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UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON | THE HONORS COLLEGE

HISTORY OF ENERGY IN EURASIA

HIST 3395

Dr. David Rainbow

This course explores key aspects of the history of energy in modern Eurasia. Tracing major historical, technological and political transformations from the late imperial to the Soviet and post-Soviet periods (1850 to the present), we consider different ways energy resources—oil, gas, and nuclear—and politics across Eurasia have been related. We also consider the global impacts of these relations. Readings will focus on the region of the former Soviet Union, including the Caucasus and Central Asia, and touch on topics such as: imperial power, industrialization, revolution, technology, utopia, Stalinism, the Cold War, the environment, health, nationalism, and current questions in Eurasian energy. Course counts toward the Energy and Sustainability minor.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- 1) Read, think, and speak about historical topics critically.
- 2) Write and speak analytically about the past.
- 3) Understand how the history of energy in Eurasia connects and relates to broader themes in world history.
- 4) Explain some of the principle developments of the history of energy in Eurasia in political, environmental, and social terms.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

Readings

This is an upper-level honors history course. As such, it requires a substantial amount of reading. Your performance in the course—class participation and writing assignments—is dependent upon whether, and how well, you do this job.

Class participation

You should come to class each day having completed the readings and assignments, and prepared to make productive contributions to our discussions.

Assignments

Reading responses

You should come to the first class of each week with a brief (1 paragraph) response to the readings for the day. You are expected to write intelligently and thoughtfully, analyzing rather than describing what you have read.

Profile assignment

Together with a small group of your classmates, you will prepare a 10-15 minute PowerPoint presentation profiling one of the oil barons from the early years of the Caucasus oil booms. Groups will be assigned in class. See “Profile Assignment” sheet for further instructions.

Intelligence briefings

During our playing of “Twilight Struggle”—a game about the Cold War—you will produce three 2-page reports on a historical topic related to the history of energy in Eurasia during Cold War (and related to your interests in the game). See “Intelligence Briefings” assignment sheet for further instructions.

Book reviews

You will write two brief (2 page) book reviews, one on Loren Graham’s *The Ghost of the Executed Engineer* and one on Kate Brown’s *Plutopia*. See “Book Review” assignment sheet for further instructions.

Final project

Your final project will be a research project resulting in a 5-6 page paper and a 10-minute presentation during our final class meetings related to the project. See “Final Project” assignment sheet for further instructions.

Formatting for written work

All written work must be typed, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, with margins of 1-1.25.” You do not need a title page, but you do need a descriptive title (e.g., Reading Response, Week 4), the date and your name in the heading. Essays should be *Chicago Style*. Staple your own work.

Evaluation

Class Participation:	15%
Reading responses:	15%
Profile assignment:	10%
Intelligence briefings:	10%
Book reviews:	25%
Final Project:	25%

POLICIES

Late Submission of Work:

Late assignments will be assessed a penalty of one letter grade per day (e.g., from B+ to C+), unless prior arrangements with the instructor have been made.

Attendance:

This course is an intensive, short-term course. The material covered in each meeting cannot be made up. Therefore, more than one unexcused absence will negatively affect your grade. After three unexcused absences you will automatically fail the course.

Laptops, etc.

Please do not use laptops, tablets, or phones during class. You should come to class with books, printouts, and notebooks in hand. If this presents a hardship, let me know.

Plagiarism:

Suspected plagiarism will be reported to the Honors College hearing officer for appropriate sanctions. Familiarize yourself with UH's academic honesty policy here:

<http://publications.uh.edu/content.php?catoid=21&navoid=5723>.

TEXTS

To be purchased:

Charles King, *The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus* (Oxford University Press, 2009)

Loren Graham, *The Ghost of the Executed Engineer: Technology and the Fall of the Soviet Union* (Harvard University Press, 1996)

Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters* (Oxford University Press, 2013)

Svetlana Alexievich, *Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster* (Picador, 2006)

Available online:

Joseph A. Martellaro, "The Acquisition and Leasing of the Baku Oilfields by the Russian Crown," *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1 (Jan. 1985): 80-88.

Robert Blackey, "Words to the Whys: Crafting Critical Book Reviews," *The History Teacher*, vol. 27, no. 2 (Feb., 1994), pp. 159-66.

Ronald Grigor Suny, "A Journeyman for the Revolution: Stalin and the Labour Movement in Baku," *Soviet Studies*, vol. 23, no. 3 (January 1972): 373-394.

John McCannon, *A History of the Arctic: Nature, Exploration and Exploitation* (Reaktion Books, 2012) [through UH Library Catalog]

Scott Borgerson, "The Coming Arctic Boom: As the Ice Melts, the Region Heats Up," *Foreign Affairs*, 1 July 2013

Sara Brinegar, "The Oil Deal: Nariman Narimanov and the Sovietization of Azerbaijan," *Slavic Review*, vol. 76, no. 2 (Summer 2017).

David S. Painter, "Oil and Geopolitics: The Oil Crises of the 1970s and the Cold War," *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, vol. 39, no. 4 (150) Special Issue: The Energy Crises of the 1970s: Anticipations and Reactions in the Industrialized World (2014), pp. 186-208.

On reserve in the library:

Steve LeVine, *The Oil and the Glory: The Pursuit of Empire and Fortune on the Caspian Sea* (Random House, 2007)

Marshall Goldman, *Petrostate: Putin, Power and the New Russia* (Oxford University Press, 2008)

Jeronim Perović, "The Soviet Union's Rise as an International Energy Power: A Short History," in Jeronim Perović, ed., *Cold War Energy: A Transnational History of Soviet Oil and Gas* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 1-27.

Felix Rehschuh, "From Crisis to Plenty: The Soviet 'Oil Campaign' Under Stalin," in Jeronim Perović, ed., *Cold War Energy: A Transnational History of Soviet Oil and Gas* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 47-77.

Dilip Hiro, *Inside Central Asia: A Political and Cultural History of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Iran* (Overlook Duckworth, 2009).

SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Reading	Due
WEEK 1			
	Introduction		
	The Caucasus and Early Oil	King, pp. viii-19; LeVine, pp. 3-13; Martellaro, pp. 80-88	
WEEK 2			
	The Caucasus	LeVine, pp. 14-27 Suny, 373-94	
	Oil Barons of Baku	[independent research]	Profile assignment
WEEK 3			
	Russia's Empire	King, pp. 20-63	
	Nations and Revolutions	King, pp. 142-199	
WEEK 4			
	The Sovietization of Azerbaijan	Brinegar	
	Soviet Oil & Gas	Perović, 1-27	
WEEK 5			
	Building Technocracy	Graham, pp. 1-49	
	Engineering an Empire	Graham, pp. 50-100	
WEEK 6			
	Race for the Bomb	Brown, 3-9	Book review: Graham
	Energy Society	Brown, 15-74	
WEEK 7			
	The Soviet Atom	Brown, 75-96	
	Stalinism and Sacrifice	Brown, 97-123, 141-49	
WEEK 8			
	Cooking the Books	Brown, 165-84, 204-20	
	Plutopia	Brown, 231-46, 282-96, 331-8	
WEEK 9			
	Oil and the Cold War	Painter, 186-208	Book review: Brown
	Cold War: Twilight Struggle	[game prep]	
WEEK 10			
	Iranian Crisis, 1945-46	[independent research]	Intelligence brief
	Energy Crises, 1970s	[independent research]	Intelligence brief
WEEK 11			
	Collapse, 1989-1991	[independent research]	Intelligence brief
	Ukraine, Belarus, Chernobyl	Alexievich, 1-32	
WEEK 12			
	Legacies of Disaster	Alexievich, 55-67, 81-92, 114-122	
	Siberia and the Arctic	Borgerson, 1-9	
WEEK 13			
	Kazakhstan: Building an Oil State	Hiro, 234-280	
	Post-Soviet Russia	Goldman, 55-92	
WEEK 14			
	Final presentations		Final project

PROFILE ASSIGNMENT

In the late nineteenth century, a few wealthy capitalists from around the world played central roles in the development of the modern oil industry. This was a period of dramatic change in economic development, technological innovation, and international trade. In Baku, the capital city of Azerbaijan and part of the Russian Empire, several of these changes converged to completely transform the region overnight. Several major “oil barons” turned their attention to Baku and the Caspian region, making it the world’s leading producer of oil by the beginning of the twentieth century.

Your assignment is to produce, together with your partners, a brief profile of one of these “oil barons.” You should conduct research independently before meeting with your partners to collaborate in producing a PowerPoint biography of the person. Your biography should:

1. Consist of between 10-15 slides (not including title and works cited)
2. Include at least six primary sources (three images and three written)
3. Include a works cited at the end listing primary sources and at least three secondary, academic sources (not counting the LeVine chapter). You may include online sources.
4. Focus on your baron’s biography as it relates to his involvement in the early years of the oil industry in Baku.

The barons we will examine are:

1. John D. Rockefeller
2. Robert and Ludvig Nobel
3. The Rothschild brothers
4. Zeynalabdin Taghiyev

You are required to meet with your partner(s) at least once to work on the project. PowerPoint presentations should be uploaded to the course Dropbox folder prior to class time on the day they are due.

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFS

During our playing of “Twilight Struggle,” you will produce three intelligence briefs on three separate topics related to the role of energy during the Cold War and related to the game. You will conduct research in order to produce each of these reports, which should help you and your team during the game. They should be addressed to the rest of your team, highlighting the strategic significance of your topic for winning the Cold War.

Topics will be assigned from game cards at the end of the class before they are due. Your reports should be submitted at the start of class on the day they are due, and should conform to the following rubric (2 pages total).

- I. Your name and team
- II. Topic or event
- III. Historical summary (1-2 paragraphs)
- IV. Important actors (1 paragraph each on at least 2 actors)
- V. Strategic analysis (1 paragraph)
- VI. Energy relevance (1 paragraph)
- VII. List of sources consulted

BOOK REVIEWS

You will write two book reviews, one of Loren Graham's *The Ghost of the Executed Engineer* and one on Kate Brown's *Plutopia*. Each should be two to three pages long. You should not include a title page, footnotes, or anything other than a clean, well-organized, properly formatted, stapled, coherent essay. Anything that distracts from your writing is bad for you.

Your primary task in the book report is three-fold: 1) identify what you take to be the most significant argument(s) of the book (this must include a clear statement of the book's thesis in your own words), 2) describe how the author makes his/her argument(s) (this should touch on specifics as well as encompass the structure of the book in its entirety), and 3) why the argument of the book matters (what's at stake?). The task is relatively simple, which is not the same as saying it is easy to complete. In any case, a good report is impossible to write unless you have read and written about the book carefully and intelligently.

Use the following article as a guide for your reviews: Robert Blackey, "Words to the Whys: Crafting Critical Book Reviews," *The History Teacher*, vol. 27, no. 2 (Feb., 1994), pp. 159-66.

FINAL PROJECT

Option 1: Legacies of the Past

Building upon our reading of Svetlana Alexievich's Nobel Prize-winning *Voices from Chernobyl*, you should explore some aspect of how the history of the Chernobyl disaster continues to impact the world today in a research paper. Your consideration of the topic must be done *historically*, meaning that you need to pay special attention to how Chernobyl and its legacies can be understood in the broader context of the history of energy in Eurasia and the world.

Your project should consist of analyzing one or more post-Chernobyl “artifacts,” which you will identify yourself. For example, you might consider analyzing any of the following: documentary films, technological, environmental, health or other scientific studies, news reports, popular culture, laws, charitable organizations, debates over nuclear power, interviews with survivors, museum curator, or others somehow related to the event.

Your analysis can take a number of forms, as long as I approve it in advance. You might, for example, produce a short film or video essay, contact and interview a relief worker, curate an online exhibition of photographs or artwork, write a paper based on research into a relevant topic, or produce a graphic novel. All projects must include a written component.

The paper should consist of 5-6 pages of text, not including a bibliography, and follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* format. Topics must be approved by me in advance.

All students will give a 10-minute presentation on their project during the final day of class.

Option 2: Cold Warriors

Building upon our playing of “Twilight Struggle,” you may expand upon the research you did for your intelligence brief and produce a research paper. This paper should be analytical, making a claim about your chosen topic and working to defend it using primary and secondary sources. The topic must be connected to one of the energy-related themes in the course, and might productively engage with one or more of the themes raised in other readings or class discussions.

The paper should consist of 5-6 pages of text, not including a bibliography, and follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* format. Topics must be approved by me in advance.

All students will give a 10-minute presentation on their project during the final day of class.