

HSA10: Critical Inquiry
Section 5: The Economics of Oil and Energy
Course Outline and Reading Schedule
Spring 2012

Meeting times: Tuesday and Thursday, 12:00 – 1:10
Location: Parsons B146
Instructor: Prof. Gary R. Evans
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DESCRIPTION OF COURSE

Welcome! HSA 10 is a writing-intensive course that addresses a theme developed by your teacher in conformity with writing and educational objectives developed by the college and by the Department of Humanities, Social Sciences, and the Arts. Because I am an economist, I thought that you might be very interested in the economics of energy. There is a lot to be learned here and this subject is very topical and important.

Our future choices for energy production in the United States, including technological choices, will have a profound impact upon our economy and our environment. Some members of your generation of students graduating from Harvey Mudd College will play an important role in shaping our energy future.

It might help, therefore, to start by reviewing the contemporary energy picture in order to understand it better. We will read two texts together about energy and review current surveys and data provided by the *Energy Information Administration* of the U.S. Government. We will use that data in part to confirm or disavow some of the claims that are made in the books that we are reading and in the media. Each week we will have class discussions of the material read and try to arrive at a general understanding of the status quo. Later in the semester we will explore options for change in the future. From time to time I will give a lecture about some aspect of energy economics in addition to lectures and discussions about writing.

(You might want to refer at this point to the Course Calendar and course Bibliography to review the various assignments and due dates. The Bibliography has codes for the reading material that referenced in the Course Calendar).

The semester will open in the second week with a collective discussion and common readings for all students in HSSA 10 courses. That section will offer a common introduction to the different approaches and perspectives of the Humanities, the Social Sciences, and the Arts and students will be asked to submit an essay that surveys the common readings shared in this session. This first essay is graded and will constitute 10% of your grade.

After the second week the course will revert to the primary topic, the economics of energy and oil. In the eighth week a short midterm paper will be due based upon material that has been read and discussed up to that point. After Spring break each student will submit a research paper proposal and work will begin on the research project that will be due (first draft) in the 14th week of the semester, on April 17th.

You will notice at the end of the semester on the course calendar that two weeks have been set aside for class presentations. During this period each of you will individually address the class for about eight minutes explaining the results of the research you did for your research paper assignment. This presentation is a graded, formal assignment and you should take it seriously. It is recommended that you use PowerPoint or some other visual aids although that is not required.

Each HSSA10 class taught this semester is asked to offer a single student presentation (or two) during **Presentation Days** at the end of the semester. In this class you students, with my guidance, will select a volunteer to make this presentation.

For those of you who might be a little shy or uncomfortable with public discussion, I will patiently find ways to work your participation into general class discussion.

COURSE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

A general objective that I have in all classes:

- (A) To encourage students to think of yourselves as intellectuals;
- (B) To encourage students to develop a balanced and eclectic attitude about your own education.
- (C) To encourage students to make a large space in your intellectual lives to be occupied by literature, art, culture, foreign language, music, politics, history, and other subjects that fall under the banner of humanities, the arts, and the social sciences, all in the spirit of promoting objective (A).
- (D) To encourage students to be fair and open-minded, cordial, sympathetic and respectful to peers and others, and especially those who have world views and opinions distinctly different from your own.
- (E) To be open, honest, and public in the expression of what you believe and what matters to you.
- (F) To help train students to be expressive and effective in written and oral communications, in general but also specifically as a means to exercise objective (E) in compliance with objective (D).
- (G) To encourage students to consider and weigh the widespread effects and implications of your professional work after graduation.
- (H) To make students aware, at least to some degree, of the wide range of vocational possibilities that await your choice as you near graduation.
- (I) To contribute, to some degree and sometimes indirectly, to the development of skills that are useful in your chosen profession after graduation, including in some cases, skills or practices that are useful to qualify for work in certain well-defined areas in which I have some expertise.
- (J) To encourage all students to directly consider training in leadership skills, to understand why this may be necessary for students who intend to pursue careers in the sciences, and to encourage a smaller subset of students to strongly train to pursue explicit positions of leadership in academia, scientific research, government, non-profit enterprises, or the business world, and especially in the technology business world.
- (K) To encourage all students to directly consider training in entrepreneurship and to encourage a smaller subset of students to train and prepare for building startups, especially technology startups, or participating in such enterprises.
- (L) To generally expose students to what I loosely regard as "the economists' way of thinking about things," or the economics perspective on emerging issues, including those in the sciences and the application of technology.

The objectives I have for this class:

- (1) To promote the objectives above, especially in the spirit of the general objectives of the HSA 10 courses offered in the core.
- (2) To emphasize the effort to develop and improve your writing and speaking skills in compliance with general objectives D,E, and F above - this is a seminar class designed or formatted with this specific objective in mind.
- (3) To collectively understand much more about the general current status of energy production and use, including the technology, economics, environmental effects and politics, in the United States (mostly) and the rest of the world (to a lesser degree).

- (4) To specifically understand the role currently played by hydrocarbon energy sources, including their environmental and economic consequences.
- (5) To evaluate the potential of renewable alternatives to hydrocarbons, including their cost constraints.
- (6) To develop a better understanding of how important economic constraints, like cost, impact and will continue to impact to the direction of energy production and use in the future.
- (7) Attempt to assess the range of possibilities for our energy future.
- (8) To encourage students to think about careers in this field.
- (9) Any other objectives identified and favored by students in our first few days of discussion.

MY EXPECTATIONS

Honor Code: Your work in this course should conform to our community's Honor Code. While I encourage you to read, review, and discuss each others' ideas and writing, all submitted work must be your own. If you are unsure what constitutes acceptable practice, it is your responsibility to ask.

Participation and Attendance: This is a seminar course. We will devote class time to discussions, peer editing, and other activities that depend on everyone's active and thoughtful participation. You will benefit from others' participation, and you have an obligation to participate in return. Your grade will depend in part upon your class participation. Although I don't require class attendance in my advanced lecture courses, I *do* in my seminar courses because they rely upon class participation. I allow you to miss some classes, but it can't become a habit. I don't take role, but it is a small class and I will notice if you are not there.

In our class discussions I expect all of you to treat your peers with respect and courtesy, especially in circumstances where you disagree. I also promise to treat you the same way.

Late work: I expect that you will complete assignments on time. Unless you have a very good reason for being late, any late material submitted will be graded down and in extreme cases, not accepted.

Laptops. We will need access to Sakai and other internet-based resources frequently in class. If you own a laptop, please bring it to class. There aren't many power outlets in the classroom, so please be sure to charge your battery before class. Please do not use your laptop or other devices to do check email or browse the internet during class-time and you are absolutely forbidden to use them to do work for other classes while we are meeting.

COURSE GRADES

This is a seminar class that requires writing and class participation, especially through class discussions and presentations, so the relative weights for performance are as follows:

Liberal Arts paper **10%**

Midterm paper **20%**

Research paper (including topics, sources, and revisions) **40%**

Class participation **20%**

Final presentations **10%**

RESOURCES YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

HSA10 Tutors. The HSA10 tutors are graduate students employed by the department to assist you with planning and executing the key papers and presentations for this course. Although I don't intend to use a tutor or a grader on a continuing basis in this course, if you think you might benefit from the help of a tutor, please discuss this with me and I can arrange some help for you.

Writing Center. The HMC Writing Center is an excellent resource for getting trained readers' comments and advice at any stage of the writing process, from developing ideas to polishing papers. The Center is open Sunday through Thursday evenings from 7:00 to 11:00 and Saturday afternoons from 3:00 to 5:00, and it is located in Parsons B161. You may schedule an appointment with a writing center consultant through the center's website, www.hmc.edu/writingcenter/, email them at writing_center@hmc.edu or you may simply drop in during normal hours. *You will likely find your Writing Center visit more valuable if you come earlier than the night before your assignment is due!*

REQUIRED TEXTS AND OTHER READING MATERIAL

In the fall writing class you were required to purchase a style book and should have been told that this book will also be used in the spring semester for HSSA10 courses, including this one. That required style book is

Joseph M. Williams and Gregory G. Colomb, *Style - Lessons in Clarity and Grace*, 10th ed., Longman Press, 2010, ISBN 978-0-205-74746-7

All other materials required for this class are free and available on the internet (and will be provided on Sakai and in the dedicated class web pages). They are listed in the *Bibliography* and include codes that are used in the Course Calendar.

READING THE COURSE CALENDAR for the schedule of events planned for this semester.

[Note: The course calendar is subject to revision but you will be warned far in advance if that happens and it would be reflected in a revised Course Calendar that would be provided to you].

The Course Calendar shows all *due dates* for this class. These are indicated by a **D:** next to a description of what is due. These dates are generally consistent with the other HSA-10 classes, although may vary by a day or two.

Reading assignments are indicated by an **R:** which is typically followed by a three-letter blue code (like **SEW**) which refers to a book or article that is coded in the class *Bibliography*, typically followed with page or chapter references. Six of these readings are papers written by students in a prior class. In all cases the date under which the reading is found indicates that you must complete the reading *prior to attending class* by that date, and that further you are prepared to discuss the reading if called upon. (More instructions and guidance will be offered for this assignment). This means that in the first half of the class there is a nearly constant rotation of material to be read and discussed and you are expected to keep up with it.

In much of the second half of the class there are few common reading assignments. That is because by then you will be embarking on your research project and finding and reading material that is pertinent to that project.

On some days a specific topic of discussion is planned and that is indicated with a **T:** On other days we will be discussing the reading or the research that you are doing either collectively or individually. On many days we will be working in class in teams gathering common background information and discussing it using your laptops and online sources.