrew Needham, *Power Lines*, 185-257
- Th 4/4: **NO CLASS. INSTEAD, WATCH *HARLAN COUNTY, U.S.A.* (available for free on YouTube)**

### Week 12

- T 4/9: Oil Crisis I
  - Reading:
    - 22. “Renewing Imperial Capacity,” in Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire*, 163-193.
    - 23. “King Tut, Commodity Nationalism, and the Politics of Oil, 1973-1979,” in Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, & U.S. Interests in the Middle East Since 1945*, 125-154
- Th 4/11: Oil Crisis II
  - Reading:
    - 24. Robert Vitalis, “Oil: The Stuff of Mass Delusion,” *Jadaliyya*, March 9, 2016
    - 25. “Getting the House in Order: The Oil Embargo, Consumption, and the Limits of American Power,” in Natasha Zaretsky, *No Direction Home: The American Family and the Fear of National Decline, 1968-1980*, 71-104

### Week 13

- T 4/16: A New Era I  
**ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE**
  - Reading:
    - 26 & 27. “Part IV: Blaming Government,” in Meg Jacobs, *Panic at the Pump: The Energy Crisis and the Transformation of American Politics*, 235-307
- Th 4/18: A New Era II
  - Reading:
    - 28. “Power to the People? Deregulation and Environmental Justice Energy Activism,” in Julie Sze, *Noxious New York: The Racial Politics of Urban Health and Environmental Justice*, 143-176

#### **Week 14**

- T 4/23: A New Era III
  - Reading:
    - 29 & 30. “Enron Emerges” and “From Natural Gas to Knowledge” in Gavin Benke, *Risk and Ruin: Enron and the Culture of American Capitalism*, 12-41, 71-102
- Th 4/25: Our Fracking World I
  - Reading:
    - Jennifer Haigh, *Heat & Light*, first third

#### **Week 15**

- T 4/30: Our Fracking World II
  - Reading:
    - Jennifer Haigh, *Heat & Light*, second third
- Th 5/2: Our Fracking World III
  - Reading:
    - Jennifer Haigh, *Heat & Light*, final third

#### **Week 16**

- T 5/7: Research Presentations
- Th 5/9: Research Presentations

**FINAL PAPER DUE 5/15 NOON**