Sociology 290

The Politics of Nuclear Power, Energy Sovereignty, and Indigenous Knowledge: The Fukushima Nuclear Meltdown and Its Impact on Nuclear Programs in Asia, the U.S., Europe, the Middle East, and Beyond

Winter 2013

Course Description

Vandana Shiva, prominent Indian environmental activist and quantum physicist, once declared that “nuclear is the dirtiest energy of all,” as she warns about the potential environmental devastation of the unfettered development of atomic arsenals and resulting radioactive pollution. Using last year’s Fukushima nuclear disaster as an intellectual launching pad, this class is designed to energize scholarly debates and discussions on the politics of energy and broader socio-political and environmental ramifications of Japan’s nuclear meltdown – namely, its impact on the future of nuclear energy programs in Asia, the Middle East, Europe, the U.S. and the Global South. We will look at a number of important issues facing the state of the world’s nuclear future, which includes: past disasters and the U.S. Government’s atomic cover-up of its nuclear experiments; the role of media on safety debates and the development of atomic armament, including depleted uranium (DU) ammunitions and bunker buster bombs; state-corporate predations of indigenous nations for uranium mining, nuclear testing, and waste dumping; the efficacy of pacifist strategies adopted by anti-nuclear grassroots movements; and finally, a broader discussion of social-political arrangements and potential political strategies for best achieving regional energy sovereignty and sustainability.

This class specifically applies a critical indigenist perspective (i.e., the Fourth World Approach coined by George Manuel and later adopted by the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) and a method of historical genealogy (devised by Nietzsche and later exploited by Foucault) in order to trace out the evolution of the state’s energy programs, including governmental efforts to propagate the peaceful use of nuclear power, develop proprietary intellectual property (IP) rights for nuclear technologies, global market creation for nuclear industries, and concomitant state responses to emergent anti-statist and ecological oppositions.

Instructor

Sociology & Legal Studies Professor Hiroshi Fukurai (hfukurai@ucsc.edu): office hours on Tuesday 2-5 p.m. and/or an appointment.

Class Meeting

The class meets on Wednesday 9-12 p.m. at College Eight, Room 301 (another meeting time may be possible, depending upon students’ request and consensus).

Evaluations:

(1) Weekly In-Class Presentation of Our Reading

• Facilitation: In the first week, each seminar participant may sign up to be responsible for organizing and leading a seminar discussion based on a close reading of the articles/book for one week; s/he can also bring into class a relevant news story, media/video clip, film or TV excerpt, photos/songs/poems, a guest appearance in
person or via a skype, etc., which is relevant to the reading topics for that day so that we can make application of the readings and concepts to contemporary events and politics, and consider the utility (or lack thereof) of the ideas put forth by various authors.

- Please remember that the success of a seminar depends on active participation and collectively developed discourse, and keeping up with the weekly reading is the most important requirement of this topical course. Come to class prepared to share your ideas and/or cogent perspective on the material by exploring the equity and adequacy of particular themes and arguments, evaluating the logic or a theory or a concept, and reflecting on the readings’ implications for work of your own.

- **Participation:** Every student is expected to present a reaction/reading paper (200-400 word) of assigned paper in class and show how they are relate to themes of the week’s topic as well as other assigned readings (5-15 min each, based on the facilitator’s discretion). It would be most ideal if you can relate the readings to issues that you are interested in exploring in your individual research and/or final paper.

- In order to facilitate discussions, your critical reaction/reading paper to be posted to ecommons by 12 noon Tuesday every week. To post your paper, please log onto our ecommons and submit your paper using Communication tool (on the left side of the screen) called Discussion Forums and upload your file for everyone to share.

  - You can present it orally. You can also distribute copies of your synopsis and explain your arguments accordingly. Or you can do so in an imaginative way as it suits your objectives.

**Final Research Paper**

(1) You must identify a key subject matter related to some aspects of energy programs, environmental effects, policy, movements, and strategies for social change. Students may choose any relevant topic covered in class and develop it into a full paper.

(2) The concept paper (3 page max, excluding a cover sheet and a bibliography) is due on the 5th week, and the final paper (20 page max) is due on the final's week.

**Oral Presentation of Your Research Paper:**

(1) The later part of this quarter (9th & 10th week) will be reserved for students to present findings on their research topic. The presentation evaluation will be based on how well s/he speaks about their research objectives and presents findings and arguments in an effective and engaging fashion.

**Use of Wikileaks Document for Research Paper:**

- In 2010, Wikileaks documents revealed more than a quarter million cables sent from 274 U.S. embassies strategically located around the globe to the U.S. State Department in Washington D.C. The cables contained information from December 28, 1966 to February 28, 2010. Critical analysis of its documents has already been felt around the globe, including so called “the Arab Spring” in 2010 which was instigated by Wikileaks’ revelations of Tunisian elites’ deep-rooted corruptions and media-constructed mass deceptions. Critical analysis of its contents has also exposed multitudes of ethically and legally questionable U.S. operations abroad, such as secret information gatherings on foreign dignitaries, reportings by surrogate agencies and
intelligence assets on the emergence of democratic and socialist movements in the global south and elsewhere, investigative summaries of specific anti-U.S. protests and activities in individual states or regions, and clandestine plots to neutralize foreign targets, among many others.

- Students are free to access, examine, and investigate the content of the wikileaks document for the final paper. The 1.7 GB document will be made available for students’ use. Brief instructions on how to extract information from the document are given in class.

**Textbook (Please obtain through Amazon or other internet outlets):**

- **EILEEN WELSOM**, *The Plutonium Files: America’s Secret Medical Experiments in the Cold War* (1999)

- The weekly reading will be posted on eCommons every week.

**Course Contents**: Some weeks will show short videos, photos, and/or pictures to gain deeper understandings of weekly subjects. New reading materials, videos, or photo magazines may be added, depending upon the topics covered in individual weeks.

Additional information enlisted in Supplement is not part of weekly reading, though these materials may provide additional information for students’ research for the final paper.

- **Week 1: Introduction on the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster, Toiletry & Civilization, Colonialism, and Enviro-Destruction**
  
  - Hiroshi Fukurai, *Disaster Memories and Other Thoughts on the Fukushima Nuclear Reactors, the Military Industrial Complex, the Ainu, and National Sovereignty*, in *MY POSTWAR LIFE* (Elizabeth McKenzie ed., 2012)

**We Watch the Following Video Together in Class for the First Week:**

- Vandana Shiva, *Transcend: Nuclear and Coal Energy*, *DEMOCRACYNOW!, 2011* (8 min video)
- Frank Lopez, *It’s the End of the World as We Know it and I Feel Fine*, *Amateur Riot*, *Submedia.tv*, 2011 (14 minute video)
Supplement:

• Week 2: History of Energy & Colonialism – “Europe” as a Colonial Construction, the “Nation” vs. the “State,” and History of Energy and State Predations

Supplement:
- UCSC Newsletter, Sustainable Energy Research (Community-based Microgrids).

• Week 3: National Sacrifice Areas – Indigenous Lands, Colonialism, & Globalization


**Supplement:**

- Radiation Exposure from 50 Years of Uranium Mining Continues to Affect Spokane Indian Reservation (DemocracyNow!), Apr. 21, 2009 (6 min).
- The *Navajo Nation’s Ongoing Battle Against Uranium Mining* (DemocracyNow!), Mar. 2, 2006 (16 min).
- *Energy Exploitation and the Ban on Uranium Mining in Navajo Country* (DemocracyNow!), May 31, 2005 (begins at 45th min).
- *As the House of Representatives Votes to Turn Yucca Mountain into a Nuclear Waste Storage Site, a Look at the History, Science, and Politics Beyond the Vote* (DemocracyNow!), May 9, 2002 (17 min).
- *WINONA LAUDE, THE MILITARIZATION OF INDIAN COUNTY* (2011)

**Week 4: The American Role in Fukushima Disaster – The Atoms for Peace Program, CIA Clandestine Psychological Warfare Operations Across the Globe, & Hegemony of Nuclear Safety Myths**


**Supplement:**

- *BBC, Secrets of the CIA* (92 min)

**Brief Student Presentation & Discussion (10-15 min each)**

- Students’ Research Topic and Investigative Trajectories

**Week 5: “Hybrid Human Experiment” of Atom Bomb Program – University of California, Medical Doctors, and Effects of Radiation Beyond Hiroshima & Nagasaki**


**Supplement:**

**Week 6: No Class**

**Week 7:** What is Energy Sovereignty? Is it Achievable? Alien Tort Claims Act & Remedies?


**Supplement:**
- *Farmers and Food Advocates Urge Obama to Create a National Sustainable Food and Agricultural Policy (Paul Willis Interview)* (DEMOCRACYNow!), Dec. 16, 2008 (6 min)

**Week 8: Strategic Efficacy of Non-Violent Anti-Nuclear & Environmental Grassroots Activities & Politics of Comfort Zone**

- B. Rex, *Pacifism Summer: Revolution Summer Through the Lens of*
Churchill’s Pacifism as Pathology (2007)
- ARC McBAY, LIERRE KEITH, & DERRICK JENSEN, DEEP GREEN RESISTANCE (2011) (selected chapters)

Supplemental Readings
- NORMAN FINKELSTEIN, WHAT GANDHI SAYS (2012).
- Bill Ayers Weatherman Underground Exposed! (2008) (9 min)

- **Week 9: Depleted Uranium Ammunition, Military Use of Radiation, and Public Reliance on Nuclear Energy – Medical, Food, and Water**

Supplement:
- *Patrick Cockburn on Missing Billions in Iraq and Soaring Cancer & Infant Mortality Rates in Fallujah, DEMOCRACYNOW!, Jul. 29, 2010 (14 min).*

- **Week 10: Student Presentations**