New course, Fall 2005:
The global oil system & the Middle East - An interdisciplinary exploration

Middle East & N. African Studies MENAS491 || Residential College RCSocSci461 || Geology GeoSci496
Credits: 3 || Info: [http://www.umich.edu/~twod/courses](http://www.umich.edu/~twod/courses)
Time: Tu.-Thurs 4:00 - 5:30 || Place: 126 E. Quad, Residential College
Instructor: Tom O'Donnell || E-mail: twod@umich.edu

Upper-level Seminar — Grad students encouraged to join

In this interdisciplinary course, we see concretely the role oil in the Middle East today by, first, surveying the basic facts about global oil resources and infrastructures, including origins, reserves, productive capacity, depletion rates, demand and price history, and reasons for the persistence of oil as the basis of transportation everywhere. Next, we examine the main actors of the international oil system, including the oil-producing nations’ OPEC cartel, and the cartel of First-World consumers, the International Energy Agency (IEA); the special role of US and other IEA-members’ strategic oil reserves; of Saudi Arabia (as the “Central Bank of Oil” and an “oil-price swing state,” its several internal crises and forces, its significance with 9/11); of Iraq (plans for development of its oil reserves, the role of the occupation, the responses and interests of internal Iraqi forces), Iran (as newly important site of global oil contention, the interplay with internal forces and crises, US policy); and of Kuwait and the UAE. We also survey the roles of Russia, the Caspian Basin, and of Latin American and African producers. This leads to study of the phases of US global and Middle-East oil strategy since WW II. Crucial here is the period after the 1973 embargo up to the 1991 Gulf War, and through the Iraq-sanctions regime. We see how a gradually increasing oil crisis is now enhancing the importance of the Middle East and its oil. We see how China and India's exploding oil demand undermines cheap and addictive oil, requiring dramatic increases in the pumping capacities of Middle-East and other producers. We examine the later-Clinton Administration's policies, and the Cheney Energy Plan, including how Middle-East and other oil-producing states which had nationalized their oil resources are being pressed to accept large private investments, transparency, and a new level of global market-control institutions in cooperation with the US and OECD states—a major step in energy globalization. We also consider the consequences of this new phase in US policy for global warming, for stagnating transportation-infrastructure modernization within the US, and for other increasingly oil- and automobile-addicted states, especially the EU, Japan and China, and, most particularly, its effect on the peoples of the oil-producing states of the Persian Gulf and the broader Middle East, increasingly seen by major consuming states as “the global oil spigot” (D. Harvey) of the 21st century.

- Requirements: readings, participation, current-events team reports, research paper