

## Energy, Climate Change, and Society

**Instructor:** Fedor A. Dokshin, PhD

**Class:** LEC0101: Mon, 9:10am to 11am

**E-mail:** [fedor.dokshin@utoronto.ca](mailto:fedor.dokshin@utoronto.ca)

Location: see ACORN

**Office:** Sociology Department  
700 University Ave (17<sup>th</sup> floor)

**Class website:** <https://q.utoronto.ca>

**Office Hours:** By appointment

### Course Description and Aims

This course examines how social life is inextricably linked with the energy system, a fact made especially salient by the climate crisis. We will spend the first part of the semester on fossil fuels. Where does the energy we all use come from and what economic, cultural, and political factors contribute to the entrenchment of fossil fuels in our energy mix? We'll then consider the energy transition away from fossil fuels and to renewable sources. What are the primary barriers to a rapid energy transition? What roles do individuals, social movements, and policymakers play in enabling and/or hampering a transition away from fossil fuels? Finally, we will consider the potential social and political outcomes that are likely to accompany a rapid energy transition and discuss issues of energy and environmental justice.

### Prerequisite

The prerequisite to take this course is 1.0 SOC FCE at the 300+ level. Students without the prerequisite can be removed at any time discovered, and without notice.

### Learning Components and Course Requirements

#### Readings:

Each week you are required to complete assigned readings in advance of the week's seminar. All readings will be available on Quercus.

#### Seminar discussions:

In our weekly seminars we will discuss the week's reading and related topics. Students will take turns as discussion leaders.

**Responsibility of being aware of what the professor says in seminars (including administrative announcements) rests with the student.**

#### Discussion leadership:

Each student in the class will be **required to lead the discussion of one article**. A sign-up sheet will be circulated in the first week of class.

Within each week's reading list are one or more articles marked with three asterisks (\*\*\*). During each discussion session, (beginning with Week 2) a student will lead the class discussion of one of these articles. You should prepare (1) a short presentation (**no longer than 15 minutes**) and (2) a series of questions for class discussion. You must use PowerPoint or another presentation software to prepare slides for your presentation. As you create your presentation, focus on the following questions:

- What is the main argument of the article? What are the key tensions and debates that the article is engaging?
- Is the contribution primarily empirical or theoretical?
- Describe the data and methods (as applicable). What are the strengths and limitations of the analytical approach? What conclusions can we draw from this research?
- Are there any parts of the article that you found unclear or confusing?
- Does the article generate any new questions or puzzles?
- Which parts did you find convincing and which parts are you skeptical about?

### Analytic comments:

Students will submit an “analytic comment” about the week’s readings each week, by 7pm on the night before class. You are allowed to miss two weeks without penalty (i.e., submit 9 comments during 11 weeks of readings). Your comment should be **no longer than 500 words**. Writing and thinking is improved by an effort at being concise. The word limit will be strictly enforced.

**Do not simply summarize the readings.** In your comment, you should creatively and critically discuss some aspect(s) of the week’s readings. You should focus on key issues, not minor details. For instance, you could comment on the major concepts from the reading: are they clear; what are their implications; do they make sense in the context of the central argument of the paper; etc? You could relate or compare two papers or arguments to each other or critically assess the measurement or conceptualization of key ideas in a study. You could evaluate the generalizability of the argument (does it apply to other, related contexts) or challenge the argument on grounds of external or internal validity. Or you could theorize an idea of your own that was inspired by the reading.

I will evaluate the analytic comments based on: (1) how well they demonstrate comprehension of the reading’s main points and (2) the quality of the analysis. Presentation and clarity of writing will also be considered.

### Weekly “Energy and Society Journal” entries:

Energy issues are omnipresent in everyday life and in public discourse. Throughout this class, you are expected to pay attention to energy-related issues around you. This practice will enrich our class discussions as well as allow you to identify topics of interest for your final paper. To formalize this practice, you are asked to keep an “Energy and Society Journal.” Each week you should keep a log of energy-related items you encountered and include a short, *informal* write-up (no more than 1 page) of your reflections on this material. You may skip two weeks of entries without penalty (9 of 11 weeks).

### Paper proposal:

The major project for the class is a final paper, which you will submit at the end of the class. To keep on track and for me to provide timely feedback, you will submit a paper proposal at the end of Week 9. The proposal should be about 2 double-spaced pages. It should clearly identify the topic and research question you intend to investigate for the final paper and explain why the question is important and what you expect to find. The proposal is due by 7pm on the Friday of Week 9.

### Final paper:

The final paper is due on the Friday of the last week of class. It should be 10-15 pages, double spaced. Detailed information about the paper requirements and a rubric will be disseminated in class.

### In-class participation:

This is a seminar course and active discussion is the main mode of learning. You are expected to **come to class prepared and participate actively in discussion**.

## Evaluation Components

	Number of occasions	Percent value	Total percent of final mark
<b>Energy and society journal entries</b>	9	2% each	18%
<b>Analytic comments</b>	9	2% each	18%
<b>Leading discussion</b>	1	10%	10%
<b>Essay proposal</b>	1	12%	12%
<b>Final essay</b>	1	30%	30%
<b>In-class participation</b>	Throughout semester	12%	12%
			100% (total)

## Communication and Quercus

### Email:

Please use your U of T email address to communicate with me about **personal matters**, or to communicate with the TAs. I make every effort to reply to emails within 24 hours, Mon-Fri 9am-5pm. Here are a couple of important points about email communication:

- Please note that the instructor and TA will not respond to emails about issues that are clearly specified in the syllabus (e.g., due dates, office hours times).
- Please use the discussion board to ask questions about course content (see below).
- Address your questions about tutorials to your TA.
- Requests for make-up tests and other accommodations should be sent to the course instructor (Professor Dokshin), not the TA.
- All emails should include the course code SOC202 in the subject line, and be signed with the student's full name and student number.

### Quercus website and discussion board:

Quercus will contain the course syllabus, assignments, discussion board, and course announcements. To clarify **questions** regarding the **syllabus**, **assignments**, as well as **substantive questions about the readings**, please use the designated discussion boards on the Quercus site.

### Office hours:

The instructor will hold online office hours through Zoom (Link will be posted in Quercus calendar).

## Procedures for Late Work

### Documentation:

Late assignment submissions will result in a 5% deduction for each day the assignment is late (starting with the day the assignment is due, up to a maximum of 50% of the grade).

Students who incur the late penalty unless the reason is a circumstance beyond their control. **Within three days** of missing an assignment deadline or test, students must send the instructor a request for consideration. Students must document their request with **one of the following**: (1) Absence declaration via ACORN; (2) U of T Verification of Illness or Injury Form; (3) College Registrar's letter (e.g., in case of personal/family crisis or emergency); or (4) Letter of Academic Accommodation from Accessibility Services.

- Students who are late in submitting an assignment for other reasons, such as family or other personal reasons, should request their College Registrar to email the instructor.

## Grade Appeals

The instructor and teaching assistants do their best to mark work fairly, consistently, and accurately. Nevertheless, one of us may unintentionally err in our marking. If you believe that your test or lab assignment has been mismarked, please adhere to the following rules

- For basic mathematical errors, simply alert one of the TAs about the error.
- In the case of more substantive appeals, **you must wait at least 24 hours** after receiving your mark. If you wish to appeal, please submit a thorough written explanation to Professor Dokshin of why you think your mark should be altered. If your appeal is deemed appropriate, the entirety of your test/assignment will be re-graded. Please note that upon re-grade your mark may go down, stay the same, or go up. **You have 30 days after receiving a mark to appeal it.**

## Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the U of T degree that you earn will be valued as a true indication of your individual academic achievement, and will continue to receive the respect and recognition it deserves.

Familiarize yourself with the University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>). It is the rule book for academic behaviour at the U of T, and you are expected to know the rules. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment including:
  - working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work;
  - having someone rewrite or add material to your work while "editing";
  - crowdsourcing assignment answers through Facebook or another forum.
- Lending your work to a classmate who submits it as his/her own without your permission.
- Using or possessing any unauthorized aid, including a cell phone.
- Looking at someone else's answers.
- Letting someone else look at your answers.
- Misrepresenting your identity.
- Submitting an altered test for re-grading.
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including doctor's notes.
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.

## Policy on Generative AI

Large Language Models (LLM), Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), and related machine learning systems have been proliferating. Some of these systems automatically generate essays, computer code, or images using minimal human prompting. This includes various versions of ChatGPT as well as many other writing and research assistants. Students are ultimately accountable for the work they submit.

In this class, students *may* use AI tools for conducting background research, asking questions about course themes, assimilating information for general understanding, refining language or grammar (i.e., ESL purposes), or identifying secondary literature.

In this class, students *may not* use artificial intelligence tools to automatically generate any part of your submitted assignments. The line between appropriate and inappropriate use can get fuzzy if you use an AI tool to generate an early draft and then re-work it into your own language. In general, I do not think this is a very effective way to develop your writing and thinking skills. If you use any sentences or passages generated by an AI, the following conditions must be met:

1. Students must submit, as an appendix with their assignments, any content produced by an AI tool, and the prompts used to generate the content. This documentation should include what tool(s) were used, how they were used, and how the results from the AI were incorporated into the submitted work.
2. Any content produced by an AI tool must be cited appropriately. Many organizations that publish standard citation formats are now providing information on citing generative AI (e.g., MLA: <https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/> ).

## Plagiarism Detection

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

## Accessibility Needs

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: [disability.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:disability.services@utoronto.ca) or <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility>.

## Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic & Reading	Assignments Due
1	9-Sep	<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>"This Is Your Brain on 'Deep Reading.' It's Pretty Magnificent." The Ezra Klein Show. Interview with Maryanne Wolf (<a href="#">podcast</a>; transcript on Quercus).</p> <p>Smil. <i>Energy and Civilization: A History</i>. Ch.1</p>	
2	16-Sep	<p><b>Sociology of energy</b></p> <p>Rosa, Machlis, Keating. 1988. "Energy and society." <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i>.</p> <p>Shove, Elizabeth, and Gordon Walker. 2014. "What is energy for? Social practice and energy demand." <i>Theory, Culture &amp; Society</i>.***</p> <p>Rosa et al. 2015. "The Human (Anthropogenic) Driving Forces of Global Climate Change." (in <i>Climate Change and Society</i>)***</p>	<p>– Analytic comment by 7pm, Sun</p> <p>– E&amp;SJ entry by 7pm, Fri</p>
3	23-Sep	<p><b>Fossil fuel age</b></p> <p>Yergin. <i>The Prize</i> (Prologue; Ch. 27; Epilogue)</p> <p>Unruh. 2000. "Understanding Carbon Lock-in." <i>Energy Policy</i>.***</p> <p>Clark and York. 2005. "Carbon metabolism: Global capitalism, climate change, and the biospheric rift." <i>Theory and Society</i>.***</p>	<p>– Analytic comment by 7pm, Sun</p> <p>– E&amp;SJ entry by 7pm, Fri</p>
4	30-Sep	<p><b>The nature of power in oil and gas communities</b></p> <p>Bell and York. 2010. "Community Economic Identity: The Coal Industry and Ideology Construction in West Virginia."****</p> <p>Jerolmack. <i>Up to Heaven and Down to Hell</i>. Ch. 4 &amp; 5.</p>	<p>– Analytic comment by 7pm, Sun</p> <p>– E&amp;SJ entry by 7pm, Fri</p>
5	07-Oct	<p><b>Incumbent power</b></p> <p>Film: <i>Who Killed the Electric Car?</i> (2006).</p> <p><a href="#">Supran, Geoffrey, and Naomi Oreskes. 2021. "The forgotten oil ads that told us climate change was nothing." <i>The Guardian</i> (Published 18 November 2021).</a></p> <p>Dunlap and McCright. "Challenging Climate Change: The Denial Countermovement." (in <i>Climate Change and Society</i>).***</p>	<p>– Analytic comment by 7pm, Sun</p> <p>– E&amp;SJ entry by 7pm, Fri</p>
<b>THANKSGIVING: NO CLASS</b>			
6	21-Oct	<p><b>Public response to energy industries and technologies</b></p> <p>Boudet. 2019. "Public perceptions of and responses to new energy technologies." <i>Nature Energy</i>.</p> <p>Dokshin. 2016. "Whose backyard and what's at issue? Spatial and ideological dynamics of local opposition to fracking in New York State, 2010 to 2013." <i>American Sociological Review</i>.***</p>	<p>– Analytic comment by 7pm, Sun</p> <p>– E&amp;SJ entry by 7pm, Fri</p>

Week	Date	Topic & Reading	Assignments Due
		Angelo. 2023. "Boomtown: A Solar Land Rush in the West." <i>Harpers Magazine</i> .	
<b>READING WEEK: NO CLASS OCT 28 TO NOV 1</b>			
7	4-Nov	<p><b>The energy transition</b></p> <p>Araos, Bhardwaj, and Klinenberg. 2024. "The Social Life of Climate Projects." <i>Sociological Forum</i>.</p> <p>Geels et al. 2017. "Sociotechnical transitions for deep decarbonization." <i>Science</i> 357:1242-1244.</p> <p>"The Single Best Guide to Decarbonization I've Heard." The Ezra Klein Show. Interview with Jesse Jenkins (<a href="#">podcast</a>; <a href="#">transcript</a>).</p> <p>York and Bell. 2019. "Energy transitions or additions? Why a transition from fossil fuels requires more than the growth of renewable energy." <i>Energy Research &amp; Social Science</i>.***</p> <p><u>Supplementary:</u></p> <p>Beckfield and Evrard. 2023. "The Social Impacts of Supply-Side Decarbonization." <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analytic comment by 7pm, Sun</li> <li>- E&amp;SJ entry by 7pm, Fri</li> </ul>
8	11-Nov	<p><b>Changing energy behaviour</b></p> <p>Dietz, Stern, and Weber. 2013. "Reducing Carbon-Based Energy Consumption through Changes in Household Behavior." <i>Daedalus</i> 142(1): 78-89.***</p> <p>Attari et al. 2010. "Public perceptions of energy consumption and savings." <i>PNAS</i>.</p> <p>Maniates, Michael F. "Individualization: Plant a tree, buy a bike, save the world?" <i>Global Environmental Politics</i>.</p> <p><u>Supplementary:</u></p> <p>Ehrhardt-Martinez et al. 2015. "Consumption and Climate Change." (in <i>Climate Change and Society</i>)</p> <p>Constantino et al. 2022. Scaling Up Change: A Critical Review and Practical Guide to Harnessing Social Norms for Climate Action. <i>Psychological Science in the Public Interest</i> 23(2).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analytic comment by 7pm, Sun</li> <li>- E&amp;SJ entry by 7pm, Fri</li> </ul>
9	18-Nov	<p><b>Social movements and radical flanks</b></p> <p>Rao. 2006. <i>Market Rebels: How Activists Make or Break Radical Innovations</i>. Ch 1,2, &amp; 8.</p> <p>Sine and Lee. 2009. "Tilting at windmills? The environmental movement and the emergence of the US wind energy sector." <i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>. ***</p> <p>Shifeling, Todd and Andrew J. Hoffman. 2019. "Bill McKibben's influence on US climate change discourse: shifting field-level debates through radical flank effects." <i>Organization &amp; Environment</i>.***</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analytic comment by 7pm, Sun</li> <li>- E&amp;SJ entry by 7pm, Fri</li> <li>- Final paper Proposal Due by 7pm, Fri</li> </ul>
10	25-Nov	<p><b>The promises and limits of governance and state policy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analytic comment by 7pm, Sun</li> <li>- E&amp;SJ entry by 7pm, Fri</li> </ul>

Week	Date	Topic & Reading	Assignments Due
		<p>Scott, James C. <i>Seeing Like a State</i>. Introduction, Chapter 1 &amp; 10.</p> <p>Barton. 2002. "Underlying concepts and theoretical issues in public participation in resource development."</p> <p>Li and Shapiro. 2020. <i>China goes Green</i> (Introduction).***</p>	
11	02-Dec	<p><b>Energy justice</b></p> <p>Harlan et al. 2015. "Climate Justice and Inequality." (in <i>Climate Change and Society</i>).</p> <p>Saha and Mohai. 2005. "Historical Context and Hazardous Waste Facility Siting: Understanding Temporal Patterns in Michigan." <i>Social Problems</i>.***</p> <p><u>Supplementary:</u></p> <p>Mohai, Pellow, and Roberts. 2009. "Environmental Justice." <i>Annual Review of Environment and Resources</i>.</p>	<p>– Analytic comment by 7pm, Sun</p> <p>– E&amp;SJ entry by 7pm, Fri</p>
12	03-Dec	<p><b>Transition backlash?</b></p> <p>Staggenborg and Meyer. 2022. "Understanding countermovements." In <i>Handbook of Anti-Environmentalism</i>.</p> <p>Patterson, James J. 2023. "Backlash to Climate Policy." <i>Global Environmental Politics</i>***</p> <p>Stokes. 2016. "Electoral backlash against climate policy: A natural experiment on retrospective voting and local resistance to public policy." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i>.***</p>	<p>– Analytic comment by 7pm, Sun</p> <p>– E&amp;SJ entry by 7pm, Fri</p> <p>– Final Essay Due by 7pm, Fri</p>