Course description: This is an interdisciplinary seminar that explores a spectrum of approaches to our understanding of production and use of different energy sources and their relationship to society. We will explore different dimensions of energy production and use, including historical, social, cultural, economic, ethical, political, and environmental. We will also compare perspectives of energy development as these affect particular communities and societies. This content will be complemented with the expertise of guest speakers. Areas of foci include questioning the forward momentum of energy production, its social and environmental impact, including how it distributes power, resources and risks across different social groups and communities.

Pre-requisites for Energy Minor students: EBGN 330 Energy Economics; ENGY200 Introduction to Energy; and two other energy minor courses including at least one of the following: ENGY310 Fossil Energy, ENGY320 Renewable Energy, and ENGY340 Nuclear Energy; or consent of instructor. Pre-requisites for non-Energy Minor students: LAIS100 and SYGN200.

Objectives: At the end of this course, students should be able to

- understand and apply critical thinking and interdisciplinary analysis to the relationship between energy and society.
- research, write and present case studies on the relationship between energy and society as manifested in a variety of contexts.
- meaningfully apply concepts of sustainability, justice, and community development to case studies on the energy-society nexus

Required Texts (available at CSM bookstore)

- Other required and suggested readings for this class are available on Blackboard.

Teaching Philosophy: Here are my core believes about teaching and learning:

I believe that education should be about students’ learning more than about teachers’ teaching. Teachers and students should trust and facilitate each other’s learning. Students and professor come to this class with a set of experiences, previous knowledges (note the plural), assumptions, expectations, conceptions and misconceptions that shape how they learn. Our collective job (yours and mine) is to make these explicit, to critically assess how these enhance or hinder our learning, and to provide you with a new set of experiences, knowledges and other critical tools that will hopefully give us a new way of looking at the world. More than giving you a grade, my main responsibility is to help you acquire a life-long commitment to check your knowledge, i.e., to critically question what you know and don’t know, how you came to know it, what you know it for, and how your privileges have shaped who you are and what you value as knowledge. Your responsibility is to learn to check your knowledge, to question your assumptions about the energy-society relationship and to apply this critical thinking to the rest of your life.

I believe that student learning is an evolutionary process that requires time for processing and questioning new ideas and concepts. The acquisition of new knowledge, especially one that might challenge your core believes and values about energy, often elicits strong resistance, especially because
we will be questioning many long-held assumptions about energy (reflect on your assumptions about energy that might have led you or your peers to attend CSM!). Our shared responsibility is to acknowledge this and move beyond resistance. **As resistance fades away as the semester unfolds, your learning should increase, your thinking should become more sophisticated and your attitude for new knowledge becomes more welcoming.** This course is built in such a way that will allow you the opportunity to evolve in your learning.

I believe that the **creation and acquisition of new knowledge is a social process.** You will have plenty of opportunities to develop and process your own individual ideas but soon you will be co-creating and co-acquiring knowledge with your peers. Pair and group activities in and out of the classroom are fundamental elements of this learning process. **Hence your active participation in these will be highly valued.** Attendance and participation grading policies reflect this core belief.

I believe that our **writing is a reflection of our ideas.** To produce good, clear and powerful writing, we need to have good, clear and powerful ideas (and vice versa). Sloppy writing often reflects sloppy ideas (and vice versa). Hence in order to improve both, you will need a close and in-depth reading of course material, a commitment to listening, opportunities to test ideas with others, time to reflect about these exchanges, and a continuous engagement with your own drafts. Good writing cannot happen the night before a paper is due. You need to revise your own writing and perhaps have the Writing Center help you as well. My responsibility is to guide you towards good readings, help you develop your listening, provide you with opportunities to test ideas with others, and allow you ample time between the assignment of a paper and its due date. **Your responsibility is to engage the readings, be willing to listen, share your ideas with others, think and write critically and give yourself plenty of time to outline, draft, edit and re-edit your writing (and perhaps visit the Writing Center).**

Furthermore, I believe in the **power of diverse ideas and arguments.** All of us come into this course with opinions-- weak and strong, clear and unclear, well-supported and not-so-well supported-- about energy and society. Our collective responsibility is to turn these into powerful and well-supported arguments that can hopefully have an impact on the world. To do this we need a respectful and nurturing environment to share opinions, learn to disagree, and explore ways to turn them into well-crafted arguments. Hence one of my primary roles is to construct and maintain such classroom environment, constructively challenge your opinions and help you transform them into well-supported arguments. **Your role is to be open to this challenge, learn not to take challenges against your ideas as challenges against yourself, and to be respectful of the classroom environment and of others’ attempts at transforming their opinions.**

**Course Policies:**

This course consists of in-depth reading, lectures, in-class collaborative exercises, films, quizzes, written assignments and presentations. As educator, one of my responsibilities is to put great deal of effort and thinking in developing these elements and offering them to you to help you learn. **As student, your responsibility is to reciprocate this effort by seriously exploring the reading assignments, being prepared to discuss them in class, actively participate in collaborative learning, and effectively and critically incorporate this material in quizzes, papers, group presentations and (hopefully) in your own thinking and practices.**