

EAS 565, Fall 2018

# Principles for Transition: Power Over, Power With

Class meetings: Mondays, 5:30-7:00 pm, September 16 – December 10  
Classroom: Room 1024, Dana Building  
Instructor: Prof. Thomas Princen, office 2506, Dana Building; 647-9227; tprincen@umich.edu  
Office hours: Wednesdays, 12 noon – 2 p.m.; and drop-ins anytime; 2506 Dana Building

## GOALS

This course is part of a series of courses that come under the rubric of “transitional thinking.” These courses examine fundamental shifts in biophysical and social conditions, especially those that are discontinuous and irreversible, with an eye to the future. A primary purpose is to understand and prescribe measures for **positive transition**—that is, for effecting peaceful, democratic, just and sustainable changes in how societies North and South organize themselves for fundamental change. Two overarching goals are to develop i. a grounded sense of urgency *and* possibility; ii. tools—historical, conceptual, practical—for positive transition.

This half-semester course explores transition through the lens of power. A premise is that transition, being a fundamental, unprecedented, discontinuous shift with both biophysical and social dimensions, will play out along lines of **power differences** and **power sources**. This course asks how power promotes business as usual, hinders transition, and how it can promote positive transition.

Part I examines how physical power, especially fossil fuels, especially oil, translates into economic, political and military power.

Part II examines resistance to such power, including the organization and protest of resident and indigenous peoples, NGOs and transnational organizations.

Part III examines the concept and practice of “power with” -- empowerment through action; the special power of the place-based; and the power, individual and collective, of reconnection, respect, humility.

## PREMISES

1. The world is in transition, a process that will intensify as a) the era of cheap energy comes to an end; b) payments for past environmental abuses come due; c) marginalized peoples and social entrepreneurs assert their sovereignty over food, fuel and markets.
  2. Business-as-usual, however efficient, equitable and cooperative, can not be sustained.
  3. Less consumption for the Global North and more consumption for the Global South is possible, desirable and just.
  4. To avoid catastrophic loss, fundamental (not marginal) social change is necessary—and urgent.
- Students in this course need not accept these premises but they should be able to work with them. Students who have not taken NRE 564 will be given background reading and a brief lecture on transition.

To be as clear as possible about the nature of this course, it is not an energy course nor an economics or politics course (in the sense of party politics). It does not dwell on biophysical trends, economic growth and efficiency, or political gridlock. It does not pretend to be “value-free,” “objective,” positivist, or merely descriptive. Nor does it purport to have “the answer.” It is exploratory: the course

explores the near future, drawing from the past but envisioning a future, a positive future for current and coming generations.

For students whose aim is to document trends, to “do the science” and leave the rest—behavioral and societal change, values, power—to others, this is not the right course. NRE 565 is for those willing to tackle what is among the thorniest of issues facing humankind—getting off fossil fuels, reducing consumption for some, increasing it for others, restructuring humans’ relationship to natural systems, organizing to live within our means (biophysical, cognitive, social), devising principles consistent with the impossibility of endless material growth and inequitable cost displacement and, especially in this course, understanding the crucial role of **power**.

## METHODS

The course combines features of a seminar (readings and discussion) and lecture. It uses extensive readings, cases, and personal and professional experiences. Although there are no prerequisites, students are expected to be familiar with contemporary environmental trends—e.g., toxics, freshwater, climate—and the premises of transition (again, as laid out in NRE 564).

Students must **prepare** daily, **engage** in discussions (including written submissions), and support classmates in an atmosphere of mutual and collaborative learning.

**Electronic devices policy:** No operating laptop computers, smart phones or other electronic devices are allowed in the classroom. They should be turned off and stowed away upon entering the classroom. Prof. Princen’s classroom responsibility is to focus students’ attention on the topic at hand. Experience has led to the unfortunate conclusion that, all too often, use of such devices distracts the student, other students, and Prof. Princen, and thus diminishes Prof. Princen’s effectiveness and students’ learning.

**Absence policy:** *In-class*, face-to-face activities are the core of the course.

Attendance at all class sessions, including the introductory session, in which expectations are set, and the concluding sessions, in which evaluations are conducted, are required. There are **no repeats** and **no make-ups** and **no electronic equivalents**. There is **no Canvas site** for this course. Students are responsible for all substantive and procedural information presented **in class**, regardless of absences (however unavoidable such absences may be). Note: such information is given **in class**, not via email.

## Evaluation criteria:

- i. Preparation for and constructive participation in daily **in-class** activities.
- ii. Clearly written, well-argued, thoroughly substantiated answers to short written assignments.
- iii. Positive contribution to one’s own and others’ research, writing and presentation.

## REQUIREMENTS

1) Daily preparations – The in-class discussions of experiential cases and conceptual readings are designed to develop key concepts as well as to grapple with important policy-making dynamics. Reading guidelines may be distributed in class for some of the readings. Thorough preparation of readings and cases are essential to the success of these exercises.

2) Weekly principles – The readings are selected to stimulate thought about power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century transition. No single reading or combination of readings says definitively what the role of power in its various forms are, yet each may offer a different framework for understanding.

For each session’s readings, write at least two principles (e.g., criteria, guidelines, rules of thumb, propositions) based on the readings.

One principle should derive from a **case**, the other from a **conceptual** reading.

Principles are **normative statements**, not descriptive summaries. They take the form of general, prescriptive statements. They are not a summary; they are written to deliberately suggest action.

The objective is not to be right, but to be exploratory and synthetic, even, at times, provocative. The broader, long-term goal is to build a conceptual framework for power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century transition, and to offer guidelines for action. The collection of principles from all class members (instructor included) thus serves as a publicly accessible (initially only to the course members) database from which anyone can build a conceptual framework for thinking and acting transitionally. The readings contain many possibilities for such principles. Sometimes the authors make them explicitly and can be extracted almost verbatim. More often, though, principles are implicit in the text, in which case they must be inferred, developed and written in the student's own words.

A few carefully crafted sentences will generally suffice for each principle. It is useful to indicate where in the reading the principle originated (e.g., page number, a short quote). If feedback is desired, it is the responsibility of the class member to ask. Otherwise, in each class session a few volunteers will share their principles. This will be one basis for class discussion.

Print the principles (by computer or, if extremely legible, by hand) using large font, and (physically) post them on the classroom walls for everyone to read at the beginning of class—i.e., 5:30 pm sharp. Afterwards, the principles will be put in a binder, available to all members at office 2506 Dana Building. The class thus begins promptly at 5:30 pm with everyone posting and reading principles between 5:30 and 5:40 pm. Class discussion begins at 5:40 pm.

3) Research project/presentation -- Final product, at the student's choice, is a research paper, a comparative analytic paper, or a final exam. Results will be publicly presented in class for feedback. An extended evening session to accommodate all papers is possible.

Instructions and criteria provided **in class**.

*Note: All submissions are on paper, not electronic.*

## GRADES

The final grade will be based on the following weightings:

Preparation/participation/principles	45%
Research paper/comparative analytic paper/final exam	45%
Presentation	10%

Written assignments will be graded for both content and exposition (see WRITING and WRITTEN WORK below).

## WRITING and THINKING

The instructor assumes that the student takes full responsibility for clear, direct, coherent writing--even for short assignments and report drafts. Readers are not expected to wade through sloppily written, poorly organized papers, let alone copy edit them.

If, for any reason, including the problem of using English as a second language, writing assistance is needed, it is the student's responsibility to see the instructor **in advance** of due dates.

The instructor also assumes, and highly recommends, that all students take advantage of the services of the Sweetland Writing Center on campus (1111-1148 Angell Hall; 764-0429). In fact, those with poorly written papers will be referred to the Center and required to submit additional drafts.

## WRITTEN WORK GUIDELINES

Type all assignments and submit in paper, not electronic, unless so directed. Single spacing is acceptable for final papers (in fact, for source reduction purposes, preferred) but drafts to be read and marked by others should be double spaced with ample margins for comments. **Number** all pages and **staple**. All assignments should include **name, date, mailing address** (campus or email or other preferred means of contact), and **assignment** topic.

Printing on the back side of used paper and other creative uses and re-uses of paper are encouraged, provided the material is readily **readable**.

Inattention to these seemingly minor details will result not only in reader consternation and judgmental lapses, but also in the paper being returned for corrections and re-writing.

## READING MATERIALS

A coursepack is the primary sources of cases and readings. Additional readings and cases will be distributed in class. Again, no Canvas site.

Required coursepack available at Dollar Bill, 611 Church Street.

The experiential cases in these materials are intended to 1) show “the possible,” i.e., that which is grounded in lived practice, across cultures, across time; and 2) be a source of principles for a peaceful, democratic, just and sustainable transition.

The conceptual readings are intended to create a “language of urgent transition,” especially with respect to “power over” and “power with.” These readings should suggest ways of thinking about fundamental change, from the local to the global, from individual to collective, from global North to global South. They too are sources of principles.

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## SCHEDULE

Note #1: The instructor may modify the following schedule **in class** with notification no more than one class period in advance of the change. Students are responsible for all organizational updates given **in class**.

Note #2: All cases and readings, unless otherwise noted, are in the **coursepack**. They should be read **in advance** of all class sessions, including the first one. Page numbers refer to pages in the original publication, not to the photocopy pages; the order of readings does not necessarily correspond to the order in the following schedule.

### SEPTEMBER 10 Introduction

*Case discussion:* Yergin, The Prize

*Reading discussion:* Thiel, "Politics," read carefully first the conclusion, pp. 201-203, then pp. 169-181, then skim pp. 182-201.

*Lecture:* Introduce "power," "transition"

*Pick up:* i. Research guidelines;  
ii. three cases by Princen, Bozzi, and Broad

### SEPTEMBER 17

*Case:* Princen, "The Culture of Fossil Fuel"

*Reading:* Thiel, "The Political," first re-read the conclusion, pp. 201-203, then read carefully pp. 182-201, then skim pp. 169-181

*Lecture:* Faces of Power

### SEPTEMBER 24

*Case:* Mintz, Sweetness and Power

*Reading:* Nixon, "Slow Violence," pp. 1-28

*Turn in:* Research preferences

### OCTOBER 1

*Case:* Bozzi, "Mountaintop Removal"

*Reading:* Walzer, "Political Power," pp. 281-295 (handout)

### OCTOBER 8

*Case:* Broad, "El Salvador Gold"

*Reading:* Meadows, "Places to Intervene in a System" (handout), leverage points #9 to #6

*October 15* *Fall Study Break – no class*

**Due** Friday, October 19th, 12 noon, office 2506: 2-page, double spaced, wide margins draft of research paper. Expectations and procedures explained in class and in a handout.

### OCTOBER 22

*Case:* Friedrich, "When Energy Runs Short" pp. 77-106

*Reading:* Meadows, "Places to Intervene in a System" (handout), leverage points #5 to #0

**Due** Friday, December 6, 12 noon, room 2506: “Nearly final”<sup>Ψ</sup> draft of research paper. 5-6-page, double spaced, wide margins.

OCTOBER 29

*Case:* Glennon, “The Black Mesa Coal Slurry Pipeline,” pp. 155-168;  
*Reading:* Cordova, “What Is the Role of a Human Being,” pp. 183-192;

NOVEMBER 5

*Case:* Clapp, “Financialization, Distance and Global Food Politics” (handout )  
*Reading:* Merchant, “Consciousness,” pp. 19-26

NOVEMBER 12

*Case:* *New York Times*, “A Food’s Global Success Creates Quandary at Home” (handout)  
*Reading:* Zukov, “Seat of the Soul,” pp. 168-174

NOVEMBER 19

*Case:* Pollan, “The Farm,” pp. 32-56

NOVEMBER 26

*Case:* Milbrath, “Transforming Dominator Society,” pp. 29-57

DECEMBER 3

*Presentations*

DECEMBER 10 (last class)

*Presentations*

**Due** Final paper (hard copy). Deliver any time the week of December 10<sup>th</sup> but no later than Friday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 12 noon, room 2506. Include all previous drafts for which comments have been added.

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<sup>Ψ</sup> “Nearly final” means 1) the paper is clearly and logically organized with headings and, as appropriate, subheadings; 2) transitions from section to section and from paragraph to paragraph are clear; and 3) the language is concise and free of typos, grammatical errors, and misspellings. In short, the paper is so close to completion that the reader should have to contend only with ideas, arguments, and information, not with problems of exposition.