With gasoline prices and dependence on foreign oil near record levels, energy has become a popular topic again. Americans consume a disproportionately large amount of energy by world standards, yet government leaders—Democrats and Republicans—have been unwilling or unable to craft coherent policies that address an array of interrelated economic, environmental, and geopolitical issues. Because of the critical need to obtain petroleum, government initiatives have often been directed toward securing stable foreign supplies, even if doing so meant resorting to armed conflict (i.e., the two Gulf wars) or tolerating repressive, undemocratic leaders in oil-producing countries, according to some policy analysts. Of course, other energy resources remain available to Americans, but alternatives such as domestic coal and nuclear power have encountered serious technical and political objections that reduce their viability. Meanwhile, the development of renewable energy resources and the pursuit of energy efficiency have encountered political and market-based problems as well.

This course will take an historical approach toward understanding the development of energy production, consumption, and policy in the United States. It will examine the origins of American attitudes toward energy and the movement to inject government oversight of certain energy enterprises starting at the end of the 19th century. With great relevance to recent events, the course will also trace the often-convoluted evolution of energy use and government policy in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Offered only to upper level students, this course differs from typical classes in which the professor lectures to the class. Instead, this course will depend on students to make presentations and to participate heavily in class discussions of readings and archival materials. Students will also be required to compose several short papers in this writing-intensive course. Read the syllabus carefully, since several opportunities exist for choosing topics for your assignments. If you have a special interest in any topics (Depression-era history, the making of legislation, international politics, Appalachian history, etc.), let the professor know early so you focus on them.
Required readings

- Several articles available on Scholar, from VT library databases, and the Internet.

Aug 23. 1. *Introduction.* General discussion of class and themes to be explored.

**Assignment 0.** Write a wiki description of yourself, one that includes a discussion of 1) your background as a history student (or whatever), 2) the topics within history you like the most, 3) why you are taking this class, and 4) what you plan to do once you graduate. You can include pictures, other graphics, or links to favorite sites. Write as much as you like, but do not write fewer than 200 words. See the professor’s wiki entry for a rough example of what you can do. Have fun with this little assignment, which will give you experience in posting to a wiki (something we’ll do more of during the semester). The exercise will also help us get to know each other better, thus leading to a more enjoyable and productive class experience. Other students can gain experience in commenting on wiki posts. Feel free to offer scintillating and incisive comments (such as “I also loved the movie, ‘Groundhog Day,’ because it’s a metaphor for humanity’s enigmatic efforts to ascertain ontological truth in the postmodern neoglobal macrocosm.”). Make sure to post the wiki description under “Who are we in this class” before Aug. 25.


Aug. 30. 3. *Energy Transitions as a Historical Theme.*

entire book. Just get a sense of it from reading summaries and then choose a brief section to read and comment on. Read the Melosi article first.

**Sept. 1. 4. Systems Approach and Other Useful Concepts.**


**Assignment 1.** Understanding economics. From Scholar, download the assignment “Consumer Price Index Exercise” and answer the three questions. Submit your answers (electronically or on the sheet) today.

**Sept. 6. 5. Social History of Energy in America.** Read Nye book. 4 presenters.

**Sept. 8. Social History of Energy in America (continued).** 5 presenters.

**Sept. 13. 6. Oil in American (and World) History**


- Our Plan (1). Early years of oil through JD Rockefeller (~1900). (You may want to look at Ida Tarbell’s, *History of the Standard Oil Company by Ida Tarbell*, a muckraking classic from 1904, available at http://www.history.rochester.edu/fuels/tarbell/main.htm.)
- Empires of Oil (2). Merger of Shell Oil and Royal Dutch and challenge of Rockefeller’s Standard Oil. Events through World War I.
- The Black Giant (3). 1920s and introduction of exploration in Middle East.
- War and Oil (4). World War II and role of oil in it.
- Crude Diplomacy (5). Strategic importance of oil after World War II.
- Power to the Producers (6). Automobile culture and good life based on cheap energy
- The Tinderbox (7). 1970s to 1990s. OPEC stirrings to Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.
- The New Order of Oil (8). Gulf War and need to rethink oil in society.

You should summarize the segment and explain the historical significance of events described in light of events that occurred later. In other words, think about the impact of events highlighted in your segment. You may need to do extra research to understand such impacts. Work in groups of two people. Plan for a presentation in class of 12 minutes. Each member of the group should also submit a 300-word essay on one element of their presentation (in other words, don’t
duplicate your partner’s sub-topic) along with a 150-word wiki entry. (Essay and wiki are due on the following class day.)

Sept. 15.  Oil (continued)

Sept. 20.  Expansion time.  Whew!  We’ve been working diligently (or let’s hope so).  Maybe we’ll need a little time to catch up in case we’ve fallen behind.

Sept. 22.  7. Electrification in America.  Technological innovation and regulatory policies allowed the electric utility industry to expand and provide apparent benefits to all parties.  But not forever…


Sept. 29.  Open.  To be announced.  Note: Sept. 30 is the last day to drop class without grade penalty.

Oct. 4.  9. Nuclear power in 1970s and 1980s.  Despite high hopes, nuclear power encountered problems in the US.  What can historical studies of nuclear power tell us about events occurring today?


4 presenters.


Assignment 3: Half of the class will form groups to prepare information for presentation to class about the impacts of the 1973 energy crisis. Groups will be asked to research and describe the way the energy crisis affected:

a) the economy (inflation, consumer demand, new consumer choices, etc.)
b) the financial world (stock market, bond prices, etc.)
c) everyday life (driving, heating/cooling in homes, etc.)
d) government policies (laws passed immediately after the energy crisis)
e) popular opinion regarding the causes (and solutions) to the energy crisis.

Students working on the same general topic should coordinate their research so they investigate different subtopics. Short presentations (ideally using PowerPoint—see Edwards article for presentation advice) will be made by members of your group in today’s class. Each student will also write a 500-word essay and a 250-word wiki contribution (exclusive of a bibliography that contains at least 7 sources). Group members should write on different, though undoubtedly related, sub-topics. Good sources for some of these topics include Time and Newsweek magazines. Don’t forget to look in the Proquest Historical Newspaper database for articles about the energy crisis. You can even find some great articles about energy shortages and problems with the energy infrastructure from before October 1973. Essay and wiki posts are due the day following your presentation.

Note: Several of the next class discussions deal with federal responses to energy problems since the 1970s. (We have already discussed initial responses by Presidents Nixon and Ford.) When thinking about the plans proposed by presidents (and their subordinates), ask (among other things) what was going on politically that made it difficult for the presidents to accomplish their stated goals? In other words, explore the context and the political environment in which these leaders operated. What similarities (and differences) do we see in their pronouncements and policies about energy? What goals did they seek, and how successful were they in meeting their goals?

Oct. 13. 11. *Energy Crisis II: The Carter Energy Plan.* President Carter made energy policy a cornerstone of his first two years as president, though he ended up with much less than he expected. What caused energy crisis in 1979? What else was going on at the time?


**Assignment 4:** Half of the class will form groups to prepare information for presentation to class about President Carter’s “National Energy Plan,” sent to Congress in 1977. Groups will be asked to research and describe elements of his plan, such as:

a) Carter’s overall philosophy about energy use in the US.
b) Carter’s views on the value of conservation.
c) Carter’s plan to stimulate the development of renewable, fossil, and nuclear fuels.
d) The politics of energy legislation. Why didn’t Carter’s final policy include all the major elements sought by the president?
e) Passage of laws in 1978 that sought to accomplish Carter’s goals.

Students working on the same general topic should coordinate their research so they investigate different subtopics. *Short presentations* (ideally using PowerPoint—see Edwards article for presentation advice) will be made by members of your group in today’s class. Each student will also write a 500-word essay and a 250-word wiki contribution (exclusive of a bibliography that contains at least 7 sources). Group members should write on different, though undoubtedly related, sub-topics. Essay and wiki posts are due the day following your presentation.


**Oct. 20. 13. Energy Efficiency II: Government and Regulatory Policies to Encourage It.** After the 1978 National Energy Policy provided some incentives for energy efficiency, the states picked up the ball and encouraged even more efficiency, especially in the electricity sector.


**Oct 25.** Another expansion day.


**Assignment 5:** Half of the class will investigate President Reagan’s energy policy. Groups of two students will examine the following:

a) Reagan’s philosophy about energy use and the role of government in the economy.

b) Steps taken by the Reagan administration to reverse some of Carter’s initiatives. (Consider Reagan’s appointments to relevant government agencies, such as the Dept. of the Interior, Dept. of Energy, etc. Also consider actions that allowed Carter’s initiatives to lapse.)

C) Energy legislation that helped or hurt specific energy industries.

d) Energy prices and energy consumption during the Reagan years as presidents.

During today’s class, groups will discuss the results of their research. Each student will also write a 400-word essay and a 200-word wiki contribution (exclusive of a
bibliography that contains at least 6 sources). Group members should write on different, though undoubtedly related, sub-topics. Essay and wiki posts are due the day following your presentation.

**Nov. 1. 15. Energy Policy during the Bush I Administration.** Though much of the rhetoric about pursuing the 1991 war in the Persian Gulf had to do with democracy, many people thought the war was more about securing the supply of foreign oil for several nations. After the first Gulf War, Congress passed the Energy Policy Act of 1992.


**Assignment 6:** Here’s a chance for you to do some fun analyses of a real law. Half of the class (grouped into pairs) will jointly do research and present information dealing with one element (“title”) of EPAct 1992. You will be asked to investigate:

a) The origins and goals of the title. Why did lawmakers feel the need to introduce legislation in the first place? What was the background of the title? What problems existed as a backdrop to this title? What were the goals of the title?

b) What incentives did Congress offer to reach the goals? (Tax incentives, revision of existing laws, etc.?)

c) How has the title achieved its goals since 1992? What has happened as a result of passage of the title? Have the goals been met? Has there been criticism of parts of the law?

The following titles (and subtitles) will be examined:

Title I. Energy efficiency. Choose one subtitle.
Title IV. Alternative Fuels, nonfederal program.
Title VII. Electricity. Choose subtitle A or B.
Title XII. Renewable Energy.
Title XII. Coal. Choose subtitle A or B.
Title XV. Oil.
Title XXI. Energy and the Environment.
Title XXII. Energy and Economic Growth
Title XXVIII. Nuclear Plants.


Each student will also write a 400-word essay and a 200-word wiki contribution (exclusive of a bibliography that contains at least 6 sources). Group members should write on different, though undoubtedly related, sub-topics. Essay and wiki posts are due the day following your presentation.

**Nov. 3.** Open. To be announced.
Nov. 8. 16. An Era of Deregulation? Deregulation has become the mantra of many people in business and policy. What are the causes for this belief in market principles? Why have people become disillusioned with government regulation? Vietor, chap. 4. (Chapters 1 and 4 are contained in the same PDF file.)

Assignment 7. Class members will explore deregulation of the following industries: natural gas, petroleum, or electric power). Questions to be answered include:

a) What was the rationale for regulation of the industry in the first place?
b) What were the motivations for deregulation of the industry?
c) What role did technological change play in deregulation? (Did new technologies make obsolete the original reasons for regulation?)
d) What were the consequences of deregulation since the industries have been opened up to more competition and less government oversight? Were expectations met? Why or why not?

A 300-word analysis that answers these questions is due today, with a 100-word summary posted on the wiki. 6 presenters (working in three groups).

Nov. 10. 17. Elements of Clinton, Bush II, and Obama Energy Policies. President Clinton’s energy initiatives consisted of efforts to impose an energy tax (in general), to raise the federal gasoline tax, and to garner support for the Kyoto Protocol to deal with climate change. At the end of the Clinton presidency, some people pondered the problem of oil being too cheap.


Nov. 15. *Presentations on an energy event in history.*

**Assignment 8.** Choose a topic from the history of energy in America (one we haven’t discussed in detail; consult with professor for preapproval). Provide an historical discussion of the topic, making sure that you provide relevant context for the topic (environmental, political, economic, etc.). Describe events within the framework of a theme from Zelizer’s or Hirsh’s articles (read earlier in term) and explain (as part of the concluding part of the paper) why your historical discussion can provide insight and understanding of a current energy concern. In other words, the presentation and paper will combine historical and policy analyses.

Ideas for topics include:
- Coal shortage fears during WWI and aftermath
- Electric utility company abuses exposed in late 1920s and aftermath (Public Utility Holding Company Act of 1935, etc.)
- Rural electrification in the 1930s. (Alternatively, the creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority)
- 1957 Price Anderson Act to support use of nuclear power.
- Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act of 1978, which unintentionally created incentives for renewable energy systems and deregulation of electric utility system.
- Rise (and fall?) of various renewable energy technologies. Subtopic: Renewable Portfolio Standards—requirements that utilities use renewable energy technologies to produce certain amounts of power.
- Nuclear accidents (Choose one: Three Mile Island, 1979, Chernobyl, 1986, Japan, 2011) and impact (in US and elsewhere)
- 2008 oil price/gas price run-up and decline
- Climate change policy debate
- Other ideas: get approval from professor before pursuing topic.

Each student will write a 600-word essay and a 300-word wiki contribution (exclusive of a bibliography that contains at least 8 sources). Essay and wiki posts are due the day following your presentation.

Nov. 17. *Student presentations 2.*

Nov. 22 and 24. *Domestic Energy Use and Food Preparation Laboratory Experience.* In these self-directed classes, students will examine the use of energy in the preparation and delivery of food in domestic settings and the historical context in which that energy use emerged. Report to class next week on the factors that led you to develop your particular research methodologies and the results of your laboratory experiences. Explain the larger implications of energy use for domestic pleasures in American society. Wiki contributions of photographs will be welcomed.

Nov. 29. *Student presentations 3.*

Dec. 1. *Student presentations 4.* (Note: Dec. 2. Last day to drop course with dean’s permission.)

**GRADING FORMULA:**

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**THE NATURE OF THIS COURSE**

This senior seminar course requires maturity and discipline. The success of the course will depend largely on the interest, enthusiasm, and participation of students. Significant principles and issues surrounding energy, technology, law, and government policy will be discussed. Students will be in charge of making presentations and interpreting reading materials. As a designated “writing intensive” course, the class also requires students to undertake a fair number of written assignments. Consequently, only students who have successfully taken “Historical Methods” (HIST 2004) may enroll in this course.

This is a seminar class, and its success depends largely on the participation of students. As noted by a colleague, Professor Robert Hatch of the University of Florida, "[s]eminar discussion has a long tradition and is based on criteria not far removed from those of the 'critique.'" Professor Hatch provides a set of guidelines that you need to consider in all aspects of seminar communication and when preparing reviews of commonly read texts in this class. Read his criteria at: [http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/rhatch/HIS-SCI-STUDY-GUIDE/0095_seminarCritiques.html](http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/rhatch/HIS-SCI-STUDY-GUIDE/0095_seminarCritiques.html).

To obtain the most from the class, each student should attend all discussions and be prepared to participate fully. In fact, due to the small size of the class, participation will be necessary to avoid reliance on the professor to lecture.

**GENERAL ASSIGNMENT**

For each class, every student should be prepared to discuss all the readings. Moreover, each student will chose (or will be assigned) one or more readings (or parts of the readings). He or she should be especially well prepared to

- summarize the reading,
- discuss the major themes and significance of the reading,
• provide a critique of the reading, noting the author's use of evidence and his/her success in arguing from it. (For more information on performing these tasks, see Robert Hatch’s Web site, listed above.)

Specifically chosen “presenters” will also prepare a wiki contribution (at least 200 words) that will be posted on the Scholar Web wiki BEFORE class. By doing so, other students can get a sense of the upcoming discussion. Each student needs to present at least four times during the course.

WIKI ASSIGNMENTS

To encourage good writing (albeit of short expositions) and peer review, we will post many of the essays on the wiki portion of the Scholar site. To get started, you will write a short autobiography (see Ass. 0). Thereafter, whenever you present material (or when specifically instructed to do so in an assignment), you will post a brief summary as a wiki entry. Other students are encouraged to participate in the class partly through their comments and criticisms of the wikis. Each student must comment on at least four wiki posts during the semester (from different weeks—not all from a single week). Make sure you sign you wiki contributions and comments.

You do not need to learn too much wiki formatting language for posting your essays and comments. Scholar provides basic instructions (when you enter the “edit” mode on the wiki pages; see “Wiki Tips” in the right-hand column). However, you may find it easier to write your contribution using Microsoft Word and then having the software format the text into wiki style. To do so, you can use an add-in for Microsoft Office, which can be found at http://www.microsoft.com/download/en/details.aspx?id=12298. (The add-in is especially useful when you use bullet items.) Save your Word file as “MediaWiki (*.txt).” Reopen the file (in Notepad, for example) and then copy and paste the contents into the Scholar wiki page.

GENERAL WRITING REQUIREMENTS

As seniors, you are expected to write clearly and effectively, without making petty grammatical and spelling errors. I therefore suggest that you have other students (or friends) read drafts of your papers before you turn them in. I further suggest (strongly!) that you read my “Writing Tips” (http://www.history.vt.edu/Hirsh/writtips.html) to get an idea of the type of writing I prefer. (I especially dislike the use of passive voice and will deduct points for its use.) If you need assistance with your writing skills, please seek help at the University’s Writing Center (http://www.composition.english.vt.edu/wc/WC_Home.html).

Include a word count at the end of each written assignment. (Penalty for none: 5 points.) Each assignment will ask you to limit your analysis to a certain number of words. By writing to a strict limit, you will learn to write clearly and concisely—something that the readers in the "real world" appreciate greatly. For extra assistance in reaching this goal, see Jacques Barzun, Simple and Direct (unfortunately unavailable electronically; call number: PE1408 .B436 1985), a wonderful and easy-to-read primer on good writing. (Penalty for papers +/- 10%: 5 points for each 10% increment.)
Moreover, in each of the assignments, you will lose 0.5 point for using the verb "to be" in any of its forms more than three times. (“To be” is the infinitival form of “am,” “is,” and “are” in all tenses.) By consciously avoiding the verb, you will choose more active verbs and produce more interesting papers. Also, make sure you read the chapter by C. Edward Good on “to be.” For more style tips, see Barzun’s book and Hirsh’s writing tips (Web site above).

For each paper, include a bibliography (whose contents are NOT to be included in the word count). In historical documents, authors generally use the “Chicago style” of bibliographic (and note) citation. Also use footnotes or endnotes (NOT to be included in the word count) to provide evidence of the resources you used for your analyses. The lack of notes suggests laziness or plagiarism (an honor code violation).

Late Assignment Policy: I will accept assignments that are turned in late, but with the following penalty: Each calendar day after the due date, I will deduct 10 points. This policy may appear harsh, but you have known about due dates since the beginning of the term. Please begin work on papers early enough so that you do not incur this penalty. Obviously, unpredictable events occur in life that may cause hardships and difficulties in meeting a deadline. I like to think I am open-minded, and I will make exceptions to this late policy on a case-by-case basis. Just talk to me.

Submit your written assignments in the Scholar’s Drop Box. You can convert Powerpoint presentations to PDFs (or leave them as .ppt files) and put them in the Scholar Resource section called “Student Presentations.”

OTHER STUFF

Students having special needs or handicaps should contact the professor early in the term for assistance in overcoming problems.

The honor code will be strictly enforced in this course. All assignments submitted shall be considered graded work unless otherwise noted. All aspects of your course work are covered by the honor system. Honesty in your academic work will develop into professional integrity. The faculty and students of Virginia Tech will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty.

Electronic equipment: For the sake of others (and me!), please disable the ringer on your cell phones before coming to class. Feel free to use a computer in class, but only for class purposes. If we are discussing a topic and you want to find related information on the Web, go for it! But please do not use your computer for general surfing, e-mail, blog writing, Facebook, or other unrelated work. I find the inappropriate use of computers and cell phones in class to be rude and annoying. When we are all working together, I want you focused on work. You have plenty of time outside of class for other online activities.