

Carleton University
Institute of Political Economy
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Department of Political Science
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Fall 2024

PECO 5503F (PSCI 5504F / SOCI 5504F)
Colonialism and Racial PetroCapitalism
Thursdays, 2:35 pm - 5:25 pm
Dunton Tower 1524

I General information

Instructor: Tyler McCreary
Office Hours: Tues/Thurs, 5:30 pm – 6:30 pm
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II Course description

Fossil Fuels! They are regularly imagined to contain incredible powers, both fueling the global economy and shaping its politics. Fossil fuels are portrayed as simultaneously indispensable to our economy and a tragic political curse that enriches elites while driving racial inequalities, colonial conflicts, and expanding climatic crises. However, tracing the political economy of fossil fuels demonstrates that these relations are not inevitable but the particular effects of the way that fossil fuels are integrated into the global circuits of racial capitalism. This course critically examines the political economy of fossil fuels, colonialism, and race. Doing so, the course takes an explicitly materialist lens to examine the relationship between energy and society, studying the social, political, economic, and environmental impacts of hydrocarbon development within a global capitalist society. Moreover, it focuses on how fossil capitalism is interlinked to uneven development at multiple scales.

Unpacking these relationships, this course is organized into four units. First, it begins with relations of the broadest scale, examining the movements of fossil fuels through the global capitalist system and the role of petroleum in organizing the reigning political economic order. The second section turns to the the question of original accumulation and the dispossession of Indigenous peoples to appropriate hydrocarbon resources. Third, the class shifts to the relationship between transportation technologies and fossil capitalism. Analysis here highlights how race entwines with questions of circulation to structure the political economy of Anglo North America, both at the scale of the city and the nation. Finally, the last section turns to the question of the democracy (or lack thereof) and the politics that petroleum engenders. Here we note the ways that the political visions of dominion and authoritarian domination interlink with the imagined entitlement to fossil fuels, and conversely how decolonial visions open alternative horizons.

III Course Format

As a graduate seminar, this is a conversation-driven class. The form of this conversation includes both in-person classroom dialogue and non-synchronous online exchanges.

Each week, 24 hours prior to class, particular assigned students post reading responses online, including posing five questions of the text. Over the course of the semester, each student will submit two (2) reading responses for assigned texts.

We will begin class by going around the table and having each member of the class share their response to the assigned book. Students are responsible for ensuring that they are familiar with the main arguments under discussion every week and able to contribute to critical commentary around the text.

Then, I will provide a short lecture, situating the text within the broader literature and highlighting how it contributes to understanding the political economy of science and technology. This lecture should clarify what theoretical lineages the author draws upon or draws together. It is designed to help position the book within the larger oeuvre of the author and an understanding of the debates around the relationships between colonialization, racialization, and petro-capitalism. My approach to lectures is dialogic, by which I mean students are encouraged to ask questions. I will try to identify issues of concern or confusion from the initial student responses; however, students should solicit further clarification on points of uncertainty. Following the lecture component, there will be a short break.

The second half of the class will be seminar discussion. Here we will engage the questions posed in the online writing responses, as well as the opening oral remarks by students. We will engage with the books' arguments, methodological approach, conceptual framework, relation to other course readings, and application of the text to particular student research projects. The class will conclude with each class member given the opportunity to make a final comment.

IV Learning outcomes

Attentive the pressing and interlocking climate crises and colonial emergencies, this course aims to support students to:

- i. recognize the mutual entanglements of fossil fuels with racial capitalism and settler colonialism;
- ii. analyze how different political forces, from labourers to Indigenous peoples, are contesting the political, economic, social, and environmental relations imposed by petrocapiatalism;
- iii. read and synthesize texts, engaging scholarship on colonialism, racialization, capitalism and fossil fuels in writing;
- iv. develop the verbal skills to engage in critical class discussion within a seminar setting;
- v. build the intellectual tools not only to understand racial petro-capitalism but also to change it.

V Texts

Required

- Bloom, Nicholas Dagen. 2023. *The Great American Transit Disaster: A Century of Austerity, Auto-Centric Planning, and White Flight*. University of Chicago Press.
- Curley, Andrew. 2023. *Carbon Sovereignty: Coal, Development, and Energy Transition in the Navajo Nation*. University of Arizona Press.
- Daggett, Cara New. 2019. *The Birth of Energy: Fossil Fuels, Thermodynamics, and the Politics of Work*. Duke University Press.
- Dochuk, Darren. 2019. *Anointed with Oil: How Christianity and Crude Made Modern America*. Basic Books.
- Estes, Nick. 2019. *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance*. Verso Books.

- Hamilton, Shane. 2014 [2008]. *Trucking Country: The Road to America's Wal-Mart Economy*. Princeton University Press.
- Mah, Alice. 2023. *Petrochemical Planet: Multiscalar Battles of Industrial Transformation*. Duke University Press.
- Malm, Andreas and the Zetkin Collective. 2021. *White Skin, Black Fuel: On the Danger of Fossil Fascism*. Verso Books.
- McCreary, Tyler. 2024. *Indigenous Legalities, Pipeline Viscosities: Colonial Extractivism and Wet'suwet'en Resistance*. University of Alberta Press.
- Moore, Jason W. 2015. *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital*. Verso.
- Scott, Rebecca R. 2024. *Land of Extraction: Property, Fracking, and Settler Colonialism*. NYU Press.
- Thompson, Heather Ann. 2015 [2001]. *Whose Detroit? Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City*. Cornell University Press.

VI Evaluation at a glance

Critical reading responses	50%
<u>Class discussion participation</u>	<u>50%</u>
Total	100%

VII Evaluation in detail

Critical reading responses

Each critical reading response will consist of a 1,500 - 2,000 word ejournal in which you engage with the author's main arguments. They are assigned to particular students each week and due 24 hours before class so your classmates can read them prior to class. Late submissions will be deducted 15% per hour.

A critical reading response should not only give a synopsis of the book, but also critically appraise its contribution. Thus, you should consider not only the topic of the text but also tools of analysis that the author used. How does the author approach the study of the colonialism and racial petrocapiatalism? What relations do they focus on? What sources of information do they use? How do they interpret this information? What concepts and conceptual frameworks did the author use in her analysis? What social, political, economic, and environmental contexts does the author consider in their analysis? How does the author impact your understanding of colonialism, racialization, and petrocapiatalism? How does this text compare to other course readings? What new dimensions does it add to the class discussion? How does this reading help you reflect on your research?

The purpose is to encourage you to read carefully, develop a critical engagement with the literature, and clearly articulate your thoughts. At the close of each reading response, you should pose five questions for further consideration. The first question should address the topic of the book and it's particular arguments (i.e. how do we understand the author's argument). The second question should ask after the methodological approach of the author (i.e. what sources and modes of interpretation does the author rely upon). The third question should address the conceptual tools that the text presents (i.e. what concepts and frameworks does the author employ). The fourth question should relate this reading to broader thinking around colonialism, racialization, and petrocapiatalism (i.e. how does this reading

relate to the other course texts). The final question should reflect on how the reading can inform your own research and political engagements (i.e. how does the book help you think about your projects).

Class Participation

Your active participation in the seminar represents a significant percentage of your final grade. Attendance is required (either in person or virtually with permission). In addition to attending class, students are expected to contribute to class discussions. You are expected to come to class prepared (both having done the reading and thought about it). Useful contributions to class discussion resonate with the questions that you should engage in the critical reading responses. Students are expected to critically engage the author’s arguments and think through how they help us understand the political economy of science and technology. However, as we are trying to create a democratic learning space, students are also expected to monitor how much they are speaking and make space for others to participate.

VIII Course schedule

Week #	Date	Reading
Introduction		
1	5-Sep-2024	Syllabus
Ecology, Work, and Industry		
2	12-Sep-2024	Moore. <i>Capitalism in the Web of Life</i>
3	19-Sep-2024	Daggett. <i>The Birth of Energy</i>
4	26-Sep-2024	Mah. <i>Petrochemical Planet</i>
Settler Colonialism and Fossil Extractivism		
5	3-Oct-2024	Curley. <i>Carbon Sovereignty</i>
6	10-Oct-2024	Scott. <i>Land of Extraction</i>
7	17-Oct-2024	McCreary. <i>Indigenous Legalities, Pipeline Viscosities</i>
8		
Race, the City, the Freeway, and the Automobile		
9	31-Oct-2024	Thompson. <i>Whose Detroit?</i>
10	7-Nov-2024	Hamilton. <i>Trucking Country</i>
11	14-Nov-2024	Bloom. <i>The Great American Transit Disaster</i>
Petro-Politics from Dominion to Decolonization		
12	21-Nov-2024	Dochuk. <i>Anointed with Oil</i>
13	28-Nov-2024	Malm & Zetkin. <i>White Skin, Black Fuel</i>
14	5-Dec-2024	Estes. <i>Our History Is the Future</i>

Attach most recent version of Course Outline Appendix. Please do not make changes to the Appendix; it is supposed to be consistent across all courses in the Department.