

Studio Script

Course: A History of Oil – Summer 2018

Introduction to Instructor

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Videos Included in Module:

- 1. Introduction to Instructor**

Video 1: “Introduction to Instructor”

Slide:

HIST 2910. Introduction to Instructor.”

- Hello! Welcome to the online course, A History of Oil: Science, Technology, Culture, and Conflict.
- My name is Ian Wereley, and I will be your instructor. I am so excited that you have chosen to join us on this adventure, in which we will journey back in time and explore the hidden history of oil in places across the world. This online course is the first of its kind in Canada, and together we can make it an important hub of new ideas and creative thinking about oil and its impact on our daily lives.
- Today, more than ever before, oil issues are dominating local, national, and global conversations. Turn on any news channel, pick up any current affairs magazine, or eves drop on the conversations of your local coffee shop – oil products and technologies, as well as their environmental impacts, are everywhere. For Canadians, in particular, oil has become such an integral component of our political culture and identity that it is difficult to imagine ourselves living without it.
- In the early twenty-first century, the global energy landscape is in a state of unprecedented flux, and Canada’s energy future is uncertain and unpredictable. The subject of oil is now more than ever a national concern of supreme importance, presenting daunting challenges for future policymakers and everyday consumers alike. Canadians find themselves asking: what effects will the quest for energy and natural resources have on our society and our position on the world stage in the future?

- This online course seeks to use history to address the complex energy dilemmas that Canadians face, particularly as they relate to oil. As a wise mentor once told me, only by looking at the past can we walk into the future. In order to face the daunting energy challenges that lay ahead, we must have a better understanding of the history of oil and its role in shaping the contemporary world. In other words, we can't know where we are going if we don't know where we've been.
- In this course, students will explore the history of oil from the ancient period to the mid-twentieth century, while also conducting conversations about the present day and the future. We will examine a wide variety of topics, including the origins of oil, and the scientific and technological processes by which it is extracted and refined. We will learn about the regions and countries that have played a major role in the history of oil, and locate points of conflict and cooperation between them. Finally, we will analyze the images, stories, and ideas that have been used to think about oil in the past, and try to find similarities and connections with how we interpret oil today.
- Specifically, students will follow a series of themes as they move through the course – science, technology, culture, and conflict – which will guide their learning of the key people, places, and processes that have shaped the history of oil. These themes have also been used to design the assignments and activities you will complete in this course, and they will play an important role in the final exam.
- By the end of this course, you will have a better understanding of oil and the ways in which this fascinating resource has shaped our everyday lives. My ultimate goal in making this course is to

equip learners from all disciplines with the knowledge necessary to make informed decisions about oil.

- {Short pause}
- Ok, let's shift gears a little. Because this is an online course, it is more challenging to build a connection between the instructor and the students. Online courses offer tremendous opportunities to students, but for some, they can also be a little bit lonely and isolating. Hence, it is important that we connect and establish our own presence in this online environment. To facilitate this connectivity, I have included several forums that will allow us to build relationships and share experiences among each other.
- Fear not! While you may find yourself sitting alone at your computer during this course, you will never be without friends, colleagues, your TA, or myself. We are all in this together!
- It is my belief that in order for this course to function properly, it is essential that we connect, and get to know each other. Only when we have an understanding of each other's point of view, goals, and ambitions can we foster the type of dialogue that I wish to see in this course.
- To get these conversations and peer-to-peer connections started, I will begin with a brief introduction to myself and my own history. In keeping with the theme of the course, I will tell this story through the lens of oil.

Short pause

- Oil has completely conditioned my life and way of thinking about the world. It has been a part of my everyday life for thirty-one years, and it is in many ways the reason I am standing before you today. My friends say that I'm obsessed with oil, but I prefer enthusiastic!

- My story of oil begins in the cold winter of 1987. I grew up in a small town called Brockville Ontario, which sits on the St. Lawrence River between Montreal and Toronto. Despite its small size, Brockville is an international oil hub. I have fond memories of watching massive oil tankers sail past on their journey into the interior of Canada, and of long, black oil trains rolling slowly through the city. As a young boy, I can remember day dreaming about where these oily cargoes were coming from, and the destinations to which they were headed.
- Once I was old enough to drive, my interest in oil grew stronger. For the record, I failed my driver's test twice. But once I passed, I gained access to every teenager's dream – a Champaign coloured 1999 Dodge Grand caravan with seating for 7 (but it sometimes fits 10). What I appreciated most about this vehicle was the power of gasoline to open up the world to me. In that minivan, I felt I could go anywhere, and do anything, and bring everyone.
- After high school, I started an undergraduate program in International History at Carleton University. To my surprise, I discovered that oil, and energy in general, were largely invisible subjects – things that were simply 'there' in the fabric of history, but that were rarely considered or problematized on their own. In my undergraduate coursework, I dedicated myself to exploring the topic of oil, and I have never turned back!
- While I chose to enter graduate school, several of my friends went to work in the oilfields of Northern Alberta. This was a painful experience, not for them but for me. There are rarely moments in history as lucrative as the Albertan oil boom of 2010-2012. As I sat at my desk eating noodles and pondering if I could save money by switching to dial up, my friends in Alberta would call me to chat...From Las Vegas...In limo they rented. Indeed, one of my friends

with a high school education was earning six figures per year helping to remove oil sands from the ground. I can't tell you how many times I thought about dropping out and heading west.

- Anyways, I didn't, and in my Master's research at Carleton, I continued to study international history through the lens of energy. My thesis explored the transition from coal to oil fuel that occurred in the British Royal Navy during the early twentieth century, and the sociocultural ramifications that this shift created for Britons at local, national, and international levels. In other words, I looked at how changing uses of energy, in this instance coal and oil, changed people's everyday lives.
- I finished my MA with a hunger to learn more about the history of oil, and its impact on our world today. In 2012, I began my PHD at Carleton with the aim of exploring these topics in greater depth. My program of study focussed on the history of oil and energy in the British Empire, and my research and publications have broadened to include contemporary Canadian energy policy and issues related to climate change.
- Today, I live in Aylmer Quebec with my wife, son, and dog. Monday to Friday, I commute to work for 30 minutes in my Hyundai Elantra, which is reliable but not much else. On the weekends, I often commute to the forest in my 1985 Honda three wheeler, which is fun to drive but certainly not reliable. As with many other millennials, I have several jobs at any given time. I am currently an instructor at Carleton, of course, but I also work for the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies. I conduct research on energy transitions and the cultural history of oil, and currently have projects on the 1970s energy crisis, and the historical oil marketing of British Petroleum. My speciality is the use of understudied sources such as cartoons, advertisements, maps, theatrical productions, and travelling exhibitions to reconstruct the attitudes and

experiences of historical oil consumers. In my mind, the most exciting part of my work is to demonstrate how the history of oil offers important lessons for navigating our own changing energy landscapes. In other words, I look for ways that the transition toward oil can help us in our inevitable transition away from oil.

- This course is the culmination of my long-standing passion for oil, and it is an honour to be able to teach it today. I hope that it also sparks your interest and imagination, and that it encourages you to drill down into the history of oil and its impact on your life.
- To begin this course, I recommend you start by clicking on the Course Essentials section. There, you will find important information about the course, the assignments, and the types of material that we will be covering. Make sure you read and understand the syllabus first.
- Once you have perused the syllabus, you may proceed to the lesson entitled “Start Here – Introduction to this Course,” which can be found in the Course Essentials section.
- Great! Are you ready to dig in? Let’s embark on this adventure in the history of oil together!