

Energy & Geopolitics

AK2201/FAK3102 (7.5 hp)

Version 1, 28 August 2024

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. 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. The course starts with the premise that the Western appetite for fossil fuels has been permanently growing for last 100 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 policies. 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 the strive for energy affected geopolitical trends? And, to what extent have energy needs 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, power and identities, "petroculture" and nationalism.

This course will consist of **6 sessions**, each followed by a specific homework assignment. The first 3 sessions will provide an overview of energy and geopolitical trends after 1918. During the next 3 sessions, students will train formulating and answering research questions, identify and analyse sources of information, and communicate their research results. At the end of the seminar, students will produce their own short 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, workshops, and home assignments. The lectures introduce key concepts and disciplinary traditions dealing with energy & geopolitics. During workshops students will practice critical historical reading and debate. Assignments will concentrate on writing techniques and preparing the final essay.

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 anonymised and be no longer than 500 words. However, the draft of/and the final essay, might be extended till 1,000 words. By preparing an assignment essay (& having a teachers' & peers 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 final 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. Then, in the main part, outline your argument (based on different claims). The argument should be linked to one of energy & geopolitics concepts and be supported by (at least) two different sources. The essay should also provide a critical assessment of limits and weak points of your argument. The essay should end by discussing how your argument reframes the wider problem stated in the introduction. We will discuss detailed guidelines for preparing the essay during the classroom activities, but you can grasp how the essay should look from reading the assessment table at the end of the PM.

The essay must not exceed 1,000 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 15, 2024. Delay in submitting the essay leads to lower grade, but no essays would be accepted after October 31, 2024.

Schedule

Tue 3 Sept 13:15-17:00 (Location: V12, Teknikringen)

Teacher: Aliaksandr Piahnanau

Session 1 will introduce the course and the subject of energy and geopolitics in a historical perspective. At lecture 1, you will learn about its key concepts such as “energy regimes” and “energy materiality” and key milestones in the European energy history. Lecture 2 will feature 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 1 (submit before 8 Sept): Form a group of 2-3 people. Your task is to write together a forecast essay (max. 500 words). You need to predict whether or not a particular event will happen or announced by 15 October 2024. This event should be directly related to the course of energy & geopolitics. The essay should provide a probability of the event (from 1 to 10; 1 is extremely unlikely); and a score of how confident you are about your forecast (from 1 to 10; 10 is extremely confident). The body of the essay should describe how you have reached your conclusions. Ideally, the essay should start with a base rate for the predicted event (supported by sources) and readjust it with calibration factors.

Tue 10 Sept 13:15-17:00 (Location: E34, Lindstedtsvägen)

Teacher: Aliaksandr Piahnanau

Session 2 is about spatial implications of energy. Lecture 3 will discuss different energy systems, while lecture 4 will present the “(hidden) infrastructural integration” in Europe since the late 19th century. Both lectures will focus on the spatial connection 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.

Assignment 2 (submit before 15 Sept): Your task is to write an analytical essay (max. 500 words) on a specific issue related to the topic of energy infrastructure in Europe. The essay should have an introduction, a body and a conclusion and should be centred around a concrete research question that your essay seeks to answer. The answer you give in the essay (= your argument) should be supported by at least 2 scholarly publications.

Tue 17 Sept 13:15-17:00 (Location: V3, Teknikringen)

Teacher: Aliaksandr Piahnanau

Session 3 will bring under examination (trans-)national actors involved in energy & geopolitics. At lectures 5 & 6, 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.

Assignment 3 (submit before 22 Sept): Form a group of 2-3 peoples. Choose an important energy actor in Europe and write together an analytical essay on a concrete historical source that you can rely on to study this actor: a newspaper article, archival material, a document, an object. Your essay should describe the origin of the source, who created it and for what purpose, analyse what kind of information it reveals and how trustworthy this information is. The essay should have an introduction, body and conclusion and be no longer than 500 words and mobilise at least 2 other scholarly publications.

Tue 24 Sept 13:15-17:00 (Location: B22, Brinellvägen)

Teacher: Aliaksandr Piahnanau

Session 4 will open up a series of classes dedicated to studying energy history through different sources and methodologies. At lecture 7, we will take a closer look at a set of textual and narrative sources, while at lecture 8, we will explore different methodologies for source analysis. 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, and material objects.

Assignment 4 (submit before 29 Sept): Choose an important historical problem in the field of energy and geopolitics in Europe (after 1918) and write an analytical essay on it. Your essay should include a research question, a description of the main scholarship and your argument. The argument should consist of different claims, each of which should be supported by specific evidence (source). You should use at least 2 scholarly publications. Overall, the essay should consist of an introduction, a body and a conclusion. Max. 500 words.

Tue 1 Oct 13:15-17:00 (Location: V2, Teknikringen)

Teacher: Aliaksandr Piahnanau

Session 5 will be organised as a writing training. Lecture 9 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. At lecture 10, we will talk about peer-reviewing process; students will exchange their paper drafts and peer-review it.

Assignment 5 (due by 6 October): Submit a draft of the final essay (maximum 1,000 words). You may draw on literature you have already studied in the course (or elsewhere) and base your draft essay on one of your previous assignment essays. The essay should use at least 2 scholarly publications.

Assignment 6. Prepare an oral presentation using the structure of a written paper (for the class of 8 October). Consider including figures, which will back up your claims.

Tue 8 Oct 13:15-17:00 (Location: V2, Teknikringen)

Teacher: Aliaksandr Piahnanau

Session 6 will include oral presentations by students. You will present your final research paper. It should consist of introducing the topic, research questions, a thesis, overview of sources and methods, claims, limitations and conclusion. Students will be asked to give critical feedback to other presentations.

Assignment 7 (due by 15 Oct): Rework and re-submit your final essay taking into account critic you received before (under 1,000 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 16, 2024) will result in lowering the grade by one letter per week of delay: from B to C, for example, if the delay was submitted on Oct 20, 2024. The essay will be evaluated in 10 criteria providing 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.

Assessment table for grading the final essay

Essay structure	1 point	3 points (or + 2 additional points)	4 points (or + 1 additional point)	5 points (or + 1 additional point)
1. Introduction	Presents a vaguely formulated problem (“knowledge gap”) related to the field of history of E&G	Presents a well-defined problem related to the field of history of E&G	+ this problem is socially important	+ this problem is innovative (or engaging)
2. Argument (thesis) (multiply points by 2)	is clearly formulated.	+ it is built on different claims (has sufficient detalization),	+ addresses the wider problem,	+ it is counter-intuitive.
3. Concept, method & sources used to prove the argument (multiply points by 2)	The conceptual framework is defined,	+ The argument/claims are 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 & defined to analyse 1 or more sources.
4. The limits & weak points of the argument	Limits of the argument are well-defined,	+ weak-points of the argument/claims are defined,	+ weak-points of the concept or of the method or of the sources are defined,	+ some weak-points are addressed with counter-critique.
5. Conclusions	Summary the argument,	+ elaborate wider consequences (for the field of E&G, for society)	+ address the wider problem stated in the introduction,	+ summary the strongest proves.
7. Coherence	Each paragraph is designed around one overarching idea,	+ Each paragraph has an introductory sentence and concluding sentence.	+ Each part of the text has mini-introduction and mini-conclusion,	+ The text is coherent and all its parts are logically connected to each other.
7. Structure & abstract (divide points by 2)	The text has an identifiable structure, with introduction, body & conclusion,	+ Micro-structure of the course PM was fully completed,	+ The text has a well-chosen subheadings,	+ The essay is accompanied by a short abstract (under 150 words).
8. Language (divide points by 2)	The text contains a joke	Formalities and design show no major flaws,	Linguistic rigor: few or no language errors. The text does not have major errors,	Linguistic rigor. The text is designed in a way that favours understanding.
9. Sources (divide points by 2)	Statements backed up by citing sources,	+ Argument/claims are supported by 2 or more different kinds of sources,	+ Citations follow a clear consistent system,	+ Well-designed bibliography (covering well the subject of discussion).
10. Title & figures (divide points by 2)	An accurate & unique title corresponding to the content of the essay or its argument,	+ the title is clear & memorable,	the text has 1 figure (properly discussed in the paper),	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).

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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