

“Energy and the Humanities”

Yale University 2018 - 2019



During the 2018-2019 academic year, the Yale Environmental Humanities Initiative hosted a yearlong conversation to explore the thematic intersection of energy and the humanities. The program included roundtables and workshops featuring Yale faculty and student work, visiting speakers, two new undergraduate courses, and three conferences. Overall, the yearlong program of activities brought together a diverse set of voices to explore the present and future of the energy humanities. Activities were initiated by Yale Environmental Humanities and by our partner programs and departments.

Douglas Rogers (Anthropology) and Paul Sabin (History) were the faculty conveners for the “Energy and the Humanities” thematic program. Deepti Chatti (Forestry & Environmental Studies and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies) was the graduate program coordinator.

The 2018-2019 “Energy and the Humanities” series was supported by generous grants from:

*Humanities/Humanity Grant Program, Whitney Humanities Center
The Edward J. and Dorothy Clarke Kempf Memorial Fund
320 York Humanities
Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies*

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Graduate Coordinator: Taylor Rose
Undergraduate Program Assistant: Gabriella Blatt

“Energy and the Humanities: Interventions and Ambitions”

September 7, 2018

A roundtable discussion that featured short talks by Isabel Lane (Slavic Languages and Literatures), Myles Lennon (Anthropology/F&ES), Katja Lindskog (English), Douglas Rogers (Anthropology), and Paul Sabin (History). Lane spoke about her doctoral work on nuclear-age literature. Lennon discussed his ethnographic study of the solar industry. Rogers introduced his new research on efforts to develop petroleum-based proteins. Sabin shared a new energy history teaching website being developed with support from the Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning. The roundtable and fall reception were co-sponsored by the Program in Agrarian Studies, The Edward J. and Dorothy Clarke Kempf Memorial Fund, Whitney Humanities Center, Literature, the Arts, and the Environment Colloquium, Forum on Religion and Ecology, Yale Environmental History, and Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

Yale Environmental Humanities

Co-hosted by Program in Agrarian Studies, The Edward J. and Dorothy Clarke Kempf Memorial Fund, Whitney Humanities Center, Literature, the Arts, and the Environment Colloquium, Forum on Religion and Ecology, Yale Environmental History, Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies

Friday, September 7, 2018
Whitney Humanities Center
53 Wall Street

ROUNDTABLE 3 pm, Room 208
FALL RECEPTION 4:15 pm, Room 108

Speakers include

ISABEL LANE
Slavic Languages and Literatures

MYLES LENNON
Anthropology/F&ES

KATJA LINDSKOG
English

DOUG ROGERS
Anthropology

PAUL SABIN
History

Energy & the Humanities: Interventions & Ambitions

320 York Humanities

Yale SCHOOL OF FORESTRY & ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Research SEMINAR SERIES

Crafting Spaces of Value:
Special Economic Zones, Infrastructure,
Energy and Extractive Practices in Nigeria

Wednesday, October 10, 12 – 1 PM
Burke Auditorium, Kroon Hall, 195 Prospect Street




Omolade Adunbi
Associate Professor
Department of African American Studies
University of Michigan

“Crafting Spaces of Value: Special Economic Zones, Infrastructure, Energy and Extractive Practices in Nigeria”

October 10, 2018, Omolade Adunbi (Michigan)

Omolade Adunbi is a political anthropologist and an Assistant Professor at the Department of Afroamerican and African Studies (DAAS). His areas of research explore issues related to resource distribution, governance, human and environmental rights, power, culture, transnational institutions, multinational corporations and the postcolonial state. His latest book, *Oil Wealth and Insurgency in Nigeria* (Indiana University Press, 2015) addresses issues related to oil wealth, multinational corporations, transnational institutions, NGOs and violence in oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Adunbi discussed local efforts to tap into oil pipelines and create business ventures using the oil.




Energy Democracy


Ashley Dawson, CUNY Graduate Center

Thursday, October 11th / 4:30 pm / Burke Auditorium, Kroon Hall

Ashley Dawson is Professor of English at the Graduate Center/CUNY and the College of Staten Island. He is the author of "Extreme Cities: The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate Change" (2017) and "Extinction: A Radical History" (2016).



With support from: Yale Environmental Humanities, 320 York Humanities, Whitney Humanities Center, Kempf Fund, Yale F&ES



“Energy Democracy”

October 11, 2018, Ashley Dawson (CUNY Grad Center)

Ashley Dawson’s presentation explored models for just transition being advanced by the contemporary movement for energy democracy and examined historical precedents for a democratic and equitable transformation of the energy system. Dawson is Professor of English at the Graduate Center/CUNY and the College of Staten Island. He is the author of two recent books on topics relating to the environmental humanities, *Extreme Cities: The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate Change* (Verso, 2017), and *Extinction: A Radical History* (O/R, 2016), as well as six previous books on global social justice movements and anti-imperialism. He is a long-time member of the Social Text Collective and the founder of the CUNY Climate Action Lab.

“Subjunctive Realism: The Rhetoric of Ecological Disaster in Narrative Nonfiction”

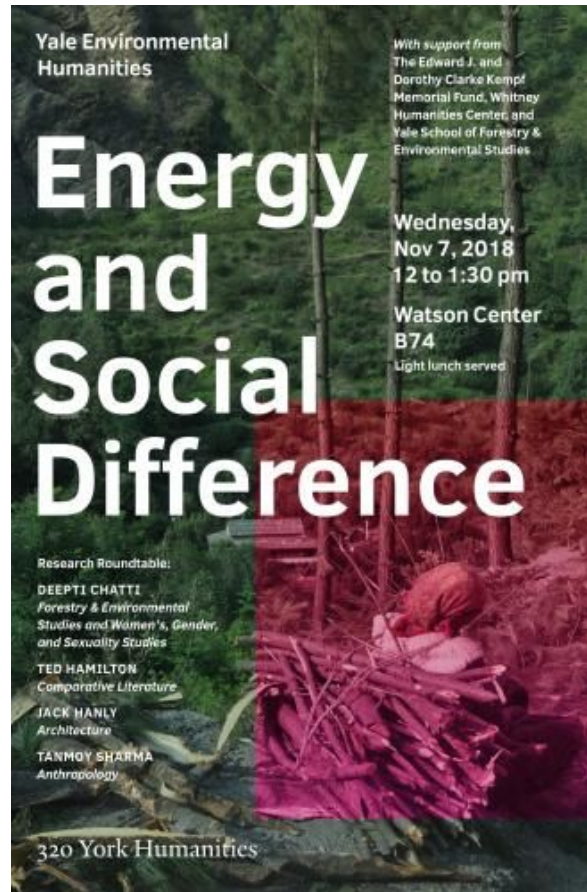
November 1, 2018, Isabel Lane (Yale)

Isabel Lane, a doctoral candidate in Slavic Languages and Literatures, discussed a chapter from her dissertation on Russian and American fiction in the nuclear age.

Research Roundtable: “Energy and Social Difference”

November 7, 2018

A roundtable discussion featuring current research by Yale graduate students on the intersection of energy and social inequalities and social justice. Participants included Ted Hamilton (Comparative Literature), Jack Hanly (Architecture), Aanchal Saraf (American Studies), and Tanmoy Sharma (Anthropology).



Yale Environmental Humanities

With support from The Edward J. and Dorothy Clarke Kempf Memorial Fund, Whitney Humanities Center, and Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies

Energy and Social Difference

Wednesday, Nov 7, 2018
12 to 1:30 pm
Watson Center B74
Light lunch served

Research Roundtable:

DEEPTI CHATTI
Forestry & Environmental Studies and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

TED HAMILTON
Comparative Literature

JACK HANLY
Architecture

TANMOY SHARMA
Anthropology

320 York Humanities

“The Greenhouse Affect: Solar Imaginaries from Wall Street to West Harlem”

December 3, 2018, Myles Lennon (Yale)

Myles Lennon’s talk explored the affective energy of solar technology with a focus on its capacity to reconfigure raced, classed, and gendered subject formations and intersectional power. In drawing from multi-sited ethnographic research at private solar corporations and grassroots solar campaigns in New York City, solar technologies have catalyzed unlikely ideological synergies between white neoliberal sustainability technocrats and Black anti-capitalist environmental justice activists. The modularity of rooftop photovoltaics, the ubiquity of the sun, the dispersed, physical nature of distributed electricity generation, and the quantifiability of solar’s economic and climatic impacts have transformed the intersectional dimensions of the industrialized power sector. Attending to these transformations illuminates the affective energy of solar and the role intersectional power plays in emergent energy transitions. Such an analysis can deepen our understanding of how the bold rhetoric of “100% renewable energy” is instantiated in practice.

Yale Department of Anthropology and
Yale Environmental Humanities

The Greenhouse Affect: Solar Imaginaries from Wall Street to West Harlem

Myles Lennon, Yale University

Abstract: Solar technology is not only an emerging source of industrialized energy; it is also a potent force of affective energy. Cultivating imaginaries and reorienting desires, it generates a sense of hope in a broad liberal economy of climate mitigation. This talk will explore the affective energy of solar technology with a focus on its capacity to reconfigure raced, classed, and gendered subject formations and intersectional power. Drawing from multi-sited ethnographic research at private solar corporations and grassroots solar campaigns in New York City, I contend that solar technologies have catalyzed unlikely ideological synergies between white neoliberal sustainability technocrats and Black anti-capitalist environmental justice activists. The former have embraced a social justice ethos, while the latter have adopted technoscientific prudence and practice, creating novel alliances that both foster and foreclose important responses to climate change. I partly attribute this convergence of ideas to the material and biophysical properties of solar energy technologies as they take shape in the city’s diverse skyline. The modularity of rooftop photovoltaics, the ubiquity of the sun, the dispersed, physical nature of distributed electricity generation, and the quantifiability of solar’s economic and climatic impacts have transformed the intersectional dimensions of the industrialized power sector. Attending to these transformations illuminates the affective energy of solar and the role intersectional power plays in emergent energy transitions. Such an analysis can deepen our understanding of how the bold rhetoric of “100% renewable energy” is instantiated in practice.



Myles Lennon is a Ph.D. candidate in environmental anthropology at Yale University. He previously worked in the non-profit sector conducting research, engaging in policy advocacy, and developing programs related to energy efficiency, climate adaptation, and sustainable urban planning in New York City.

Monday Dec 3, 2018 | 4pm
10 Sachem St. | Rm 105

“Imperfect Media: Niger Delta, Oil, and the Trauma of the Future”

January 22, 2019, Cajetan Iheka (University of Alabama)

Cajetan Iheka’s research and teaching focus on African and Caribbean literatures and film, postcolonial studies, ecocriticism, ecomedia, and world literature. He is the author of *Naturalizing Africa: Ecological Violence, Agency, and Postcolonial Resistance in African Literature* (CUP 2018), and co-editor of *African Migration Narratives* (Rochester UP 2018). He is currently working on two projects, namely a monograph that examines ecomedia in Africa, more specifically, the articulations of the continent’s ecological issues in photography, film, and other artistic media. His other project is the MLA volume, *Teaching Postcolonial Environmental Literature and Media*. Cajetan Iheka will join Yale’s English Department faculty in July 2019.

THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT PRESENTS

CAJETAN IHEKA

JANUARY 22 | 4:00PM | LC 211

“Imperfect Media:
Niger Delta, Oil,
and Trauma of
the Future”



Cajetan Iheka’s research and teaching focus on African and Caribbean literatures and film, postcolonial studies, ecocriticism, ecomedia, and world literature. He is the author of *Naturalizing Africa: Ecological Violence, Agency, and Postcolonial Resistance in African Literature* (CUP 2018), and co-editor of *African Migration Narratives* (Rochester UP 2018). He is currently working on two projects, namely a monograph that examines ecomedia in Africa, more specifically, the articulations of the continent’s ecological issues in photography, film, and other artistic media. His other project is the MLA volume, *Teaching Postcolonial Environmental Literature and Media*. Cajetan also serves as associate editor for *African Studies Review*, the journal of the African Studies Association. He directs the UA in South Africa “Resistance and Freedom” study abroad program.

Energy Technologies, Sustainable Development, and Environmental Justice in the Kitchens of Rural India



Deepti Chatti

School of Forestry and Environmental Studies &
Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Thursday, January 31, 2019
2:00-3:30 pm

WLH 309, 100 Wall Street

“Energy Technologies, Sustainable Development, and Environmental Justice in the Kitchens of Rural India”

January 31, 2019, Deepti Chatti (Yale University)

Based on multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork with rural Indian cooks, US-based energy technology experts, public health professionals, and climate change researchers, Deepti Chatti’s talk analyzed the contestations over what “clean” cooking energy technologies are, and discussed debates about which forms of development are sustainable for families in India. Chatti contrasted the technological anxieties of global energy experts with the everyday lived experiences of families in the Indian Himalayas. Her research shows that low-income Indian families are viewed both as victims of poverty needing global technological expertise, and perpetrators of climate change needing to become more responsible global citizens. Chatti’s talk examined how the promise of modernity entangled with energy projects, and centers the kitchens of low-income families in India to deepen our understanding of how environmental justice concerns manifest in postcolonial societies.

“Graduate Conference on Religion and Ecology: Exploring Energy”

February 8, 2019

Hosted annually at Yale University, the [Graduate Conference in Religion and Ecology](#) (GCRE) is a unique academic venue for graduate students and working professionals to share research on the intersections of environmental ethics and moral worldviews. This year the Conference partnered with the Yale Environmental Humanities to examine the intersection of energy, religion, and ecology. Keynote speakers included Dr. Erin Lothes, Associate Professor of Theology and researcher in Energy Ethics, and Ms. Kehkashan Basu, Founder and President of the Green Hope Foundation and 2016 Winner of the International Children’s Peace Prize.

Yale Environmental Humanities

Exploring Energy

Friday, February 8, 2019
409 Prospect Street
campuspress.yale.edu/gcre

Graduate Conference in Religion and Ecology

Additional support provided by Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale and Tsai Center for Innovative Thinking at Yale

320 York Humanities

Resisting Petrofeminisms: Toward More Just Feminist Futures

Sheena Wilson,
University of
Alberta

Monday, February
18, 2019 - 4:00pm
WLH 309, Harkness
Hall, 100 Wall Street



Co-hosted by Yale Environmental Humanities and the Women's, Gender, and
Sexuality Studies Program at Yale

“Resisting Petrofeminisms: Toward More Just Feminist Futures”

February 18, 2019, Sheena Wilson (University of Alberta)

Sheena Wilson is Associate Professor at the University of Alberta, co-founder & director of the international Petrocultures Research Group, and research lead on Just Powers. Her research interests involve an interdisciplinary and intersectional approach to studying how the extractivist world-view that has contributed to climate change through the exploitation of land and resources, likewise allows for the exploitation of gendered, classed and racialized bodies, and the erasure of knowledge held by those bodies. Given that mobilizing against climate change can be overwhelming, she argues for a focus on power shift—literally in terms of energy transition, and figuratively in terms of social justice—as a means to anchor feminist and decolonial political movements striving for climate justice.

“The Economic Geography of Waste and Confinement in Southeastern Louisiana”

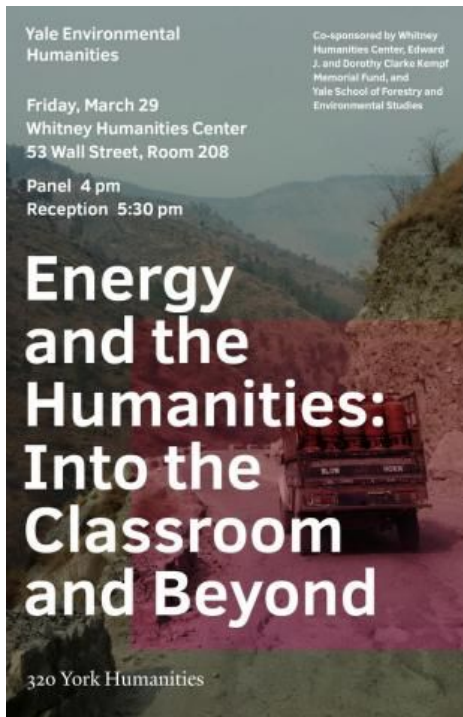
February 20, 2019, Jennifer Klein (Yale University)

Jennifer Klein is a Professor in the field of twentieth-century US history. Professor Klein’s research spans the fields of U.S. labor history, urban history, social movements and political economy. Klein’s workshop presentation focused on her current research on the history of waste management, labor, and toxic petrochemicals in Louisiana.

“Who Wrecked the Climate?: Carbon Responsibility, Class Power, and the Ecologies of Production”

February 22, 2019, Matt Huber (Syracuse University)

We are normally told that climate responsibility is diffuse. Particularly in the Global North it is “all of us” with our high carbon footprints and affluent lifestyles. In this talk, Matt Huber used theories of social class to critique this narrative and argues that climate responsibility is actually quite concentrated among the small minority of people who own, control, and profit from industrial production. Huber illustrated this argument through an analysis of the nitrogen fertilizer industry and its role in not only producing climate change, but also the other noted “planetary boundary” of the nitrogen cycle.



“Energy and the Humanities: Into the Classroom and Beyond”

March 29, 2019

A public roundtable on innovative ways humanities scholars are teaching about energy and shaping public dialogue beyond the classroom. Hosted by Yale Environmental Humanities in connection with its faculty workshop on “Energy and the Humanities” sponsored by the Whitney Humanities Center.

Faculty presenters shared experiences asking students to conduct an “oil inventory” on their relationship with fossil fuels; teaching about nuclear evacuation planning using the campus as the setting; developing a study abroad program focused on energy transitions in Europe; teaching engineers about ethics and values; and, engaging students in producing a symposium and book about oil in Arctic.

“Energy and the Humanities: Faculty Workshop”


March 29-30, 2019

With support from the Humanities/Humanity program of the Whitney Humanities Center, Yale faculty members Douglas Rogers and Paul Sabin convened an interdisciplinary group of invited scholars and Yale faculty to discuss the present and future of the “energy humanities.” Participants in this generative and exceptionally rewarding two-day workshop included scholars from literature, history, anthropology, and the arts.

Visiting faculty participants included Lynn Badia (Colorado State University), Subhankar Banerjee (University of New Mexico), Bathsheba DeMuth (Brown University), Ryan Jobson (University of Chicago), Ian Miller (Harvard University), Jessica Miller (Colorado School of Mines), Canay Ozden Schilling (Johns Hopkins University), and Jennifer Wenzel (Columbia University). Additional faculty and student discussants and participants included: Kalyanakrishnan Sivaramakrishnan (Yale University), Deborah Coen (Yale University), Benjamin Siegel (Boston University), Shafqat Hussain (Trinity College), Lisa Messeri (Yale University), and Deepti Chatti (Yale University).

Over the course of four workshop sessions, participants discussed pre-circulated papers on the history of energy transitions and the developing field of energy humanities; the intersection of labor, capital and energy from tropical plantations to modern petro-proteins; the relationship between ecology, energy, and history; ethics in energy engineering; market thinking in the construction of the electrical grid; faith, science and literary conceptions of absolute energy; and aspects of activism and public education in the public humanities.

POYNTER
FELLOWSHIP IN JOURNALISM



David
Roberts
Writer, Vox Media

“Climate, Energy, and the Green New Deal”

Monday, April 1, 4:00pm
Branford College Common Room, 74 High Street

poynter.yale.edu Yale

“Climate, Energy, and the Green New Deal”

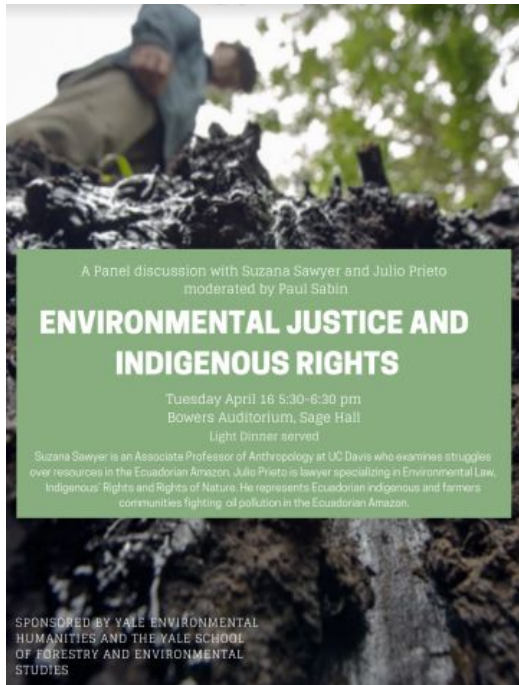
April 1, 2019, David Roberts (Vox)

David Roberts, a climate and energy reporter with Vox Media, discussed recent political and policy developments. Roberts visited Yale for two days, participating in three classes, giving two public presentations, and meeting informally with students and faculty. His visit was co-sponsored by the Poynter Fellowship at Yale.

“U.S. Energy Transition Politics in the 1970s”

April 4, 2019, Victor McFarland (Missouri)

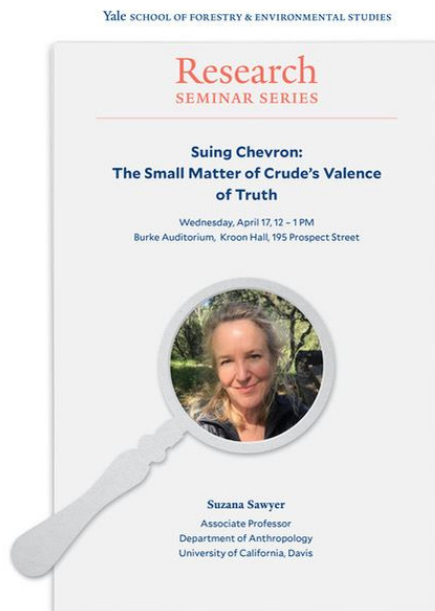
Professor Victor McFarland shared a chapter from his current book project, *Oil Powers: The United States and Saudi Arabia in an Age of Crisis*. McFarland is an assistant professor in the Department of History at the University of Missouri. His research interests center on oil and the energy industry, along with related topics including the environment, political economy, and U.S. relations with the Middle East.



“Environmental Justice and Indigenous Rights”

April 16, 2019, Suzana Sawyer (University of California, Davis) and Julio Prieto (Yale Forestry and Environmental Studies)

Suzana Sawyer is the author of *Crude Chronicles: Indigenous Politics, Multinational Oil, and Neoliberalism in Ecuador*. Professor Sawyer’s research examines struggles over resources in the Ecuadorian Amazon, focusing specifically on conflicts over land and petroleum development among forest peoples, the state, and multinational oil companies. Julio Prieto is a lawyer specializing in Environmental Law, Indigenous’ Rights and Rights of Nature. Since 2006 he has been working as litigant attorney for Ecuadorian indigenous and farmers communities fighting Chevron Corporation over oil pollution in the Ecuadorian Amazon. He is the author of *Rights of Nature, Rationale and Jurisdictional Enforcement*.



“Suing Chevron: The Small Matter of Crude’s Valence of Truth”

April 17, 2019, Suzana Sawyer (University of California, Davis)

A talk by anthropologist Suzana Sawyer on indigenous rights and oil development in the Ecuadorian Amazon, and the years-long litigation against Chevron over oil pollution. Professor Sawyer’s research examines struggles over resources in the Ecuadorian Amazon, focusing specifically on conflicts over land and petroleum development among forest peoples, the state, and multinational oil companies.

Conference: “The Aerial Image”

April 27, 2019

An interdisciplinary conference to explore “the aerial image,” broadly conceived. By drawing on recent work in the environmental humanities, the conference sought to foster critical dialogue around representations of climate, atmospheric pollution, and weather in historical context, as well as prescient studies of the historical intersections of flight, fuel, and aerial image-making practices. In considering the ways that technology, energy, and industrialization have re-shaped aerial spaces since early modernity in Europe and North America, the conference responded to our current moment—marked by the unfolding crisis of anthropogenic climate change and the ongoing deployment of drones and aerial surveillance in both private and military contexts.

Developed from a collaboration featuring Emily Doucet (University of Toronto), Matthew Hunter (McGill University), Jennifer Raab (Yale), and Nicholas Robbins (Yale), and framed by the interdisciplinary aims of Yale Environmental Humanities, the conference showcased an international group of scholars and engaged varied Yale departments and institutions, including English, History of Art, History of Science and Medicine, Film & Media Studies, and both art galleries.



New “Energy and the Humanities” Undergraduate Courses Taught, Spring 2019

Paul Sabin, “American Energy History,” History 199

The history of energy in the United States from early hydropower and coal to present-day hydraulic fracturing, deepwater oil, wind, and solar. Topics include energy transitions and technological change; energy and democracy; environmental justice and public health; corporate power and monopoly control; electricity and popular culture; labor struggles; the global quest for oil; changing national energy policies; the climate crisis. This lecture course was taught as an active-learning, discussion-oriented lecture course in Yale’s TEAL Classroom.

Myles Lennon and Douglas Rogers, “Energy and Power,” Anthropology 317

This course, developed through Yale’s Associates in Teaching Program, explores how physical energy infrastructures configure social and political power across human societies. It enables students to understand contemporary energy challenges not simply as a matter of scarce or unsustainable material resources but also as a matter of socioeconomic inequality, geopolitical instability, structural racism and sexism, indigenous sovereignty, and other social issues. In introducing students to the complex operations of coal, oil, solar, wind, gas, and other energy resources, the course offers a conceptual framework for making sense of the intersecting material and social dynamics of political power. In other words, it provides practical knowledge relevant to today’s greatest resource challenges and also imparts a critical and comprehensive lens for navigating those challenges.