

University of Alberta
CSL350/360
Oil and Democracy
SPRING 2012

Class time and room: Monday/Wednesday (9:30 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.) Room: HC 2 7
Parkland Institute Speakers' Series: Thursday (6:00 – 8:50), Room: NRE 1 001
Professors: Dr. Lorna Stefanick (Governance), Athabasca University and
Dr. Meenal Shrivastava (Political Economy), Athabasca University
Teaching Assistant: Matt Dow

Course Content

This course explores the state of democracy in Alberta in an attempt to discern if Alberta is afflicted with the resource curse that has long plagued nations in the Global South. While much work has been done exploring this question with reference to states in the Global South, little scholarly work has been undertaken on the Global North. Through course work and community-based projects, students will explore the thesis that “oil inhibits democracy” through the examination of three broad themes: the context of democracy in Alberta, rights claims in an oil economy, and governance. Students will experience firsthand how community organizations use their own knowledge to address, challenge and integrate democratic engagement and advocacy in the context of an energy economy and society. Additionally, working in interdisciplinary groups, students contribute to community-based projects.

Lecture Schedule

Week 1: Contextualizing democracy, supply and demand factors in oil markets
Week 2: Class dynamics, the staples economy, and institutions of democracy
Week 3: Wealth distribution and worker safety in an oil-economy
Week 4: The ecological and social consequences of an oil economy
Week 5: Gender, and international activism in an oil economy
Week 6: Progressive thought in Alberta,
Canadian Political Science Association panel on Oil and Democracy

Course Objectives

The primary objective of this course is to enable students to engage with the following question: How does the reliance on oil production impact democratic participation and governance in Alberta? This will be facilitated by gaining knowledge of the context of democracy and its institutions in Alberta; labour, equity, environmental and aboriginal issues in oil-based economies; the concept of class applied in the national and international context; and finally the history of progressive thought in Alberta. A secondary objective of the course is to provide students with the conceptual and theoretical tools needed for analyzing the variety of agents, institutions, and issues of democracy at the national, international and community levels.

Course Environment & Activities

This is an interdisciplinary course. You can expect to read material from a variety of disciplines, including political studies, political economy, sociology, labour relations, environmental studies, public administration, gender studies, critical theory, and human geography. Monday and Wednesday classes will feature class discussions and guest speakers. On Thursdays we will meet for about an hour before the

public speaker series, which runs from 7-9 pm. We will combine in-class seminar style theoretical learning and practice, including engagement with community organizations and service groups in the non-profit sector and interacting with the speakers in the speaker' series. The course will be thematically structured through seminar readings, discussions, and presentations. Your practical work in your community placement will complement the theoretical readings and seminar discussions.

A major component of the course is working with a community-based partner: you will devote 30-35 hours to a specified project over the course of six weeks. Pre-arranged placements and projects will be selected whose mandates correspond to the course's focal themes. Examples of the types of groups that students might be placed with include: the Pembina Institute, Amiskwaciy Academy, Fruits of Sherbrook, Public Interest Alberta, and Worker's Health. Students should note that this rich and unique experience is also quite intensive (six credits in six weeks) as it combines class contact time, a speaker's series, and working with a community group in addition to reading and completing assignments.

Course Reading List

See the companion document "Democracy and Oil Schedule" for the detailed list of required readings, class speakers, and CSL/Parkland Institute speakers' series events.

Assignments and Grading ~

Assignment 1: review essays (500 words each/2 pages)	40% total
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• undergraduates: 4 essays (10% each assignment)• graduate students: 5 essays (8% each assignment) variable due dates, see below	
Assignment 2: active participation	20% total
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• individual participation 10%• group participation 10%	
Assignment 3: group reflection and presentation on partner organization due either June 6 or 11, see below	15%
Assignment 4: individual reflections paper	25%
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• undergrads 3000 words/12 pages• graduate students 4000 words/16 pages due June 15 – NO late papers will be accepted	
	Total: 100%

Assignment 1 – Critical review essays

Write a review essay on any **one** of the required weekly readings from the course reading list. Reflect on a facet(s) of your CSL experience that illustrates and/or potentially challenges a key idea in the reading. Your essay should not just summarize the reading but should also explain how it relates to the objectives of the course. You are expected to assess the reading critically, using the theories and concepts discussed in the course. Explain what insights you have drawn from the reading, the in-class speakers, and the speaker series, and how it was applied to your project with the partner organization.

Students are required to do four (undergrads) or five (graduate students) review essays from a choice of six weekly readings; **each assignment is due 9:30 a.m. of the Monday following the week in which the reading was assigned.**

Assignment 2 - Participation

There are two components to the participation grade, individual and group. The individual component will be assessed by virtue of your engagement in class discussions, with course guest speakers, and in the speaker series.

The second component will be based on your work as a group organizing one session of the speakers' series. This will require you to organize yourselves in groups of a minimum of three individuals to organize and participate in the weekly speakers' series. Each group must do the following: 1) work closely with the teaching assistant in organizing the logistics of the weekly lecture, including introducing the speaker(s); 2) prepare a list of questions related to the topic of the evening to facilitate public discussion; 3) discuss your group's involvement in the speaking engagement and the relevance of the talk for the course in the speaker's series session debriefing in class.

Assignment 3 –Group Reflection and Presentation to Community Partners

A 20 minute group presentation on the last day of class will be done with other students who are working with the same community group as you are; the audience will be other students in the class, and representatives of the organization that you were working for. The task of your group is to briefly describe the history and purpose of the organization, as well as the project that you and your fellow students undertook as part of your CSL experience. The major focus of your presentation will be to discuss the relationship of your organization to the theories, concepts, and themes of the course, with particular reference to the organization's role in promoting structures and/or processes of democratic governance. The linkages between course concepts and the work you did for the community project can be presented as a group, or individually, as determined by your group. The grade, however, will be given to the group.

Due dates: June 6, groups #1 and #2; June 11, groups #3, #4, #5.

Assignment 4 – Individual Reflections Paper

This reflective paper will demonstrate your ability to link the theories, practice, and institutions of democracy introduced in the course, with your experience of community service learning. The paper will have two central purposes:

- 1) Explain how your experience with the community organization is relevant in advancing any of the processes or institutions of democracy.
- 2) Explain the insights you have derived from the course material, the class speakers, and the speaker series, and how these were applied to your project with the partner organization.

Your paper should include some of the following elements that provide the provincial context that the organization is situated in, in order to fully explain its relationship to democratic process and institutions:

- the historical and geopolitical context of an oil economy
- the political institutions and processes in an oil economy
- the impact of the discovery of oil and its share in the economy
- the impact of international trends on a society/economy tied to oil
- environmental issues in an oil economy
- socio-economic issues in an oil economy

Due date: assignments are to be submitted by email by Friday, June 15. Late papers will NOT be accepted.

Note: There is no final exam in this course.

Grading & Marking

Assignments will be marked using a number and/or percentage, but final grades will be posted in letter form. The University guidelines for grading in undergraduate courses are listed in the first three columns of the table below. The percentages that go with a letter grade are listed in the last column.

Descriptor	Letter Grade	Grade Point Value	Percentage equivalent
Excellent	A+	4.0	90 – 100
	A	4.0	86 – 89
	A-	3.7	82 – 85
Good	B+	3.3	78 – 81
	B	3.0	74 – 77
	B-	2.7	70 – 73
Satisfactory	C+	2.3	66 – 69
	C	2.0	62 – 65
	C-	1.7	58 – 61
Poor	D+	1.3	54 – 57
Minimal Pass	D	1.0	50 – 53
Fail	F	0.0	49 and below

Note: A grade of “Incomplete” (IN) is given only in very extreme circumstances.

Policies, Ethics, Conduct

Missed Classes

Regular attendance is essential for this course. In cases of potentially excusable absences, notify your instructor (Dr. Stefanick) by e-mail either before the absence, or no later than two days after. Because of the compressed schedule, students who miss more than two classes will be asked to withdraw from the course. Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult sections 23.4.2 and 23.4.3 of the University Calendar.

Where the reason for the absence is illness, medical documentation is not required. However, students [may](#) elect to present a Medical Declaration Form for Students (available at

<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/artsintranet/pdfs/MedicalDeclarationformforstudents.ashx-1.pdf>). In the absence of a U of A Medical Declaration, or where the reason for the absence is something other than illness, a student must present a completed Statutory Declaration, signed by a Commissioner of Oaths. Statutory Declaration forms can be obtained from your Faculty office.

If you miss a lecture or tutorial, it is your responsibility to get notes from another student. The instructor and teaching assistant do not provide notes.

Late Assignments

Be aware that because of the compressed and intensive nature of this class, and, given the flexible assignment structure of assignment #1, unexcused absences will result in the total loss of the grade for any assignments that are late or that are not handed in as a result.

To reiterate: Late assignments will NOT be accepted.

Academic Integrity

The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at www.ualberta.ca/secretariat/appeals.htm) and avoid any behaviour that could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.

Learning and working environment

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring that all students, faculty and staff are able to work and study in an environment that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The sociology department urges anyone who feels that this policy is being violated to:

- Discuss the matter with the person whose behaviour is causing concern; or
- If that discussion is unsatisfactory, or there is concern that direct discussion is inappropriate or threatening, discuss it with the Chair of the Department.

For additional assistance regarding this policy, contact the student ombudman at <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/OmbudService>. Information about the University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures can be found in the GFC Policy Manual, section 44.

Plagiarism and cheating

All students should consult the “Truth-In-Education” handbook or Website <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/TIE/> regarding the definitions of **plagiarism** and its consequences when detected. Students are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the *Code of Student Behaviour*.

In particular, please note:

No student shall represent another's substantial editorial or compositional assistance on an assignment as their own.

No student shall submit in any course or program of study, without the written approval of the course instructor, all or a substantial portion of any academic writing, essay, thesis, research report, project assignment, presentation or poster for which credit has been obtained by the Student or which has been or is being submitted by the Student in another course or program of student in the University or elsewhere.

Rules of thumb: Do your own work, and ALWAYS CITE when you use someone else's work. Check web sites for where and how they have been produced. (The Library web site has info on assessing internet sites as sources of information.)

Recording of Lectures

Recording is permitted only with the prior written consent of the professor or if recording is part of an approved accommodation plan.

Please note that this syllabus may be subject to minor changes. Any such changes will be announced in class or via email. Policy about course outlines can be found in Section 23.4(2) of the University Calendar.