

International History and Politics

Academic year 2021-2022

The Fuel of Globalisation: Transnational Histories of the Petroleum Century

HPI138 - Autumn - 6 ECTS

Thursday 14h15 - 16h00

Course Description

This course analyzes how petroleum fueled the dynamics of globalization in the 20th century. Long an instrument that helped maintain colonial rule and build US imperialism, oil became a central stake in both hot and cold wars, and finally a factor of geopolitical change toward a multipolar world. As an accelerator of productivity, this energy resource was also at the basis of technological and cultural revolutions that accompanied the intensification of global exchanges, creating opportunities for mobility, workers' emancipation and mass consumption, while at the same time it drove market monopoly, conflicts, pollution, and new forms of material dependency. Multidimensional in its scope and methods, this course offers insights from cultural studies, STS and various social sciences to cover economic, political, environmental and sociocultural aspects of the petroleum century.

> PROFESSOR

[Antoine Acker](#)

[Office hours: Wednesday 10-12](#)

> ASSISTANT

Atiya Hussain

[Office hours: Monday 9-11](#)

Syllabus

Please note that this syllabus is provisional. Changes may be brought, and an updated version will be presented in the introductory session.

Requirements

- Participating actively and regularly in the seminar. If you are unable to attend the first session, contact us in advance or immediately after
- Reading carefully all mandatory texts selected for each session
- (Co-)conducting a seminar session in the semester
- Writing a final paper of about 4000 words + bibliography.
- Submitting two short semester works on the source(s) and literature of your paper research
- Responding to another student's research reports

Submission deadlines

- Nov 1: primary source work
- Dec 1: bibliographic work
- Dec 31: final paper

Deadlines are not negotiable and late essays will not be graded. Plan to submit your final paper one week ahead of the deadline to avoid last minute complications and enjoy your Christmas holiday! In counterpart for meeting the deadlines, I promise a quick feedback. You are very welcome to discuss your work in progress with me during my office hours.

Course outline and readings

Mandatory readings are in bold. Readings in italics are optional

1. Sept 23: Introduction: The ubiquity of oil
2. Sept 30: The transition to oil (with Nathalia Capellini)
 - **Introduction of Jones, Christopher F. *Routes of Power: Energy and Modern America*. Harvard University Press, 2014, 1-21.**
 - **"Oil and the Internal Combustion Engine"** in Crosby, Alfred W. *Children of the Sun: A History of Humanity's Unappeasable Appetite for Energy*. Norton, 2006, 85-100.
 - **"The 1950s and 60s: Post-war Boom"** in Pirani, Simon. *Burning up: A global history of fossil fuel consumption*. Pluto Press, 2018, 79-92.
 - **Ghosh, Amitav. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. University of Chicago Press, 2016, 96-108.**
 - **Watch: The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power, episode 1.**
 - *Jean-Baptiste Fressoz. "Pour une histoire désorientée de l'énergie". *Entropia*, 15 (2013): 173–87.*
3. Oct 7: The fuel of imperialism? Oil and Western domination
 - **"Oil, Empire, and Environment"** in Ross, Corey. *Ecology and Power in the Age of Empire: Europe and the Transformation of the Tropical World*. Oxford University Press, 2017, 199-230.
 - **Mitchell, Timothy. *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*. Verso Books, 2011, 94-108.**
 - **"The coup in Iran"** in Garavini, Giuliano. *The Rise and Fall of OPEC in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford University Press, 2019, 78-87.
 - *Introduction of Salas, Miguel Tinker. *The enduring legacy: Oil, culture, and society in Venezuela*. Duke University Press, 2009, 1-14.*
 - *"The Iran Tragedy and the 'Seven Sisters' Cartel" and "A Storm in the Desert: The first Gulf Crisis" in Maugeri, Leonardo. *The Age of Oil: The Mythology, History, and**

- Future of the World's Most Controversial Resource*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006, 63-75; 145-53.
- *Watch: The Prize*, episode 2
4. Oct 14: From hot to cold war(s): Fueling global conflicts
- Ediger, Volkan Ş., and John V. Bowlus. "A Farewell to King Coal: Geopolitics, Energy Security, and the Transition to Oil, 1898–1917." *The Historical Journal* 62.2 (2019): 427-449.
 - "War and the Reshaping of Europe's Oil Empire" in Ross, Corey. *Ecology and Power in the Age of Empire: Europe and the Transformation of the Tropical World*. Oxford University Press, 2017, 231-236.
 - *Watch The Prize*, episode 4.
 - David Painter, "Oil, Resources, and the Cold War, 1945–1962," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War: Volume 1: Origins*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad. Cambridge University Press, 2010, 486–507.
 - "Marching for Petroleum: Supply and Weapons" in Black, Brian C. *Crude Reality: Petroleum in World History*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2012, 125-147.
 - "Oil from WWI to WWII" and "Oil and WWII" in Singer, Clifford. *Energy and International War: From Babylon to Baghdad and Beyond*. World Scientific, 2008, 129-51.
5. Oct 21: Petrocultures: How oil shaped the modern way of life
- Brian C. Black, "Oil for Living: Petroleum and American Conspicuous Consumption". *Journal of American History* 99.1 (2012): 40–50.
 - "Introduction: Ultradeep, Petroleum Culture in the American Century" in LeMenager, Stephanie. *Living Oil: Petroleum Culture in the American Century*. Oxford University Press, 2014, 3-19.
 - "Introduction: On Petrocultures: Or, Why We Need to Understand Oil to Understand Everything Else" in Wilson, Sheena, Adam Carlson, and Imre Szeman (eds). *Petrocultures: Oil, Politics, Culture*. McGill-Queen's Press - MQUP, 2017, 1-12.
 - Devereux, Cecily, "Made for Mankind': Cars, Cosmetics, and the Petrocultural Feminine" in *ibid.*, 162-86.
 - "Introduction: Plasticville" in Freinkel, Susan. *Plastic: A Toxic Love Story*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011, 1-11.
6. Oct 28: The post-colonial reinvention of fossil fuels
- Acker, Antoine. "A Different Story in the Anthropocene: Brazil's Post-Colonial Quest for Oil (1930–1975)." *Past & Present* 249.1 (2020): 167-211.
 - Chatterjee, Elizabeth. "The Asian anthropocene: Electricity and fossil developmentalism." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 79.1 (2020): 3-24.
 - Apter, Andrew. "The Pan-African nation: Oil-money and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria." *Public Culture* 8.3 (1996): 441-466.
7. Nov 4: Debate session - Which narratives for the global history of oil?
- *Watch: The Prize*, episodes 3 and 5
 - Heinberg, Richard, Foreword to Auzanneau, Matthieu. *Oil, Power, and War: A Dark History*. Chelsea Green Publishing, 2018, ix-xiv.
 - "Introduction: Sovereign Landlords in the Twentieth Century" in Garavini, Giuliano. *The Rise and Fall of OPEC in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford University Press, 2019, 1-10.

- Natascha Otoyá, [Historical Black Lives Matter: What A Single Story Can Reveal About People & Landscapes – Environmental History Now. \(envhistnow.com\), September 8, 2020.](https://envhistnow.com)
 - Bring the primary source (or a reproduction thereof) you selected for your first assignment and be prepared to explain to the class which point of view this source opens on the global history of petroleum or energy in the widest sense. You will have uploaded your work on Moodle on the previous Sunday or before.
8. Nov 11: Reversals of fortune? Oil and the changing global order
- Painter, David S. "Oil and the American Century". *Journal of American History* 99.1 (2012): 24–39.
 - "Introduction: The Cash-Value of Decolonization" in Dietrich, Christopher R. W. *Oil Revolution: Anticolonial Elites, Sovereign Rights, and the Economic Culture of Decolonization*. Cambridge University Press, 2017, 1-20.
 - "McJihad" in Mitchell, Timothy. *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*. Verso Books, 2011, 200-30.
 - Garavini, Giuliano. "Completing decolonization: The 1973 'oil shock' and the struggle for economic rights." *The International History Review* 33.3 (2011): 473-487.
 - Graf, Rüdiger. "Making Use of the 'Oil Weapon': Western Industrialized Countries and Arab Petropolitics in 1973–1974". *Diplomatic History* 36.1 (2012): 185–208.
9. Nov 18: Debate session - From extraction to emissions: placing fossil fuels in history
- Peša, Iva, and Corey Ross. "Extractive industries and the environment: Production, pollution, and protest in global history" *The Extractive Industries and Society* (2021): 1-7 (in press).
 - Robinson Meyer: "The Weekly Planet: What Extremely Muscular Horses Teach Us About Climate Change." In: *The Atlantic*, 08.12.2020. <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2020/12/new-visual-history-american-energy/617329/>
 - Franta, B. "Early oil industry knowledge of CO₂ and global warming". *Nature Clim Change* 8 (2018): 1024–1025.
10. Nov 25: Petropolitics: From Carbon Democracies to Petrostates
- Introduction of Mitchell, Timothy. *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*. Verso Books, 2011, 1-11.
 - "The Petrostate" in Nikiforuk, Andrew. *The Energy of Slaves: Oil and the New Servitude*. Greystone Books, 2012, 178-99.
 - "Epilogue: The Crisis of the Petrostate" in Garavini, Giuliano. *The Rise and Fall of OPEC in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford University Press, 2019, 361-392.
 - Coronil, Fernando. *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela*, University Of Chicago Press, 1997, 387-394 .
 - Acker, Antoine. "What Could Carbofascism Look Like? A Historical Perspective on Reactionary Politics in the COVID-19 Pandemic." *Journal for the History of Environment and Society* 5 (2020): 135-148.
11. Dec 2: The ecology of oil: from local environmental change to global disasters
- Introduction of Santiago, Myrna I. *The Ecology of Oil: Environment, Labor, and the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1938*. Cambridge University Press, 2006, 1-11.
 - Morse, Kathryn. "There Will Be Birds: Images of Oil Disasters in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries". *Journal of American History* 99, 1 (2012): 124–34.

- Titus, Olusegun. "Musical narratives of oil exploration and sea degradation from the Niger Delta". In Bremner, L. (Ed.), *Monsoon Assemblages-Water Department of Architecture*. University of Westminster, 2018, 91–99.
 - McNeill, John R., and Peter Engelke. *The Great Acceleration: An Environmental History of the Anthropocene since 1945*. Harvard University Press, 2016, 2-27.
12. Dec 9: "Oil for all": struggles for energy justice (with Lukas Becker)
- "Revolution from Below: The Oil Unions, 1924-1938" in Santiago, Myrna I. *The Ecology of Oil: Environment, Labor, and the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1938*. Cambridge University Press, 2006, 291-341.
 - Osha, Sanya. "Birth of the Ogoni Protest Movement," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 41.1–2 (2006): 13–38.
 - Watch: Berlinger, Joe. *Crude* (2009). Documentary on the lawsuits opposing an indigenous community in Ecuador to Chevron-Texaco.
13. Dec 16: Debate session - The transition from oil: Can history help us free ourselves from fossil fuels?
- Mouhot, Jean-François. "Past Connections and Present Similarities in Slave Ownership and Fossil Fuel Usage". *Climatic Change* 105.2 (2011): 329–55.
 - Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "The Climate of History: Four Theses". *Critical Inquiry* 35.2 (2009): 197–222.
 - Acker, Antoine. "How the History of Brazil's Oil Industry Can Inform Our Understanding of the Anthropocene," *Past and Present* (blog), January 25, 2021, <https://pastandpresent.org.uk/how-the-history-of-brazils-oil-industry-can-inform-our-understanding-of-the-anthropocene/>
14. Dec 23: Final discussion: Was this class petromyopic?
- Jones, Christopher F. "Petromyopia: Oil and the Energy Humanities". *Humanities* 5.36 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.3390/h5020036>

Assignments

1. LEAD A SESSION

This is a student-led course. Every course participant is expected to lead a seminar session alone or as a team.

What session leaders do:

- Prepare the session's organization (see below)
- At the start of the session, make sure that all participants have understood the readings: are there concepts that need to be clarified? Are all contextual references and vocabulary in the texts clear?
- Ask questions that trigger methodological, analytical, and theoretical reflections on the readings and the session's topic (i.e. questions about the readings' arguments, structure, interrelation, and relation to the seminar topics)
- Help the class identify the main challenges raised by the session's topic, elaborate framing questions, and express hypotheses to answer them
- Make sure that the discussion remains within the scope of the seminar and does not go off topic
- Make sure that everyone has a chance to speak

They can also:

- Trigger or enlarge the discussion with some new course material (see below in *preparation*)
- Ensure a smooth transition between the sessions (i.e. by asking the class to shortly synthesize the previous session, reflect on the link between different sessions or on possible learning goals for the following week)

They should never:

- Lecture
- Do a presentation
- Answer the questions themselves right away: instead, they should always give the class a chance to elaborate an answer together
- Dismiss an oral intervention by a course participant: if they feel that an intervention is off topic, leaders can reorient the discussion with new questions or comments
- Assume that the professor or TA will lead the session for them

How to prepare for conducting a session:

- Read and annotate carefully the mandatory texts
- Do the optional readings as well
- Check all unclear concepts or unclear contextual references in the text
- Identify the readings' structure and their main thesis
- Identify the academic context of the readings (what is the topic of the book/special journal issue in which the text was published? What is the profile of the text's author? Does the text explicitly respond to some specific theory or argument produced by other authors?)
- Prepare a set of questions to trigger, orientate, and fuel the class discussion. Be prepared to improvise some new questions
- Do additional research on the topics, places or periods addressed in the readings and come to the class with some contextual knowledge
- Meet the professor, TA or someone in the professor's team to prepare the session at least 48h in advance of it. Make sure you will have time between this meeting and the class to improve your preparation if necessary. If you are unable to meet, give us a phone call or send us a short course plan within the same deadline.

You can also:

- Gather additional material to be shown or discussed in class (i.e. audiovisual, graph, map, citations...), in relation with the session's theme and/or readings (we may also provide you with some material)
- Prepare specific exercises for your class (brainstorming, dividing the class into groups, organizing a debate with assigned roles, analyzing a primary source, etc.)
- You are very much encouraged to complete the readings with primary sources

2. FIRST ASSIGNMENT – PRIMARY SOURCE WORK (10% of the grade)

Pick a primary source related to the course topic and introduce it to your fellow students: why did you choose this source? Why is it interesting? Who produced this source, when, where, how and why? What is the historical context behind it? What questions and problems does it raise? Either write 300 to 400 words or use a podcast (audio/video), or any other creative format you find suited. This is the first step towards your final paper (though you are free to change idea/topic later). You can also pick different (but related) sources (no more than 3 documents) and show how they make sense taken together.

Creative approaches are encouraged: for example, putting yourself in the perspective of a historical actor discovering the source(s) in the epoch in which it was produced, or in the shoes of the person who (co-)produced the source; creating a fictive interview of the source's author; writing or podcasting a reportage about the source, etc. More classic, scholarly approaches are perfectly fine too. You can

do the Primary Source Work alone or as a group of max. 3 course participants (you can also involve people from outside the class if you choose to do a creative Primary Source Work).

Ideally, you will use this source in your semester paper, so this first assignment will prepare you for your final work (if you decide to work in group, it is perfectly fine to work with the same sources in your respective term papers, as long as you produce a personal, original and unique interpretation of them: different semester papers can work with the same sources, but no semester paper should have several authors!).

Upload the Primary Source Work no later than Sunday, November 1 at 12PM so everybody can read/watch/hear all contributions before the zoom session. Each participant will be assigned a RESPONDENT, who will discuss the Semester Work result of his / her fellow student during the next session.

3. SECOND ASSIGNMENT – BIBLIOGRAPHIC WORK (15%)

Take the source(s) you used for the first Semester Work and add a bibliography of at least 5 works. Discuss this material in 400 to 500 words: what topic can you explore by putting this / these source(s) together with this bibliography? How does this secondary literature help understand the historical meaning of the source(s)? What is missing in this literature to have a full picture of the context, and the questions raised by, the source(s)? What further research agenda & questions do you want to explore?

Prepare this Bibliographic Work well in advance: you need to start reading for it as soon as you have submitted the first Semester Work (**Nov. 1**). This Bibliographic Work is another step towards your term paper. It is possible to pick a different source than in the Primary Source Work, in case you changed your mind and want to explore a new topic for the term paper. This second assignment is individual and should be submitted in written form.

Upload the Bibliographic Work no later than December 1 at 12PM. Each student will be assigned a RESPONDENT, who will comment on the submission of his / her fellow student.

4. FINAL PAPER (75%)

Your paper must address any aspect of the history of petroleum or the history of energy in general. I am available in my office hours to discuss your topic choice. The essay should have 4,000 words excluding abstract and bibliography. A +/- 10% variation from this length will be accepted, but please note that the ability to synthesize your research within a limited number of words is an essential research skill and an expectation for this class. The paper consists of an introduction (which announces the topic, research question, main hypothesis or argument, addresses previous historiography and defines the perimeter of the research), several points coherently articulated to form an argumentation, and a conclusion (which synthesizes your research results). The core text must be preceded by an abstract of ca. 1,000 signs as well as followed by a bibliography and, whenever possible, an annex containing a reproduction of at least one primary source. If your essay is based on sources that cannot be reproduced on paper, please discuss this with us.

Submit the paper **only by email** to the professor, with the TA in cc. A **Word** or Word-compatible version must be provided to enable us to check the number of words (**no PDF**).

Assessment

- The session lead is never graded, as I encourage to think of it as a contribution to the class rather than an individual performance. However, leading a carefully prepared session is a condition to pass this class.

- The essay counts for 75% of the grade while the first assignment (primary source work) counts for 10% and the second assignment (bibliographic work) for 15%.
- To receive a grade above 4, the essay needs to follow the formal requirements of the IHP Department as well as the citation and bibliographical guidelines provided for this class on Moodle. If you have any doubt about the formal requirements, please ask the TA.
You will be assessed according to the following criteria:
Excellent (6): Paper is original (i.e. it contributes to the studied field with a novel approach and / or new empirical findings and analytical conclusions), based on a clear argument, structure is logic, writing is fluid and engaging, analysis is highly convincing and nuanced. Key issues and questions of the course have been understood, mobilized, and successfully articulated with the broader knowledge of the author. It bases on primary and secondary sources whose analysis follows scientific methods and serve the essay's core argument.
Good (5): Essay is based on a clear argument, structure is logic, and writing meets standard academic requirements. Key issues and questions of the course have been understood and mobilized. It bases on (at least one) primary and on secondary sources whose analysis follows scientific methods and serve the essay's core argument.
Pass (4): Essay follows a coherent structure and conveys efforts of the author to elaborate clear arguments. Writing meets academic standards, key issues and questions of the course have been understood and mobilized. It bases on (at least one) primary and on secondary sources whose analysis follow scientific methods.
Anything under 4 means that the essay does not fully meet these requirements. Half-points reflect nuances between the different thresholds described above.

Resources:

Further resources will be added before and during the semester

1. Basic bibliography on the general/global history of oil and energy

Auzanneau, Matthieu. *Oil, Power, and War: A Dark History*. Chelsea Green Publishing, 2018 (or the original in French: *Or noir: la grande histoire du pétrole*. La Découverte, 2018).
 Black, Brian C. *Crude Reality: Petroleum in World History*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2012.
 Crosby, Alfred W. *Children of the Sun: A History of Humanity's Unappeasable Appetite for Energy*. Norton, 2006.
 Mafféi, Benoît. *Les guerres du pétrole. Une histoire alternative des relations internationales au XXe siècle*. Droz, 2021.
 Maugeri, Leonardo. *The Age of Oil: The Mythology, History, and Future of the World's Most Controversial Resource*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006.
 McNeill, J. R., und Peter Engelke. *The Great Acceleration: An Environmental History of the Anthropocene since 1945*. Harvard University Press, 2016.
 Pirani, Simon. *Burning up: A Global History of Fossil Fuel Consumption*. Pluto Press, 2018.
 Shah, Sonia. *Crude: The Story of Oil*. Seven Stories Press, 2004.
 Smil, Vaclav. *Oil: A Beginner's Guide*. Oneworld Publications, 2008.
 Smil, Vaclav. *Energy Transitions: History, Requirements, Prospects*. Praeger, 2010.
 Yergin, Daniel. *The prize. The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power*. New edition (you can use earlier editions). Simon&Schuster, 2009.

2. Primary sources

Several archives in Switzerland have files on energy history (indication thereof will be added in a later version of the syllabus).

You are encouraged to look online for digitalized sources. Many universities, media, public and private archives as well as governmental organizations and even some companies worldwide have digitalized collections. Here are just a few examples of some webpages to start with:

Global:

- <http://www.energyinsights.net/cgi-script/csarticles/articles/000014/001432.htm> (especially for statistics and reports)
- <https://ourworldindata.org> (for statistics on fossil fuels trade, consumption, and CO2 emissions)

USA:

- The American Oil & Gas Historical Society provides a list of archival resources (text & audiovisual):
<https://aoghs.org/media-resources/>
- Another resource guide:
https://www.cah.utexas.edu/collections/energy_natural_resources.php
- National Petroleum Council (with reports dating back to 1946):
<http://www.npc.org>

Latin America:

- The Brazilian National Archive has hundreds of digitalized sources on petroleum (in Portuguese): <http://sian.an.gov.br/sianex/consulta/login.asp>
See also Getulio Vargas Foundation (in Portuguese):
<http://www.fgv.br/cpd/doc/acervo/arquivo> and Petrobras: <http://memoria.petrobras.com.br>
- Mexico: <http://petroleo.colmex.mx/index.php/archivos/47>.
See also M. Santiago's very detailed note on sources: Santiago, Myrna I. *The Ecology of Oil: Environment, Labor, and the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1938*. Cambridge University Press, 2006, 365-7.

Europe:

- The Italian Energy company ENI has a structured archive including some valuable digital sources on petroleum: https://www.eni.com/enipedia/it_IT/storia/archiviostorico
- British Petroleum provides a few digitalized pictures:
<https://www.bp.com/en/global/corporate/who-we-are/our-history.html>

The Middle East:

- In US academic libraries:
http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/mideast.asp
http://ted.lib.harvard.edu/ted/deliver/advancedsearch?_collection=iohp
<https://cnu.libguides.com/psenergy/oilandgas>
- OPEC: http://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/index.htm

Africa:

- Pictures of Nigeria's oil landscapes in Kashi, Ed. *Curse of the Black Gold: 50 Years of Oil in the Niger Delta*. PowerHouse Books, 2008. Check also Ed Kashi's blog.

3. Movies

Anderson, Paul Thomas. *There Will Be Blood*. Drama, 2008.
Berg, Peter. *Deepwater Horizon*. Action, Drama, Thriller, 2016.
Cioffi, Sandy. *Sweet Crude*. Documentary, 2009.
Gaghan, Stephen. *Syriana*. Drama, Thriller, 2005.
Gelpke, Basil, und Raymond McCormack. *A Crude Awakening: The Oil Crash*. Documentary, War, 2006.
Kramer, Stanley. *Oklahoma Crude*. Comedy, Drama, Western, 1973.

Wilde, Cornel. Maracaibo. Adventure, Drama, Romance, 1958.

Yergin, Daniel. The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power, episodes 1-8, 1992.

4. Online resources

The Cultures of Energy Podcasts (also on iTunes):

<http://culturesofenergy.com/podcast/>

Check especially the episodes with Michael Watts, Timothy Mitchell, Amitav Gosh and Stephanie LeMenager

Oil Man: Chroniques du début de la fin du pétrole

Le Monde journalist Blog of Matthieu Auzanneau

<https://www.lemonde.fr/blog/petrole/>

H-Energy (H-NET Energy history section):

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-energy>