

# ENGY498/598: Energy and Society

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**Course Description:** The global energy picture is a complex one, with individual countries at varying degrees of “development” in energy production, transmission, use, and conservation. Often countries enter into regional agreements for energy sharing, creating complex geopolitical configurations. And significant changes in the ease, cost, and political feasibility of continuing to rely on business-as-usual practices of energy extraction are creating a new energy landscape. What is often lost amid these concerns, however, is the impact that various energy strategies have on local communities and regional and national societies. This course focuses on the interface among traditional forms of extraction in oil, gas, coal, and nuclear; the development of renewable energy technologies such as solar, wind, biomass, and geothermal; and the communities and societies that both drive or resist these developments.

The course begins with a brief introduction to the global energy production context and then focuses on particular case studies that highlight the relationship among energy, society, and community in different locations. The course will examine energy success stories wherein communities, governments, and/or energy companies work together to promote socially just and economically viable forms of energy production. The course also explores conflicts driven by energy development. These case studies, supplemented by the expertise of guest speakers from industry, government, NGOs, and elsewhere, range from the BP gulf oil spill in the United States to the development of solar arrays in Spain to the ongoing development of nuclear power in China. Areas of focus therefore include not just the forward momentum of energy production but also social and environmental degradation, unjust business and public policy practices, and the disenfranchisement of affected communities.

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