HI3J1-30 Empire and Energy in the Middle East

24/25

Department
History
Level
Undergraduate Level 3
Module leader
Katayoun Shafiee
Credit value
30
Module duration
22 weeks
Assessment
100% coursework
Study location
University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

The building of world energy systems in the modern era served as the occasion for some of the largest projects of technical and economic development in the latter half of the nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries. A vast global network of oil wells, pipelines, refineries, transoceanic shipping, dams, railroads, electricity and communications networks resulted from this enterprise.

While everyone is aware of the importance of coal, oil, water, and electricity to the history of the modern Middle East, we know surprisingly little about how the social and technical properties of each form of energy have shaped that history. Conventional ways of writing social and political history treat technical problems of producing, processing, and selling forms of energy as practices that are external to the social world. Carbon-based fossil fuels and river-based hydro-power appear to have an “impact” on society, as simply natural resources that affect political systems, social and economic orders, and state formation from the outside while often blocking the possibility for democratic forms of politics.

The origins of the first oil industry as well as the first large-scale hydro-electric dam in the Middle East reside in a little-known part of southwest Iran, now known as Khuzestan province, bordering the Persian Gulf.

Module web page

Module aims

This module offers students the opportunity to make use of rich primary sources held in the BP Archive, US and British National Archives (company reports, governmental correspondences, newspapers, photography, and film) among many other sources in order to develop alternative accounts of the history of energy and empire in the Middle East. Focusing on the anatomy of different kinds of energy system including a British-controlled oil company now known as BP, the students will follow the transformation of forms of energy through the machinery of operations (technical, scientific, legal, governmental, administrative), from the initial development of a particular industry (e.g. Anglo-Iranian oil industry) or large-scale infrastructure (e.g. the Dez Dam in Iran) in the early part of the twentieth century to the dramatic departure of British and/or American-controlled corporate entities as well as international economic institutions of economic governance, such as the World Bank, over fifty years later. The module is designed to be attractive to students interested in the history of British and American empire in the Middle East as well as business history and the history of science and technology that draws on interdisciplinary thinking in Science and Technology Studies. It encourages students to rethink historical and political analysis by drawing connections between the political and historical forces through which large-scale infrastructures such as an oil industry or a large-scale dam have been shaped and the technical forces through which politics and history have been shaped.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Week 1: Introduction: STS, History of Science and Technology
Week 2: Part I: Assembling Oil Networks (ANT and Oil)
Week 3: Material properties
Week 4: Labour
Week 5: Oil Nationalisation and Empire
Week 6: Reading Week

Part II:
Week 7: Assembling Water Networks
Week 8: Material properties, Soil Science
Week 9: Labour-Nature
Week 10: Democratic Futures

Part III: Infrastructures
Week 11: Infrastructure and Water/Oil/Coal
Week 12: Reading Week
Week 13: Infrastructure and Electricity

Part IV: Assembling Knowledge Networks
Week 14: Economic Science and Nature
Week 15: Cont’d (Soil Science)

Week 16: Petro-Knowledge

Part V: Possibilities for Democracy
Week 17: Development and Energy
Week 18: International Economic and Scientific Governance
Week 19: Carbon Democracy and Global Climate Change
Week 20: Final Conference / Other energies (nuclear power, grain, oil, coal, etc)

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate a systematic knowledge and understanding of the connection between political and economic interests and their significance for imperial history and the present situation in the Middle East
- Critically analyse and evaluate a broad range of primary sources, including archival sources, relating to the history of various energy systems in the Middle East
- Effectively communicate ideas, and make informed, coherent and persuasive arguments, relating to the history of energy in the Middle East
- Critically review and consolidate theoretical, methodological, and historiographical ideas relating to science and technology studies and the history of energy in the Middle East

Indicative reading list

Reading lists can be found in Talis

Specific reading list for the module

Subject specific skills

See learning outcomes.

Transferable skills

See learning outcomes.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	18 sessions of 2 hours (12%)
Tutorials	4 sessions of 1 hour (1%)
Total	300 hours

Type	Required
Private study	260 hours (87%)
Total	300 hours

Private study description

History modules require students to undertake extensive independent research and reading to prepare for seminars and assessments. As a rough guide, students will be expected to read and prepare to comment on three substantial texts (articles or book chapters) for each seminar taking approximately 3 hours. Each assessment requires independent research, reading around 6-10 texts and writing and presenting the outcomes of this preparation in an essay, review, presentation or other related task.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A2

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
Seminar Contribution	10%		No
Reassessment component			
1000 word reflective essay in lieu of Seminar Contribution			Yes (extension)
Assessment component			
1500 word essay	10%		Yes (extension)
Reassessment component is the same			

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
3000 word source based essay	40%		Yes (extension)
Reassessment component is the same			
Assessment component			
3000 word essay	40%		Yes (extension)
Reassessment component is the same			

Feedback on assessment

Written feedback provided via Tabula; optional oral feedback in office hours.

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- Year 3 of UENA-VQ32 Undergraduate English and History
- Year 4 of UENA-VQ33 Undergraduate English and History (with Intercalated year)
- Year 3 of UHIA-V100 Undergraduate History
- Year 4 of UHIA-V101 Undergraduate History (with Year Abroad)
- Year 3 of UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
- UHIA-V1V8 Undergraduate History and Philosophy (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
    - Year 3 of V1V8 History and Philosophy (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
    - Year 4 of V1V8 History and Philosophy (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
- Year 4 of UHIA-V1V6 Undergraduate History and Philosophy (with Year Abroad)
- Year 3 of UHIA-V1V7 Undergraduate History and Philosophy (with a term in Venice)
- Year 3 of UHIA-VM11 Undergraduate History and Politics
- UHIA-VM14 Undergraduate History and Politics (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
    - Year 3 of VM14 History and Politics (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
    - Year 4 of VM14 History and Politics (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
- Year 4 of UHIA-VM12 Undergraduate History and Politics (with Year Abroad)
- Year 3 of UHIA-VM13 Undergraduate History and Politics (with a term in Venice)
- Year 3 of UHIA-VL13 Undergraduate History and Sociology

- UHIA-VL16 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
    - Year 3 of VL16 History and Sociology (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
    - Year 4 of VL16 History and Sociology (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
- Year 4 of UHIA-VL14 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with Year Abroad)

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 3 of UHIA-V100 Undergraduate History
- Year 4 of UHIA-V101 Undergraduate History (with Year Abroad)
- Year 3 of UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
- Year 4 of UHIA-V1V6 Undergraduate History and Philosophy (with Year Abroad)
- Year 3 of UHIA-VM11 Undergraduate History and Politics
- Year 4 of UHIA-VM12 Undergraduate History and Politics (with Year Abroad)