POLS 196-06: Climate and Extractive Politics
(American Politics / Comparative Politics)

Spring 2022

Course meetings:
Mondays 2:00-4:50pm

Instructor:
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Office Hours: Mondays 1:00pm-2:00pm, Tuesdays 9:00-10:00am

Course description

This senior seminar is an evaluation of the politics of oil and other fossil fuels in the context of the clean energy transition. Course topics include the fundamentals of the energy transition, the political consequences of extractive resource wealth (commonly referred to as the “resource curse”), decarbonization, “net zero” targets, obstacles to moving away from fossil fuels, and an assessment of how energy policy is implemented in practice. Readings will be drawn from the political science and economics literatures, news articles, case studies, and policy memos from leading energy think tanks and research institutions.

Course Objectives

There are four learning objectives for this course. First, students will develop an understanding of energy policies that have been pursued in a variety of contexts, ranging from developing authoritarian or democratic states to advanced, developed democracies or autocracies. Second, students will gain a detailed understanding of decarbonization and what it means for energy incumbents. Third, students will acquire literacy in evaluating successful vs. failed policy approaches. Lastly, students will learn the tools and skills necessary to evaluate state, national, and international energy policies with attention to how policies can be designed to improve domestic governance and mitigate climate change.

Prerequisites

Open only to Seniors. Requires a 3.0 GPA in all GPA (UCSB cumulative; POLS overall major; and POLS upper division major) categories, as well as at least a B in an upper division POLS course of the same subfield.
Requirements

This course is in seminar and lecture format. Students are required to . . .:

1. Complete the required readings before each class and **actively** participate during class;

2. Make one 10 minute presentation (in groups of 2-3 students) in class about an energy-exporting state or country. For these presentations, students will generate five (5) original graphical summaries (graphs, charts, tables, other visuals, etc.) of the energy history and politics of the selected state or country using data gathered from any publicly available sources (either online or in print from the library). **Students in the group with the best graph/visual will each “win” 2 grade points added to their final grade;**

3. Write a final paper in memo format (max 2000 words) on one of the course topics with an application to a specific policy, regulation, or government intervention. A one page proposal is due at the beginning of class in **Week 3.** The final paper is due in **Week 10;**

4. Present a short (3 minutes!) version of the final paper in class in **Finals Week.** The objective of the presentation is to visually summarize the primary findings of the final paper.

Grading

1. Class participation and attendance: 30%

2. Group presentation: 10%

3. Paper presentation: 20%

4. Final paper: 40% (including one page proposal)

Academic Resource Center/Disability Support

If you believe you have a disability, then you should contact the Disabled Students Program (DSP) for further information. The DSP is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ASA) and University policies. For more information, go to https://dsp.ext-prod.sa.ucsb.edu/
Important Academic Policies and Academic Integrity

UCSB students are expected to uphold the academic policies set forth by the university. Students should therefore familiarize themselves with all the rules, regulations, and procedures relevant to their pursuit of degree.
The policies are located at: https://studentconduct.sa.ucsb.edu/academic-integrity

Course Webpage

All readings for the course can be downloaded from the course webpage on Gauchospace.

Course Outline and Readings

1. Introduction: Fundamentals of the Energy Transition
   Week 1 - Reading:

2. Political Economy of the Oil Curse
   Week 2 - Readings:
Week 3 - Readings:


• Karl, Terry Lynn. “Overcoming the Resource Curse.” (watch here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORkgMaHkv6U)


3. Oil and the Energy Transition: What does Net Zero mean for fossil fuels?

Week 4 - Readings:


Week 5 - Readings:


• Fankhauser, Sam et al. (2021). “The meaning of net zero and how to get it right.” *Nature Climate Change.*


4. Obstacles to decarbonizing the energy system

**Week 6 - Readings:**


In the next two weeks we will consider various political economy theories about energy with an application to two policy cases, supply-side fossil fuel policy and renewable industrial policy. For this week we consider the following question: Are viable are government policies on restricting fossil fuels?

**Week 7 - Readings:**

• Carbon pricing
  


• Fossil fuel subsidy reform
  


- Flaring and methane policy

  


This week we turn to solar and wind power and how industrial policies have drastically reduced the cost of solar and wind energy. When reviewing these readings, consider how renewable fuels differ from conventional fuels, and why this might or might not explain the successes and failures of renewables policies in general.

**Week 8 - Readings:**


7. Future of energy policy

For our last week of discussion we will review policy implications that have resulted from research on the political economy of oil, gas, and other resources.

Week 9 - Readings:


- (Optional) Evergreen Collaborative. (2021). *A Roadmap to 100% Clean Electricity by 2035*.


Week 10 - Memorial Day; no class

Week 11 - Final presentations