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Fall 2023 office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 12:00pm – 2:00pm, Wednesdays 6:00pm – 7:00pm, and by appointment.

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LIT 6934-001

The Literature of Extraction: Reading Energy Culture

Wednesday, 7:10pm – 10:00pm

Room CU 321

In the end, we need not just new energy sources to unmake the Anthropocene, we need to put those new energy sources in the service of creating politics and ecologies that do not repeat the expenditures, inequalities, and exclusions of the past—

Cymene Howe, *Ecologics: Wind and Power in the Anthropocene* (2019)

Land Acknowledgement: As participants in this class we recognize that Florida Atlantic University resides on the ancestral territories of the Apalachee, the Muscogee Creek, the Miccosukee, and the Seminole nations. This acknowledgement is not a memorial, but a testament to the ongoing histories of Indigenous peoples to whom we offer our gratitude as we work and live on these lands.

Course Description:

What would happen if we were to examine literary texts through the lens of energy? That is, what if we approached William Wordsworth's Romantic ruminations on the "sublime" crafts of "men's arts" as a praxis for thinking about the material forces of the sublime—"motion and means...on land and sea" made possible first by the winds that would move commerce across the Atlantic Ocean in the long sixteenth century and soon thereafter by coal? What if we understood colonial occupation in the context of East Africa or throughout Latin America in terms of the transnational plantation economies that would also be fueled by wind or hydropower or coal, and thus conducted postcolonial critiques of novels like Gabriel García Márquez's *Autumn of the Patriarch* or Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat* accordingly? Might we then understand energy not merely in terms of the "fuel-injected" American dream featured in a Bruce Springsteen song, but instead as the very means of fueling culture? Might we then appreciate that the conventional tropes of literary expression and critique are the products of the material forces contemporary to each work? That petroleum, for example, isn't simply a theme, but is that which enables the very production of culture?

As a seminar on "Reading Energy," this course shall focus on the imbrications between energy and cultural production in order to understand the ways in which material forces like coal or petroleum or "solarity" literally *fuel* culture. We shall explore a wide archive of works that represent, in the words of literary scholar Patricia Yaeger, the "ages of wood...coal...oil" and ultimately *alternative*

fuel sources like wind and solar power; and we shall move across various energy “ages” in order to arrive in the critical-utopian landscape of solarpunk—a genre that presents a viable and convivial world after extraction, and one that rejects the dystopian alarmism of conventional climate fiction. Writers including Ursula LeGuin, Amitav Ghosh, Rokeya Hossein, Nawal El Saadawi, Ken Saro-Wiwa and Patrick Chamoiseau will serve as our guides as we explore the intersections between cultural discourse, political ideology, and aesthetic expression.

Required Texts:

Elly Blue, *Biketopia: Feminist Bicycle Science Fiction Stories in Extreme Futures*, ISBN-13: 978-1621062066

Patrick Chamoiseau, *Slave Old Man*, ISBN-13: 978-1-62097-588-6

Becky Chambers, *A Psalm for the Wild Built*, ISBN: 978-1-250-23621-0

Ursula LeGuin, *The Word for World is Forest*, ISBN-13: 978-0765324641

Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*, ISBN-13: 978-0452273870

All readings appended with an asterisk () will be made available on Canvas.

Class requirements and Policies:

- **Keyword essays:** each student will prepare two brief (2-3 page) expositions over the course of the term that tackle key terms—e.g., “energy” or “solarity.” Essays shall respond to a key text from our weekly readings and should contain: clear explanations of central concepts along with close readings of key passages to explicate your chosen concepts. It is expected that the short essays will follow a logical research itinerary—that is, the keyword essays are designed to offer an opportunity to explore ideas and concepts with an eye toward the final project.
- **Book review:** students will compose either a traditional book review of 1500-2500 words or a longer “review essay” based upon either one of the assigned texts or an available book for review in a relevant journal. We will discuss genre conventions and submission procedures in class.
- **Seminar leadership:** each student will select a weekly discussion to lead. This will require a brief (3-5 minute) synopsis of central ideas; a selection of keywords to anchor class conversation; and a minimum of two questions for class discussion. **Students are encouraged to lead a discussion based upon the same text for which they prepared a keyword essay.*
- **Conference abstract** (250-500 words): each student will construct an abstract for an academic, or otherwise relevant, conference. Examples will be made available on Canvas.
- **Final seminar paper (20-25 pages) or alternative project. Each student shall produce one of the following:** 1) a formal critique of selected works inclusive of appropriate secondary source material. (We will discuss secondary source material, including our library’s electronic resources as well as a host of digital archives focused on Energy Humanities research, as we move through the semester.) 2) alternatively, each student will engage in a form of “service-learning”; examples include public discussions, campus dialogues, guest lectures for colleagues’ classrooms, and more. We will discuss possible options in class.

Grading policy:

Keyword essays: 40%

Book review: 15%

Seminar leadership: 15%

Paper abstract: 5%

Final Project: 25%

Attendance/Lateness Policy:

Your presence is vital to our classroom community, so regular attendance is required. You will be permitted *one unexcused absence* after which your grade will be negatively affected. You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss assigned texts and to produce written responses both in class and at home. You are also expected to bring your textbook(s) to class every session.

Grade Scale:

Florida Atlantic University follows a plus/minus (+/-) grading system. Numeric Values for this course are as follows: 93-100 A+; 92-90 A-; 89-87 B+; 86-83 B; 82-80 B-; 79-77 C+; 76-73 C; 72-70 C-; 69-60 D; 59-0 F

FAU ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Students are expected to attend all of their scheduled University classes and to satisfy all academic objectives as outlined by the instructor. The effect of absences upon grades is determined by the instructor, and the University reserves the right to deal at any time with individual cases of non-attendance. Students are responsible for arranging to make up work missed because of legitimate class absence, such as illness, family emergencies, military obligation, court-imposed legal obligations or participation in University- approved activities. Examples of University-approved reasons for absences include participating on an athletic or scholastic team, musical and theatrical performances and debate activities. It is the student's responsibility to give the instructor notice prior to any anticipated absences and within a reasonable amount of time after an unanticipated absence, ordinarily by the next scheduled class meeting. Instructors must allow each student who is absent for a University-approved reason the opportunity to make up work missed without any reduction in the student's final course grade as a direct result of such absence.

STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES: In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), students who require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS)—in Boca Raton, SU 133 (561-297-3880); in Davie, LA 203 (954-236-1222); or in Jupiter, SR 110 (561-799-8585) —and follow all SAS procedures. For more information, see <http://www.fau.edu/sas/>

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS) CENTER: Life as a university student can be challenging physically, mentally and emotionally. Students who find stress negatively affecting their ability to achieve academic or personal goals may wish to consider utilizing FAU's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center. CAPS provides FAU students a range of services – individual counseling, support meetings, and psychiatric services, to name a few – offered to help improve and maintain emotional well-being. For more information, go to <http://www.fau.edu/counseling/>

CODE OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the university mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the university community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see: http://wise.fau.edu/regulations/chapter4/Reg_4.001_5-26-10_FINAL.pdf

Class Schedule: (subject to change depending on class progress)

Week 1: Introductions, Reading Energy (8/23)

Cara New Daggett, "Introduction: Putting the World to Work," from *The Birth of Energy: Fossil Fuels, Thermodynamics, and the Politics of Work**
Thea Riofrancos, "Extractivism and Extractivismo," in *Global South Studies**
Jeffrey Insko, "Extraction," from *The Cambridge Companion to Environmental Humanities**
Dominic Boyer & Imre Szeman, "The Rise of Energy Humanities"*
Patricia Yaeger, "Literature in the Ages of Wood, Tallow, Coal, Whale Oil, Gasoline, Atomic Power, and Other Energy Sources"*
Herman Melville, "Extracts" & "The Lamp" from *Moby Dick**

Week 2: Extractive Zones (8/30)

Ramachandra Guha & Juan Aliers, "Introduction," from *Varieties of Environmentalism: Essays North and South**
Marisol de la Cadena, from "Uncommoning Nature: Stories from the Anthropo-Not-Seen"*
Macarena Gómez-Barris, from *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives**
Iva Peša, "Anthropocene Narratives of Living with Resource Extraction in Africa"*
Imbolo Mbue, from *How Beautiful We Were**

Week 3: White Gold (9/6)

Françoise Vergés, "The Racial Capitalocene"*
Khalil Muhammad, "The Sugar that Saturates the American Diet has a Barbaric History as the 'White Gold' that Fueled Slavery"*
Patrick Chamoiseau, *Slave Old Man*

Week 4: Sylvan Aesthetics (9/13)

Vin Nardizi, "Wood," from *Fueling Culture**
Richard Powers, from *The Overstory**
Amitav Ghosh, from *The Glass Palace**
Ursula LeGuin, *The Word for World is Forest*

Week 5: King Coal (9/20)

Ashley Dawson, "Coal," from *Fueling Culture**
Stacey Balkan, "Slum Ecologies: Figuring (Energy) Waste in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*," from *Rogues in the Postcolony: Narrating Extraction and Itinerancy in India**
Aravind Adiga, *The White Tiger*

Week 6: Geology, Race, and Matter (9/27) (*this week will be conducted via Zoom as I will be speaking at the Symposium on "Capitalism, Climate, and Cultural Study" at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign)

Kathryn Yusoff, "Geology, Race, and Matter" from *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None**
Shouhei Tanaka, "Fossil Fuel Fiction and the Geologies of Race"*
Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*

Week 7: Petrofictions (10/4)

Simon Arpana, from *Gasoline Dreams: Waking up from Petroculture**

Amitav Ghosh, "Petrofiction: The Oil Encounter and the Novel"*

Imre Szeman, "Conjectures on World Energy Literature," from *Oil Fictions: World Literature and our Contemporary Petrosphere**

Abdelrahman Munif, from *Cities of Salt**

Jason Haslam, "The Call of Cthoilu: The Weird Subject of Cold Water Oil," from *Cold Water Oil: Offshore Petroleum Cultures*

China Mieville, "Covehithe"*

Week 8: Pipe Dreams (10/11) (*this week will be conducted via Zoom as I will be participating in the After Oil School in Toronto: <https://www.petrocultures.com/projects/>)

Rob Nixon, "Pipedream: Ken Saro-Wiwa, Environmental Justice and Micro-Minority Rights" from *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor**

Kan Saro-Wiwa, "Ogoni! Ogoni!"*

Wendy W. Walters, "We are Pipeline People: Nnedi Okorafor's Ecocritical Speculations," from *Oil Fictions: World Literature and our Contemporary Petrosphere**

Nnedi Okorafor, "Spider the Artist"*

Week 9: Gendering Petrofiction (10/18)

Cultures of Energy podcast: Sheena Wilson*

Cara New Daggett, "Petro-masculinity: Fossil Fuels and Authoritarian Desire"*

Sharae Deckard, "Gendering Petrofiction: Energy, Imperialism and Social Reproduction," from *Oil Fictions: World Literature and our Contemporary Petrosphere**

Nawal El Saadawi, *Love in the Kingdom of Oil*

Week 10: The Nuclear Option (10/25)

Lester R. Brown, "Nuclear Power in Decline," from *The Great Transition: Shifting from Fossil Fuels to Solar and Wind Energy**

Kyle Powys Whyte, "Way Beyond the Lifeboat: An Indigenous Allegory of Climate Justice"*

Simon Ortiz, "Our Homeland: A National Sacrifice Area," from *Woven Stone**

Terry Tempest Williams, from *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place**

Week 11: Imagining Just Futures (11/1) (*this week will be conducted via Zoom as I will be speaking at the Annual Meeting of the American Studies Association in Montreal)

Shelley Streeby, "Introduction," *Imagining the Future of Climate Change: World-Making Through Science Fiction and Activism**

Rachel Carson, "A Fable for Tomorrow," from *Silent Spring**

After Oil Collective, from *After Oil**

After Oil Collective, from *Solarities: Seeking Energy Justice**

Ashley Dawson, "The Energy Commons," from *People's Power**

Week 12: Solar Utopias (11/8)

Oxana Timofeeva, from *Solar Politics**

Elizabeth Carolyn Miller, "We Do Not Fight for a Piece of Diamond," from *Extraction Ecologies and the Literature of the Long Exhaustion**

Rokeya Hossein, *Sultana's Dream*

Week 13: Solar Fascism, or “Renewable Masculinities” (11/15)

Naomi Klein, from *The Battle for Paradise: Puerto Rico Takes on the Disaster Capitalists**
Ganzeer, *The Solar Grid**

Week 14: Solarpunk (11/22) (Thanksgiving is observed on Thursday 11/23; the university is closed on Wednesday 11/22 & Friday 11/24; we will hold an asynchronous discussion via Canvas)

Cultures of Energy podcast: Rhys Williams*
Stacey Balkan, “Can Solarpunk Save the World”*
Kate V. Bui, “Deer, Tiger, Witch”*
Becky Chambers, *A Psalm for the Wild Built*

Week 15: Biketopia (11/29)

Adonia E. Jugo, from *Bicycle/Race**
Elly Blue, *Biketopia: Feminist Bicycle Science Fiction Stories in Extreme Futures*