

Geography 3443 – Energy and Power

Teaching team

Role	Name	Office	Office hours	Email
Instructor	Dr. Carol Hunsberger	SSC 2409	Thurs 11-12:30	chunsber@uwo.ca
TA	Awâsis (Cortney) Dakin	SSC 1430	By appointment	cdakin2@uwo.ca

Class schedule

Monday 12:30-2:30, SSC 1004 (*Different location on hearing days: see schedule below)

Wednesday 1:30-2:30, SSC 1004

Calendar description

This course investigates the political ecology of energy. Issues of politics and power, social equity, and environmental impact are examined through Canadian and international case studies. The concept of ‘energy justice’ is used both to critically assess current patterns of energy production and use and to explore more sustainable possibilities.

Prerequisites: Third or fourth year status at the University.

Overview

Energy pervades everyday life, but its origins and impacts often remain hidden from view. The act of refilling a fuel tank reminds us that fossil fuels are finite – but the challenges faced by communities where oil is extracted, and the political and economic power driving the industry, are less obvious. The pooled nature of the electrical grid obscures whether it draws on coal, nuclear, hydro or wind – and the impacts linked to each of these sources. In many parts of the world fuelwood and charcoal remain dominant sources of household energy, with implications for forest cover, gender and health.

In short, patterns of energy use are shot through with questions of social and environmental justice. *Who benefits most from current energy systems? Who bears the costs? Are biofuels sustainable? How do the politics of climate change shape energy policies? Is nuclear energy clean energy? How far can energy efficiency take us?* Through these and other questions, this course explores the impacts of energy production, equity issues surrounding energy distribution and access, and the political economy shaping key energy decisions.

The course is organized around the concept of energy justice and uses this framework to assess a series of case studies. Students explore real-life controversies over energy projects by staging a series of mock energy board hearings. In addition to problems, we consider possibilities for – and examples of – more just and sustainable energy systems.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Explain the features and theoretical foundations of ‘energy justice,’ drawing on ideas from philosophy and environmental justice;
- Apply an energy justice framework to critically assess the impacts of different energy sources (e.g. oil, coal, nuclear, wind, solar, hydro, biofuels) and specific energy projects;
- Grapple with how to reconcile diverse values, priorities and worldviews in energy and resource decision-making;
- Express well-supported arguments about how energy systems could better address social and environmental justice challenges, both orally and in writing.

Format

3 hours per week. Lectures will be interactive and will involve group discussions, debates and other activities. Students are expected to come to class having read the assigned readings and prepared to take an active role.

Readings

Course text: Sovacool, B. 2013. *Energy and Ethics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Additional readings will be provided via the course OWL site.

Tentative schedule (subject to change with notice)

Week	Monday class	Wednesday class	Due dates	Readings
08-Jan	Course overview	Set up hearings		Ch. 1
15-Jan	Foundations of energy justice	Justice activity		Schlosberg
22-Jan	Availability and affordability	Preparation Day 1	Paper 1 due (Mon)	Ch. 2, 3
29-Jan	Hearing 1: Moot Court Room	Follow-up Day 1	Stakeholder reports due	
05-Feb	Due process and transparency	Judgment Day 1	Panel, media reports due	Ch. 4, 5
12-Feb	Equity within generations	Preparation Day 2		Ch. 7
19-Feb	READING WEEK – No class			
26-Feb	Hearing 2: SSC 9420	Follow-up Day 2	Stakeholder reports due	
05-Mar	Equity across generations	Judgment Day 2	Panel, media reports due	Video (OWL)
12-Mar	Prudence and responsibility	Preparation Day 3		Ch. 6, 9
19-Mar	Hearing 3: SSC 9420	Follow-up Day 3	Stakeholder reports due	
26-Mar	Tough questions	Judgment Day 3	Panel, media reports due	3 groups
02-Apr	On hearings: mock and real	Activity		To be decided
09-Apr	Hopeful examples	Course feedback	Paper 2 due (Mon)	Ch. 10 + D’Arcy

Methods of Evaluation

Grades will be allocated based on the following tasks:

Paper 1	10%
Mock hearing: Stakeholder role	30%
Mock hearing: Panelist role	10%
Mock hearing: Media role	20%
In-class questions	10%
Paper 2	20%

Mock hearings

Throughout the term there will be three mock energy board hearings during class time, each concerning a different proposed energy project. The class will be split into three roles:

- 1) Stakeholders making submissions to the panel;
- 2) Panelists evaluating whether or not the project should proceed;
- 3) Members of the media covering the issue.

Each student will play each role once. The instructor will act as timekeeper and chair. **Attendance is mandatory on the dates of the hearings and associated work sessions.**

Stakeholders will be evaluated individually based on a written submission (20%) and an oral presentation (10%). Panelists will be evaluated as a group based on a written report explaining their decision and the reasons for it (10%). Members of the media will be evaluated in pairs based on a piece of media coverage they produce (20%). Detailed instructions for each role are provided separately.

In-class questions

During most lectures, at some point I will ask you to write a short answer to a question about course material. The question will draw on assigned readings or topics discussed in class. Each question will be worth 1-2% of your final grade; the value will be stated when the question is given. You can only submit an answer if you are present in class.

Papers

The rest of the course grade will be based on two papers. One will be a short reflection paper completed at the beginning of the semester (10%); the other a research and reflection paper completed the end (20%). More detailed instructions and expectations are provided in a separate file.

Late policy

The late penalty for written work will be 5% per weekday (the weekend counts as one 'day'). Late hard copies should be placed in the Drop Box outside the Geography main office, with the course number and instructor's name clearly visible on the first page.

Additional Information

Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed assignments or participation components worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. For UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and a downloadable student medical certificate, see: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf

Mental Health

If you or someone you know is experiencing distress, please visit this site for information on mental health resources: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>

Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Using electronic devices in class for purposes other than taking notes distracts you and everyone around you. Please turn off your phones and do not surf, text, tweet, shop, chat, etc. during class.

Accessibility

UWO is committed to achieving barrier free accessibility for persons studying, visiting and working at Western. Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

Plagiarism

The Department of Geography has a zero tolerance policy towards plagiarism. If a student commits plagiarism, the instructor will assign a grade of zero on the assignment. A second instance of plagiarism is regarded as a scholastic offense and will be dealt with according to The University of Western Ontario policy for Scholastic offenses. The most common offense is failing to cite properly. If you quote directly, you must cite the author! Students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, here:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Turnitin.com

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between UWO and [Turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com).