

Critical Theory and Frameworks (MELA45930)

22 November 2018, 14:00 – 16:00. Capitalism, Colonialism and Climate: An Introduction to the Energy Humanities

Session abstract:

In an era of climate crisis and global warming, humanity's continued reliance on coal, oil and gas is leading us towards catastrophe. Although a transition to renewables has (slowly) begun, wind and solar developments in some parts of the world are replicating the violent, colonial tendencies associated with the petroleum industry. This highlights the extent to which the energy transition must involve social and cultural transformations if it is to be truly sustainable.

In this session, we explore the history of the modern hegemonic conception of "energy," and its relationship with capitalism and colonialism. Drawing on new research from the Energy Humanities, Saharawi nomadic poetry composed in opposition to multinational renewable energy developments on Saharawi land, and Saharawi ecological knowledge and cosmologies of wind and sun, we will think through the role of the arts in imagining energy futures.

Learning outcomes:

- Students will be capable of thinking critically and rigorously about the energy transition
- Students will have knowledge of how cultural forms influence our thoughts on issues such as climate, energy transition, capitalism and colonialism

Compulsory readings:

Ibanga, Diana-Abasi (2018), "Renewable Energy Issues in Africa Contexts," *Relations*, 6:1, 117-133. Available online at

<http://www.ledonline.it/index.php/Relations/article/viewFile/1343/1056>

Macdonald, Graeme (2017). "Containing Oil: The Pipeline in Petroculture." In *Petrocultures: Oil, Politics, Culture*, edited by Sheena Wilson, Carlson, Adam, and Szeman, Imre, 36-77. Montreal & Kingston, London and Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Mitchell, Timothy (2013, first published 2011). *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*, London and New York: Verso. **Only the conclusion is compulsory reading (although the rest of the book is recommended).**

Szeman, Imre (2017). "Conjectures on World Energy Literature: Or, What is Petroculture?," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 53:3, 277-288.

Highly recommended readings:

Ghosh, Amitav (2017). "Petrofiction: The Oil Encounter and the Novel." In *Petrocultures: Oil, Politics, Culture*, edited by Sheena Wilson, Carlson, Adam, and Szeman, Imre, 431-439. Montreal & Kingston, London and Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Howe, Cymene, and Boyer, Dominic, (2015). "Aeolian Politics," *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory*, 16:1, 31-48. Available online at: https://anthropology.rice.edu/sites/g/files/bxs1041/f/Aeolian%20Politics_0.pdf.

Szeman, Imre, and Boyer, Dominics (eds.) (2017). *Energy Humanities: An Anthology*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press. Available in the Bill Bryson library.

Recommended readings:

Fairhead, James, Leach, Melissa and Scoones, Ian (2012). "Green Grabbing: a new appropriation of nature?," *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39:2, 237-261.

Klein, Naomi, (2015). *This Changes Everything: Capitalism versus the Climate*, London: Penguin Books. Available in the Bill Bryson library.

Lohmann, Larry (5 December 2015). "Questioning the Energy Transition," *Boletín ECOS* 33, November 2015 - February 2016, 1-8. Available online at <http://www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/resource/questioning-energy-transition>.

Macdonald, Graeme 2012. "Oil and World Literature." *American Book Review* 33 (3):7-31.

Mitchell, Timothy (2013, first published 2011). *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*, London and New York: Verso.

Moore, Jason W. (8 October 2016). "Nature/Society and the Violence of Real Abstraction," World Ecology Network blog, available at <https://worldecologynetwork.wordpress.com/2016/10/08/naturesociety-the-violence-of-real-abstraction/>.

Niblett, Michael (2015). "Oil on Sugar: Commodity Frontiers and Peripheral Aesthetics." In *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities: Postcolonial Approaches*, edited by Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Didur, Jill, and Carrigan, Anthony, 268-85. Abingdon: Routledge. Available in the Bill Bryson library.

Oloff, Kerstin (2017). "Sugar to Oil: The Ecology of George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968)," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 53, 316-328.

Petrocultures Research Group, 2016. *After Oil*, Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press. Available online at <http://afteroil.ca/resources-2/after-oil-2015/>

World Energy Council (2013). "World Energy Scenarios: Composing Energy Futures to 2050," World Energy Council: London. Available online at https://www.worldenergy.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/World-Energy-Scenarios_Composing-energy-futures-to-2050_Full-report.pdf