

Energy & Geopolitics

AK2201/FAK3102 (7.5 hp)

Version 1, 28 August 2023

Content and learning outcomes

Course content

Energy has played a vital role in our everyday lives since humans discovered fire-making. However, energy history is still a relatively new academic field. This course offers an overview of the concepts, approaches, and sources used by energy historians in their craft. Importantly, the course will teach students to apply this knowledge in practice. Students will learn critical reading and designing their own research projects. They will acquire skills in selecting and analyzing relevant information, and producing a short paper able to stand a peer-review.

The course will examine the historical relationship between energy and geopolitics in Europe since the First World War. Its starting premise is that the Western appetite for fossil fuels has been permanently growing for over 200 years. In times of war and peace, Europeans have strived to secure energy supplies through multilateral cooperation, technological breakthroughs, and conquest, or a combination of these methods. When they failed, economic crises, social unrest, military defeats, or even state collapses may have followed. Throughout the course, we will keep asking two basic questions in relation to modern Europe: *How far have energy needs predetermined geopolitical trends? And to what extent have energy consumption been shaped by geopolitical factors?* In this examination, we will focus on the temporal dynamics and geopolitical context of actors' behaviours and choices, as well as the "materiality of energy." As a result, the course will shed light on the historical ties between energy and geopolitics, power and identities, "petroculture," and nationalism.

This course will consist of **12 sessions (5 lectures, 5 seminars & 2 workshops)**, each followed by a specific homework assignment. The first 6 sessions will provide an overview of energy and geopolitical trends after 1918. The course central focus will be on Europe. Students will learn to identify research gaps and formulate research questions. During the next 6 sessions, students will receive training in the skills necessary to answer research questions, including source identification, analysis, and paper writing. At the end of the seminar, students will produce their own research paper.

Learning objectives

After passing the course, the students should be able to:

- describe the complex relations between energy provision and politics in a global and historical perspective
- describe and use the different theoretical concepts presented in the course
- place recent events on the energy arena within a geopolitical and historical perspective
- analyse complex chains of events within the energy field over time

Learning activities

The course consists of lectures, seminars, workshops, and home assignments. The lectures introduce key concepts and disciplinary traditions dealing with energy & geopolitics. During seminars and workshops students will learn practical skills needed for critical historical reading and historical research. Seminars will concentrate on preparing the final essay and writing techniques. While attendance of classroom activities is not compulsory, students are expected to read the book of Per Högselius, *Energy and Geopolitics* (Routledge, 2018), and to complete all home assignments (which is a prerequisite for submitting the final essay). Each assignment essay, submitted via Canvas, should be no longer than 1,000 words (except for the draft of the final essay, which should be between 1 & 2 thousand words). By preparing an assignment essay (& having a teachers' feedback), student will enhance their skills and knowledge for writing the final essay. Thus, delaying submitting of an assignment leads to a delay in obtaining a feedback on it – this might problematize the student progress. Examination takes place at the end of the course through the production of the final individual essay. The final grade is based 100% on the essay. The entire course is therefore structured in a way that aims to train students in writing a high-quality essay in the field of energy & geopolitics.

Uppsats/ Essay: During the course, you must prepare and write your own, individual essay. The essay must take the form of a longer argumentative text on the topic of energy and geopolitics. It can be about the present or the past, but it should include some kind of historical perspective. Your essay should consist of 3 main parts: introduction, main part, and conclusions. In the introduction you should identify a wider problem you want to address (knowledge gap). Then, in the main part, you outline your argument. The argument should be linked to one of energy & geopolitics concepts and be supported by analyses of (at least) two kinds of different sources (from scholarship and primary sources). You should also provide a critical assessment of limits and potentially weak points of your argument. Third, the essay should end by discussing how your argument narrows or reframes the wider problem stated in the introduction. Detailed guidelines for preparing the essay will be discussed during the classroom activities, but you can grasp how the essay should look from reading the assessment table.

The essay must not exceed 2,000 words, excluding references and bibliography. The text over this limit would not be assessed. You submit the final version of your essay via Canvas no later than Tuesday, October 17, 2023. Delay in submitting the essay leads to lower grade, but no essays would be accepted after October 31, 2023.

Schedule

Tue 5 sep 13:15-15:00

Teacher: Aliaksandr Piahnanau

Lecture 1 will introduce key concepts of energy history and history of geopolitics, including “energy materiality,” “energy systems” and “inter-dependence.”

Tue 5 sep 15:15-17:00

Teacher: Aliaksandr Piahnanau

Lecture 2 will show how energy regimes & energy systems evolved since 1918 and to what extent these changes were accompanied by geopolitical transformations in Europe. We will also compare ideological premises of actors involved in energy & geopolitics of those times.

Assignment 1 (submit before 17 Sept): Students read 4 chapters from Högselius, *Energy & Geopolitics*. After reading these texts, the students should point out key concepts or categories used in these texts; what were the author main arguments; what kind of sources he relied on; what were his conclusions. Assignment essay should be no longer than 1,000 words.

Tue 12 sep 13:15-15:00 (Location: U41, Brinellvägen)

Teacher: Aliaksandr Piahnanau

Lecture 3 will be about the “(hidden) infrastructural integration” of Europe since the late 19th century. It will focus on the spatial connection of different parts of Europe through cross-border infrastructure projects, such as railways, channels, grid-networks and pipelines and to what extent this infrastructure framed the geopolitical balance in the region.

Tue 12 sep 15:15-17:00 (Location: U41, Brinellvägen)

Teacher: Aliaksandr Piahnanau

Lecture 4 is about the temporality of energy geopolitics. It features the history of energy forecasts and energy sceneries. By exploring what the actors in the past expected from the future, students will acquire a clearer picture of historical decision-making.

Assignment 2 (submit before 17 Sept): Students choose freely 2 shorts & different scholar texts (reports, papers or book chapters, including a chapter from Högselius, *Energy & Geopolitics*) and 2 newspaper/online articles from different sources. These texts should deal with a particular issue (event, country, organisation or energy sector) related to the topic of energy & geopolitics in Europe after 1918. After reading these texts, the students should point out which key concepts or categories were used in these texts; what were their main arguments; what kind of sources the authors relied on; what were their conclusions & how they complement or disagree with each other. Assignment essay should be no longer than 1000 words.

Tue 19 sep 13:15-14:00 (Location: V1, Teknikringen)

Teacher: Aliaksandr Piahnanau

Lecture 5 will bring under examination (trans-)national actors involved in energy & geopolitics. We will see different profiles and interests associated with production, supply and usage of energy, such as private companies, cartels, governmental agencies, international institutions, but also NGOs and local communities.

Tue 19 sep 15:15-17:00 (Location: V1, Teknikringen)

Teacher: Aliaksandr Piahnanau

Workshop 1 will be organised as a role-based negotiation game on the theme of the post-WW2 energy shortage in Europe. Students will act as specific historical actors (military chiefs, ministers of fuel/economy, CEO of energy provider, industry representatives, city mayors, trade union chefs etc.) during a meeting aimed at finding a feasible plan to face the crisis.

Assignment 3 (submit before 24 Sept): Students choose freely 2 short scholar texts (reports, papers or book chapters; a chapter from Högselius, *Energy & Geopolitics*) and 2 newspaper/online articles from different sources. These texts should deal with a particular issue (event, country, organisation or energy sector) related to the topic of energy & geopolitics in Europe after 1918. This issue should be different from the assignment 2. After reading these texts, the students should point out key concepts or categories, their main arguments, sources, conclusions, “knowledge gaps”. But the main task here is to reflect about strong and weak sides of the arguments; and how their strengths and weaknesses affect the overall interpretation of the issue.

Tue 26 sep 13:15-15 :00 (Location: M23, Brinellvägen)

Teacher: Aliaksandr Piahnanau

Seminar 1 will open up a series of classes dedicated to studying energy history through different sources and methodologies. At the first of them we will take a closer look at a set of textual and narrative sources: starting with media and press, debates in state and private sectors on energy security, and, finally, diaries of individual actors.

Tue 26 sep 15:15-17:00 (Location: M23, Brinellvägen)

Teacher: Aliaksandr Piahnanau

Seminar 2 will give a glimpse into a variety of non-narrative sources of information for energy research: numerical data (including statistics), images (maps, drawings and photos, videos), sound records (radio archives and interviews) and objects (from industrial sites to museum collections).

Assignment 4 (submit before 1 Oct): Students choose freely 2 short scholar texts (reports, papers or book chapters; one of texts might be a chapter from Högselius, *Energy & Geopolitics*) and introduce one non-narrative source. These texts should deal with a particular issue (event, country, organisation or energy sector) related to the topic of energy & geopolitics in Europe after 1918. This issue should be different from the assignment 2 & 3. After reading these texts, the students should point out their key concepts or categories, arguments, sources, conclusions, their limits or weak-points, and how the findings /arguments of these texts reframe the initial understanding of the issue.

Another & completely unrelated task is to list 2 different topics/problems and accompany them by 1-2 research questions (and potential primary & secondary sources). Student will develop later one of these topics into the final essay.

Tue 3 Oct 13:15-15:00 (Location: V32, Teknikringen)

Teacher: Aliaksandr Piahnanau

At **Seminar 3** we are going to see how primary narrative sources may be analysed and what kind of conclusions may be based on them. We will also see which information may be retrieved from other sources: data, images, sounds and material objects.

Tue 3 oct 15:15-17:00 (Location: V32, Teknikringen)

Teacher: Aliaksandr Piahnanau

Workshop 2 will be framed as a writing training. Here we will discuss the main parts of a research paper; how to make an introduction, present an argument and support it, and what to write in conclusion.

Assignment 5 (due by 10 Oct): Students prepare the draft essay (at least 1,000 words) and an oral presentation (or a video presentation) with a structure of a written paper. You may rely on the literature that you have already studied in the course (or elsewhere), and build your draft essay on one of your previous assignment essays.

Tue 10 oct 13:15-15:00 (Location: V12, Teknikringen)

Teacher: Aliaksandr Piahnanau

Seminar 4. Oral presentations. Students will present their research projects, consisting of introducing the topic, research questions, a hypothesis, overview of sources and methods, main results and conclusion. Instead of oral presentation, students may send a video presentation. Students will be asked to give critical feedback to other presentations.

Tue 10 oct 15:15-17:00 (Location: V12, Teknikringen)

Teacher: Aliaksandr Piahnanau

Seminar 5. Peer-reviewing. After learning about the peer-reviewing process, students will exchange their paper drafts and peer-review it. The authors are asked to reflect on the critic and to draw a reply.

Assignment 6 (due by 17 Oct): Students rework their draft essay taking into account critic they received after oral presentation & produce the final essay version (under 2,000 words excluding references).

The final mark for the seminar will be composed of the evaluation of the final essay (100%). Only the essays submitted on time might receive A grade. Any late submission (starting from Oct 18, 2023) will result in lowering the grade by one letter per week of delay: from B to C, for example, if the delay was submitted by Oct 24, 2023; or from B to D, if the essay is submitted by Oct 31, 2023.

The essay will be evaluated in 10 criteria, each providing between 1 and 5 points. The final grade is made of the total score. A grade corresponds to the total of 40–50 points; B: 31–39 points; C: 22–30 p.; D: 16–22; E: 10–15; Fx: 6–9; F: 1–5. The course is passed for A, B, C, D, and E grades.

Essay structure	1 point	3 points	4 points	5 points
1. Introduction	Presents a vaguely formulated problem (“knowledge gap”) related to the field of energy & geopolitics	Presents a well-defined problem (“knowledge gap”) related to the field of energy & geopolitics	Presents a well-defined & socially important problem (“knowledge gap”) related to the field of energy & geopolitics	Presents a well-defined, socially important & innovative (or engaging) problem (“knowledge gap”) related to the field of energy & geopolitics
2. The argument (thesis)	is vaguely formulated	is clearly formulated	is clearly formulated and directly addresses the wider problem.	is clearly formulated and directly addresses the wider problem. It has sufficient detalization or it is counter-intuitive.
3. The theoretical (conceptual) frame used for the argument	is vaguely formulated	is clearly formulated	is clearly formulated and strongly relates to the argument.	is clearly formulated and strongly relates to the argument. It is supported by scholarship (3 or more references)
4. The method & sources used to prove the argument	The argument is supported by one main source	The argument is supported by 2 or more different sources	The method used for the analysis of sources (1 or more) is clearly defined.	There are two methods used to analyse 1 or more sources.
5. The limits & weak points of the argument	Limits & weak-points of the argument are vaguely defined	Only limits or weak-points are well-defined.	Both limits & weak-points are well defined	Limits & potentially weak points are well defined; weak-points are addressed with counter-critique.
6. Conclusions	Summary the argument	Summary the argument & its strongest proves.	Summary the argument (& its proves), and use it for addressing the wider problem stated in the introduction	Summary the argument (& its proves); link it to the problem stated in the introduction and shows how the argument changed the wider problem; elaborate other consequences for society.
7. Structure of the essay	The text has an identifiable structure , with introduction and conclusion.	The essay completes the suggested structure in the course PM (except one part).	Outlined structure in the course PM was fully completed.	The text has a clear and logical structure with well-chosen subheadings.

8. Language	Language errors and over-presence of very long phrases. The text is difficult to read	Formalities and design show no major flaws .	Linguistic rigor: few or no language errors. The text is designed without major errors.	Linguistic rigor. The text is designed in a way that favours understanding .
9. References	The essay contains irrelevant references	The essay contains a couple of relevant references	Accurate citations that consistently follow a clear system .	Accurate citations that consistently follow a clear system. Well-designed bibliography .
10. Title & figures	An accurate & unique title corresponding to the content of the essay or its argument	The title is unique, accurate, but also clear and memorable	Apart from accurate, unique, clear & memorable title, the text has 1 figure (properly discussed in the paper).	Apart from accurate, clear & memorable title, the text has 2 or more figures (properly discussed in the paper).

Selected Literature:

Required reading:

Högselius, Per. *Energy and Geopolitics* (Routledge, 2018).

Optional reading:

Högselius, Per, Arne Kaijser, and Erik Van der Vleuten. *Europe's Infrastructure Transition: Economy, War, Nature* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

Kander, Astrid, Paolo Malanima, and Paul Warde. *Power to the People: Energy in Europe Over the Last Five Centuries* (Princeton University Press, 2014)

Smil, Vaclav. *Energy and civilization: a history* (MIT Press, 2018).

Mitchell, Timothy. *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (Verso, 2011).

Yergin, Daniel. *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (Simon & Schuster, 1991).

Contacts

Communication in the course

For questions about the course, you are welcome to contact the course responsible or the respective teacher.

Course responsible

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Other contacts

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