

The History of Oil

HIST 1115/SEES 1115

Spring 2026



University of Iowa, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Lecture: TTH 11:00-11:50am (0AAA)

[Schaeffer Hall \(SH\) 140](#)

Discussion: F 11:30-12:20pm (0A01)

[Schaeffer Hall \(SH\) 74](#)

Discussion: F 1:30-2:20pm (0A02)

[Schaeffer Hall \(SH\) 31](#)

Professor Richard (Tyler) Priest, Department of History

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Zoom Meeting Room: <https://uiowa.zoom.us/j/9397749856>

Top Hat Code: 270685

Drop-in hours: Tues 3:30-5:00pm; Thus 9:00-10:30am. Also available by appointment in person or on Zoom.

Bio: <https://history.uiowa.edu/people/tyler-priest>; <http://typriest.com/>

Maggie Brandes, Teaching Assistant

Email: margaret-brandes@uiowa.edu

Office: 380M Schaeffer Hall

Zoom Meeting Room: <https://uiowa.zoom.us/j/5997533541>

Drop-in hours: Tues 1:00-2:30pm; Wed 2:45-4:15pm. Also available by appointment in person or on Zoom.

Professor Colin Gordon

DEO, History, Contact: colin-gordon@uiowa.edu

The meek shall inherit the Earth, but NOT its mineral rights.

J. Paul Getty

Course Description

This course provides broad historical perspective on the business, diplomacy, geology, technology, politics, environment, and culture of the global oil (petroleum) industry. It asks students to contemplate the big questions surrounding the origins, development, and meaning of the “Age of Petroleum,” an age in which we continue to live. How and why did oil become the most powerful international business of the last 160 years? What were the factors behind oil’s emergence as the world’s main transportation fuel, a chief source of heat and electricity, and the building block for a proliferating array of consumer goods? How and why did struggles over oil become central to world politics and shape the rise and fall of nations? How do we wrestle with the trade-offs between the unprecedented wealth and prosperity generated by oil development and the social, economic, and environmental costs that have come with it? How has the search for oil fostered human awareness of both Earth’s deep history and the fragility of ecosystems on which we depend?

Learning Objectives

Students completing this class will gain essential insight into modern global history. The course emphasizes the importance of thinking historically, developing explanations for why the past unfolded as it did, rather than along an alternative path. In this class, which fulfills a General Education Requirement for “Historical Perspectives,” students will study both primary and secondary sources to learn how professional historians work. The course also satisfies the “Sustainability” GE Requirement, which focuses on the “interconnectedness of human actions across complex natural systems.” The subject of petroleum is perhaps one of the most important to understanding the challenges and opportunities for creating healthy ecosystems, social systems, and economies.

In addition to expanding your knowledge base, this course aims to improve your written and oral expression of ideas and sharpen your analytical abilities in reading, writing, listening, and note taking. In the discussion sections, we will use inquiry-based activities to build skills in critical thinking, teamwork, and effective written and oral communication. As oil development will continue to have a large impact on our lives, this course is also designed to expand your understanding of the costs and benefits of oil to modern society and to prepare you to confront the challenges of ensuring energy sustainability over the long run. This course will also serve as a gateway for further study in History, as well as in other energy and sustainability-related courses at the University of Iowa.

Core Competencies for General Education in Historical Perspectives

History is about comprehending the temporal (time-based) conditions of existence. The basic work of historians is *to explain change and continuity over time*. Historians rely

on a set of evolving rules and methods that enable us to study the past with clarity and rigor. Such study requires evidence and informed analysis, along with an appreciation for differing interpretations. In this class, we will be working with both primary and secondary sources to learn to “think historically” in becoming apprentice historians.

Core Competencies for General Education in Sustainability

According to the UN World Commission on Environment and Development, “sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Courses in the area of sustainability tend to use a systems-thinking approach. That is, sustainability touches all natural and human life and in turn all human endeavors and activities, with courses studying the interconnectedness of human actions across complex natural systems, focusing on the consequence of these interactions over time and by place, including how these typically evolve, creating multiple, unintended outcomes.

Course Requirements

Textbook/Materials

The following required text may be purchased at [Iowa Hawk Shop](#) or from most book retailers on-line. It is also available as an ebook through UI Libraries InfoHawk.

Robert McNally, *Crude Volatility: The History and the Future of Boom-Bust Oil Prices* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

We will also be reading a good portion of Anthony Sampson, *The Seven Sisters: The Great Oil Companies and the World They Shaped* (New York: Bantam, 1975). This book is out-of-print, but PDFs of the chapters are posted in ICON. Alternatively, used copies of this book are widely and cheaply available from online retailers.

Other course readings and materials are posted as PDF documents, JPEGs, or via hyperlink in Canvas. See “Schedule” below for complete list of readings.

Expectations

The general expectation is that you come to the course eager to learn about the history of oil. The course is designed with the assumption that you have little or no prior knowledge of the subject. Rather, it is designed to introduce you to the history oil, expose you to various ways of thinking about the subject, and suggest different disciplinary approaches to help you consider an academic major.

Canvas

We will use Canvas, <https://uiowa.instructure.com/>, to manage materials for the class. The syllabus, PDFs of readings, website links, announcements, and grades can all be

accessed through this site. The class is structured by week in the “Modules” section of the website. Use your HawkID and password to log into Canvas. Remember to check the Canvas course website regularly for updates. These will be our principal means of communicating with you outside of class.

Email

According to University policy, students are responsible for all official correspondence sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). We will make class announcements primarily through our course Canvas site, but do check your UI e-mail often as well, in case I need to communicate with you individually. We will reply to emails from your UI address within 24 hours M-F.

Classroom Format

This class is taught through a combination of engaged lecture and inquiry-based discussion. Tuesday and Thursday meetings will consist of lecture, Q&A, and Top Hat interactions. Friday meetings will consist largely of discussions about lectures and other course materials. The Friday meetings will also include quizzes, in-class writing, and group exercises and activities.

Attendance at both Tuesday-Thursday lectures and Friday discussions is required to do well in the class. **For the exams, you will be responsible for assigned readings, films, and sources, as well as material presented in lecture and in discussion.** The attendance policy is outlined below. If you are unable to attend class because of illness, authorized University activities, or other circumstances that warrant special attention, you must notify the instructors by email or telephone at the earliest possible opportunity. Only an excused absence entitles students to make up graded work.

Arrive to class on time and be attentive for the entire period. If you arrive late, come in quietly – but don’t make arriving late a habit. During class time, do not chat with neighbors, read materials unrelated to class, eat or drink noisily, or otherwise disturb the meeting. Smartphones, laptops, and tablets are allowed in the lecture, provided they are used only for note taking or tasks directly related to the course. Silence all cell phones before you enter the room. Do not answer phones or send/check messages during class. At all times, please be respectful of classmates and the professor. The goal is to learn from others’ ideas in an open, tolerant atmosphere.

This course will use the **Top Hat** “student response system” to promote active learning in class. Please [Top Hat FAQ for Students](#). **Top Hat Course Code: 270685.** Students may use any device with internet connectivity (smartphone, laptop, or tablet) to connect to the daily Top Hat session. We will use this software to take attendance, pose questions, and assist with discussion. Top Hat requires a license to participate. Create and access your Top Hat account through your Canvas course site. The license is \$10 per student for the semester, which will be charged to your Ubill. You may [opt out](#) of

this content, but the consequences of doing so may affect your outcomes in this course. Students who change their minds after the opt-out deadline and wish to participate may purchase a license from Top Hat at the full retail price. One active Top Hat license will cover multiple courses at once.

Tuesday-Thursday Meetings

This class demands a high level of engagement by students with the readings and assignments. Come to class having prepared from the readings, videos, and/or documents assigned for that day. PowerPoint slides that accompany Tuesday-Thursday lectures will be posted in Canvas. The PowerPoint slides will be mostly images, not bullet-point details of the lectures. Part of learning in a classroom format is listening actively and taking notes on things you find important. Feel free to meet with the instructors for tips on taking notes and studying for this class. Early in the semester, we will work on note taking strategies and skills (see below). If you miss a class, you are responsible for obtaining notes from a classmate. Oral and virtual (Top Hat) participation in class lectures is strongly encouraged.

Friday Meetings

On Fridays, your teaching assistant will guide classroom discussions (maximum 30 students). Friday discussions serve two purposes. First, they conduct review and Q&A sessions for lectures and other course material. The quizzes during the first six weeks are designed to help you keep up with course material and prepare for the midterm exam. Meetings during the second half will focus on working with primary sources in addition to review of course material. Primary sources are documents, physical objects, or creative works that were written or created during the time under study. They offer an inside view or contemporary perspective of a particular event or time. They are the raw materials with which historians build narratives. Primary sources include maps, photographs, news stories, archival documents, diaries, speeches, artwork, propaganda films and advertisements, political cartoons, and songs, poems, and fiction. Such sources will provide an opportunity for creative exploration of the themes presented on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Tues-Thus Attendance

Attendance will be taken via Top Hat every Tuesday and Thursday. Attendance will count for 20 points, or 10% of your final grade. You are allowed three *unexcused* absences without penalty on your attendance grade. You are allowed one *excused* absence for short-term illness without documentation, if you notify us by email within 24 hours of missing the class. For further absences, you must provide an absence explanation using [this form](#) within 24 hours, or else it will be counted as unexcused.

Attendance grading criteria is as follows:

20 points – No more than 3 unexcused absences

18 points – No more than 4 unexcused absences

- 16 points – No more than 5 unexcused absences
- 14 points – No more than 6 unexcused absences
- 12 points – No more than 7 unexcused absences
- 10 points or below – More than 7 unexcused absences

For illness that requires you to miss more than three consecutive classes, you must provide additional documentation for the absence, which may include a list of appointments from MyChart or a note from a health care provider stating that you have been under the doctor's care. For your own privacy, you should not share your specific medical record. For long-term absences (generally, more than five days of classes), I will require a notification from the Registrar of the reasons for the absences.

If a personal crisis affects your ability to complete the course or affects an entire semester's registration, you should immediately contact CLAS Academic Programs and Student Development (120 Schaeffer Hall). Students may call or stop by to make an appointment. Here is the Office of the Registrar's policy for class absences: <https://registrar.uiowa.edu/absence-class>.

Participation and Engagement

You will be evaluated on your participation and engagement (P&E) in Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday meetings. You can earn P&E credit through oral participation, Top Hat responses, and Friday group activities.

We understand that speaking in class can be a stressful or daunting experience for some students. But learning to organize and communicate your thoughts orally is an important part of academic development and an essential part of becoming an engaged citizen. We expect everyone to contribute to discussions and to making the classroom and comfortable and respectful intellectual environment in which all can participate.

P&E grading criteria is as follows:

- 20 points – High level of P&E
- 18 points – Above average P&E
- 16 points – Average P&E
- 14 points – Below average P&E
- 12 points – Minimal P&E
- 10 points or below – Sub-minimal P&E

Weekly Study Guides

Note taking is a vital skill to assist learning and synthesizing information. One objective of this course is to improve your comprehension of academic lectures and readings. Each week, Learning Objective **Study Guides** will be posted in Canvas. They will consist of a series of questions and terms to help guide you through the assigned readings, primary documents, and/or films for that week. The best use for the weekly

study guides is to outline or write-out answers to the questions as you do the assignment. The study guides are for your own use and are not to be submitted for a grade. During the first Discussion meeting on 1/23, your TA will spend time discussing best practices for taking notes and using the study guides.

Quizzes

At the beginning of class on six different Friday meetings early in the semester, your TA will administer a short quiz (2-5 questions, multiple choice and/or short answer) based on the lectures and readings from that week. These are to ensure that students are completing the course readings/films and understanding the material. We will count your highest scores from five quizzes.

In-Class Writing and Response Papers

During the second part of the semester, you will submit five short writing assignments. Three of these will be written in-class during the Friday discussion. The other two will be "response papers," 2-3-pages (500-750 words) in length. Response papers are short commentaries or responses to assigned readings or films, designed to help deepen your thinking about various oil-related subjects. They should be submitted in advance of the Friday discussion section. Further instructions will be provided.

Exams

There are two exams for this class, a midterm (40 points) and final (45 points), worth a combined 42.5 percent of your final grade. The midterm, administered in class on March 10, will cover all course material from the beginning of the semester through March 6. The final exam (date TBD) will cover all material since the midterm. The format for the exams will be matching questions, multiple-choice questions, and written-answer questions. Exam study guides will be provided in advance for each exam, and your TA will host an exam review session for both the midterm and final.

Missed Assignments

Only students whose absences are excused will be given the opportunity to make up overdue assignments without penalty. It is expected that all work will be made up as soon as possible after the missed assignment. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor or TA immediately if a paper or exam was missed (or is about to be missed). Specific arrangements for make-ups will be made on a case-by-case basis. Unless there are truly extraordinary circumstances, students must contact the instructors within one day after the missed assignment to make arrangements.

There is a window of one week for making up an assignment or exam. If you have a documented reason for missing the exam, you have one week to make it up. For example, you may not make up the midterm, even with a documented excuse, at the end of the semester. If you require more than one week to make up the midterm exam, you are advised to drop the course.

Evaluation

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Due Date</i>	<i>Points/Percentage</i>
Tues-Thus Attendance	Ongoing	20 points (10%)
Participation & Engagement	Ongoing	20 points (10%)
Quizzes (6 – Best 5)	Various	25 points (12.5%)
In-Class Writing (3)	Various	30 points (15%)
Response Papers (2)	Various	20 points (10%)
Midterm Exam	March 10	40 points (20%)
Final Exam	TBA	45 points (22.5%)
Total		200 points

Course Letter Grade:

There will be 200 points possible in the course, corresponding to the percentages listed above. Your final grade will be calculated according to the following scale:

200-185 – A
 184-180 – A-
 179-173 – B+
 172-165 – B
 164-160 – B-
 159-153 – C+
 152-145 – C
 144-140 – C-
 139-133 – D+
 132-125 – D
 124-120 – D-
 119- -- F

A grade: demonstrates exceptional work that goes beyond the mere recitation of content encountered in the class. Written A work demonstrates a high level of critical thinking and analysis and the ability to synthesize concepts learned throughout the semester to produce an insightful perspective on the subject at hand. To achieve an A, students must consistently attend class, engage with the subject matter, and demonstrate preparedness. We do not award A+ grades in this course.

B grade: attempts critical thinking and analysis and shows solid grasp of the required reading. Students who achieve B-level work consistently attend class and demonstrate preparedness.

C grade: demonstrates a basic level of effort and competence with the course materials but also gaps in critical thinking, comprehension or synthesis of the material, and incomplete command of basic facts. Irregular attendance often results in C-level work.

D grade: does not meet basic standards of competency in the course. D-level work shows incomprehension of the course content and falls short of expectations for college-level coursework. A significant number of absences and a failure to complete assignments often result in substandard work.

Grades for response papers will be posted within one week. Grades for the midterm will be posted within two weeks.

There is a window of two weeks for appealing grades. Once you have received a grade for a given assignment (paper, exam), you have two weeks to appeal if you think you have received an incorrect score. For example, we will not consider an appeal at the end of the semester for the midterm exam. Rarely, and almost only in the case of an obvious error, do we change grades.

Drop-In Hours:

Professor Priest, Tues 3:30-5:00pm & Thus 9:00-10:30am; TA Maggie Brandes, Tues 1:00-2:30pm; Wed 2:45-4:15pm. During these times, we will be available to meet in our offices. Please speak with us whenever you have any questions about the course materials or requirements, if you need help, or would like to know more about a particular topic. "Drop in" means that you do not need an appointment. If your schedule makes it difficult for you to come to our office hours, send us an email or talk to us after class so that we can set up an appointment at some time that works. Email is the best way to contact us outside of the classroom. Our policy is to respond to all student emails during weekdays within 24 hours. We cannot guarantee a response to emails on weekends, but we usually find time to do so.

Academic Integrity

All students in CLAS courses are expected to abide by the [CLAS Code of Academic Honesty](#). Academic misconduct, including plagiarism, must be reported by instructors to CLAS according to these [procedures](#). Examples of academic misconduct:

- **Plagiarism** includes, but is not limited to, intentional *or unintentional* use of direct quotes without proper attribution and/or quotation marks; the use of someone else's ideas without appropriate attribution; and handing in someone else's work as your own. Our ICON site uses plagiarism detection software.
- **Artificial Intelligence** tools (ChapGPT, etc.): Because building your skills in analytical reading and writing are key learning objectives of this course, submitting work generated with AI assistance will be treated as a violation of academic honesty.
- **Posting Materials Online.** Please note that students are forbidden from posting any class materials (power points, syllabi, quizzes, tests, etc.) onto any website. All materials will be made available through Canvas. Any posting of any class

materials on any website will be considered Academic Misconduct and will be reported to the University Administration.

Students With Disabilities

For those students requiring accommodations, please present your Letter of Accommodation during the first week of class.

Resources for Academic Support

[Tutor Iowa](#). UIowa academic support information.

[History Department Writing Center](#). Browse their excellent online handouts or make an appointment for writing help.

Schedule

Week 1

1/20 Lecture: Introduction

1/22 Lecture: What is History? What is Oil?

Reading: Katherine Pickering Antonova, "What is History" 3-3.2, in *The Essential Guide to Writing History Essays* (Oxford Press, 2020), pp. 30-44 (PDF)

1/23 Discussion: How to Take This Class (Reading, Studying, Note-taking)

Websites: Jonathan Wilson, [How to Study a History Textbook](#) (A "secondary source"); UI History Teaching and Writing Center, [Taking Lecture Notes](#)

Quiz 1 - Based on Week 1 Lecture and Study Guide

Week 2

1/27 Lecture: Let There Be Artificial Light

1/29 Lecture: Oil on the Brain: The Origins of the Oil Industry

Reading: McNally, *Crude Volatility*, pp. 1-19

Film: [The Prize: Episode 1, Our Plan](#), first 20 minutes

1/30 Discussion: Who Owns the Oil Underground?

Quiz 2 - Based on Week 2 Lectures and Study Guide

Week 3

2/3 Lecture: John D. Rockefeller and Standard Oil

Reading: McNally, *Crude Volatility*, pp. 19-32; Anthony Sampson, *The Seven Sisters: The Great Oil Companies and the World They Shaped* (New York: Viking, 1975), pp. 21-32 (PDF)
Film: [The Prize: Episode 1, Our Plan](#), minutes 20-42

2/5 Lecture: Challengers to Standard Oil (C-SPAN to film)

Reading: McNally, *Crude Volatility*, pp. 32-40; Sampson, *The Seven Sisters*, pp. 32-59 (PDF)
Film: [The Prize: Episode 2, Empires of Oil](#), first 38 minutes

2/6 Discussion: The Dissolution of Standard Oil

Website: UI History Teaching and Writing Center, [How to Read a Primary Source](#)
Primary Sources: "On the Standard Oil Company: Ida M. Tarbell, John D. Rockefeller, U.S. Supreme Court" (PDF); "Petroleum – The Master," *The Oceeco* (October 1918)
Film: [The Prize: Episode 1, Our Plan](#), minutes 42-54
Quiz 3 – Based on Week 3 Lectures and Study Guide

Week 4

2/10 Lecture: Imperial Rivalries and World War I

Reading: Sampson, *Seven Sisters*, pp. 59-74
Films: [The Prize: Episode 2, Empires of Oil](#), minutes 38-53; Alternate Focus, ["WWI Sykes-Picot Agreement: Post War Goals of Imperialism and Zionism,"](#) (2013), 21 minutes

2/12 Lecture: Opening the Door to the Middle East

Reading: Sampson, *The Seven Sisters*, pp. 74-92 (PDF)
Film: [The Prize: Episode 3, The Black Giant](#), first 37 minutes

2/13 Discussion: Maps and Timelines

Maps: Europe, British Empire, Middle East, Sykes Picot, Red Line Agreement, Southeast Asia, Oil Locations
Quiz 4 – Based on Maps
 Group timeline exercises

Week 5

2/17 Lecture: Technological Innovations

Reading: Nicolas Lemann, "Texas Primer: The Hughes Drill Bit," *Texas Monthly* (February 1982) (PDF); Mark Mau and Henry Edmundson, ["Geophysics Enters the Fray,"](#) from *Groundbreakers: The Story of Oilfield Technology and the People that Made It Happen* (2015)

2/19 Lecture: Boomtimes

Reading: McNally, *Crude Volatility*, pp. 41-58

Film: [The Prize: Episode 3, The Black Giant](#), minutes 28-31

2/20 Discussion: Labor and Race in Oil

Reading: Mark Boxell, "Texas, the Tulsa Race Massacre, and White-Supremacist

Energies: Petroleum Workers and Anti-Black Violence in the Mid-Continent Oilfields,"

Journal of Energy History #9 (January 2023): 1-15 (PDF)

Primary Source: The CIO and the Baytown Employees' Federation (1941-1942)

Quiz 5 - Based on Week 5 Lectures and Study Guide

Week 6**2/24 Lecture: The Magic of Gasoline**

Reading: McNally, *Crude Volatility*, pp. 58-61

Films: [The Prize: Episode 3, The Black Giant](#), minutes 31-33

2/26 Lecture: Oversupply and Bust

Reading: McNally, *Crude Volatility*, pp. 61-92; Sampson, pp. 92-103 (PDF)

Film: [The Prize: Episode 3, The Black Giant](#), minutes 33-53

2/27 Discussion: Oil and the Environment

Reading: Joseph Pratt, "Letting the Grandchildren Do It: Environmental Planning

During the Ascent of Oil as A Major Energy Source," *The Public Historian* 2, no. 4

(Summer 1980): 28-61 (PDF)

Quiz 6 - Based on Week 6 Lectures and Study Guide

Week 7**3/3 Lecture: The Cornerstone Concessions**

Reading: Sampson, *The Seven Sisters*, pp. 104-112 (PDF)

Film: [The Prize: Episode 5, Crude Diplomacy](#), first 22 minutes

3/5 Lecture: Oil and the Second World War

Reading: McNally, *Crude Volatility*, pp. 92-94; Sampson, *Seven Sisters*, pp. 112-116 (PDF)

Film: [The Prize: Episode 4, War and Oil](#), 55 minutes

3/6 Discussion: Exam Review Session

Website: UI History Teaching and Writing Center, [Taking Exams](#)

Week 8

3/10 MIDTERM EXAM (in class)**3/12 Lecture: *Pax Americana* (The American Peace)**

Reading: McNally, *Crude Volatility*, pp. 94-96; Sampson, *Seven Sisters*, pp. 116-134 (PDF)

Film: [The Prize: Episode 5, Crude Diplomacy](#), minutes 22-53

3/13 Discussion: The New Center of Gravity

Primary Sources: Everette DeGolyer, "Preliminary Report of the Technical Oil Mission to the Middle East," with supplementary notes (February 1, 1944)

In-Class Writing 1**Week 9**

3/16: *NO CLASS* - SPRING BREAK

3/18: *NO CLASS* - SPRING BREAK

3/19: *NO CLASS* - SPRING BREAK

Week 10**3/24 *No Class*: The International Oil Order (UI Capture)**

Reading: McNally, *Crude Volatility*, pp. 96-103; Sampson, *Seven Sisters*, pp. 135-166 (PDF)

Film: [The Prize: Episode 6, Power to the Producers](#), first 13 minutes

3/26 Lecture: Threats to the Order

Reading: McNally, *Crude Volatility*, pp. 103-112; Sampson, *Seven Sisters*, pp. 167-185 (PDF)

Film: [The Prize: Episode 6, Power to the Producers](#), minutes 13-30

3/27 Discussion: The United States and Foreign Oil

Primary Sources: U.S. Federal Trade Commission, *The International Petroleum Cartel* (1949) (PDF); American Petroleum Institute (API), [Destination Earth](#) (1956)

In-Class Writing 2**Week 11****3/31 Lecture: Power to the Producers**

Reading: McNally, *Crude Volatility*, pp. 115-130

Film: [The Prize: Episode 6, Power to the Producers](#), minutes 30-52

4/2 Lecture: The First Oil Shock

Reading: McNally, *Crude Volatility*, pp. 130-139

Primary Source: Sanders Letter to Senator George Aiken (R-VT), November 27, 1973

Film: [The Prize: Episode 7, The Tinderbox](#), first 30 minutes

4/3 Discussion: Oil in American Culture

Primary Sources: Paintings, Advertisements, Energy Crisis Political Cartoons, Songs

Response Paper 1

Week 12**4/7 Lecture: The Second Oil Shock**

Reading: McNally, *Crude Volatility*, pp. 139-144

Film: [The Prize: Episode 7, The Tinderbox](#), minutes 30-44

4/9 *No Class*: The Oil Collapse (The Third Oil Shock) (UI Capture)

Reading: McNally, *Crude Volatility*, pp. 145-159

Film: [The Prize: Episode 7, The Tinderbox](#), minutes 44-53

4/10 Discussion: Oil History Jeopardy**Week 13****4/14 Lecture: The Challenge of Environmentalism**

Film: [The Prize: Episode 8, New Order of Oil](#), first 15 minutes

4/16 Lecture: The Illusion of Stability

Reading: McNally, *Crude Volatility*, pp. 160-169

Film: [The Prize: Episode 8, New Order of Oil](#), minutes 15-52

4/17 Discussion: Documenting Oil Pollution

Primary Sources: [EPA "Documerica" Project, 1971-1977](#)

In-Class Writing 3

Week 14**4/21 Lecture: Offshore Oil**

Video: National Geographic, [Big, Bigger, Biggest: Oil Rigs](#) (2009) (50 minutes)

4/23 Lecture: The Return of Boom and Bust

Reading: McNally, *Crude Volatility*, pp. 170-192

4/24 Discussion: Blood for Oil?

Reading: John Duffield, "Oil and the Decision to Invade Iraq" *Political Science Faculty Publications* 27 (2012) (PDF)

Primary Source: "[Perspectives on the Iraq War](#)"

Response Paper 2

Week 15

4/28 Lecture: Unconventional Oil and Gas

Reading: Daniel Raimi, "What Is Fracking?" Chapter 1, *The Fracking Debate: The Risks, Benefits and Uncertainties of the Shale Revolution* (PDF)

4/30 Lecture: Coping with Volatility

Reading: McNally, *Crude Volatility*, 193-225

5/1 Discussion: What the Frack!?

Video: *Gasland* (2010) [trailer](#)

Reading: Coloradoans for Responsible Energy Development, "[Is Fracking Connected to Burning Tap Water?](#)"

Week 16

5/5 Lecture: Climate Change

Reading: "The Challenge Without Precedent," *Economist* (April 25, 2020) (PDF)

5/7 Lecture: The Return of the Energy Weapon

Reading: Jason Bordoff and Meghan O'Sullivan, "The Return of the Energy Weapon," *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2025) (PDF)

5/8 Discussion: #ExxonKnew

Primary Sources: Climate Investigations Center, [Exxon Knew: Must Read Documents](#)

Final Exam: Date TBD

CLAS Administrative Policies

Administrative Home

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be

addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall. Also see the CLAS Academic Policies Handbook at <http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook>.

Drop Deadline for this Course

You may drop an individual course before the drop deadline; after this deadline you will need collegiate approval. You can look up the drop deadline for this course [here](#). When you drop a course, a “W” will appear on your transcript. The mark of “W” is a neutral mark that does not affect your GPA. To discuss how dropping (or staying in) a course might affect your academic goals, please contact your Academic Advisor. Directions for adding or dropping a course and other registration changes can be found on the [Registrar’s website](#). Undergraduate students can find policies on dropping CLAS courses [here](#).

Electronic Communication

Students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their UI email address (uiowa.edu) and must use this address for any communication with instructors or staff in the UI community. For the privacy and the protection of student records, UI faculty and staff can only correspond with UI email addresses.

Academic Honesty and Misconduct

See above.

Student Complaints

Students with a complaint about a grade or a related matter should first discuss the situation with the instructor and/or the course supervisor (if applicable), and finally with the DEO (Chair) of the school, department, or program offering the course. Sometimes students will be referred to the department or program’s Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS). Undergraduate students should contact [CLAS Undergraduate Programs](#) for support when the matter is not resolved at the previous level.

University Policies

At the University of Iowa, we strive for a classroom or laboratory climate that encourages learning while also protecting the freedoms and rights of our students and instructors. Please see this [link](#) for course policies, expectations, and resources on:

Free Speech and Expression

Non-discrimination

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Absences from Class (for illness, religious holy days, military service, and other circumstances)

Sexual Harassment/Sexual Misconduct and Supportive Measures

Conflict Resolution

Mental Health

Basic Needs and Student Support

Class Recordings

***If the University is closed during class time for any reason, you are responsible for checking the class ICON homepage for immediate updates.**

***The instructor reserves the right to modify this syllabus and/or course policies as the semester progresses. Any changes will be presented in class and in announcements through ICON.**