HNRS 353 008 Technology in the Contemporary World:
Clean Coal and Culture (3 Credits)

Mr. Richard Todd Stafford
rstaffo2@gmu.edu

Class
10:30-11:45a Tuesday and Thursday
Buchanan Hall D005

Office Hours
Buchanan Hall D203K (inside D205)
By appointment using Calendly:
https://calendly.com/richardtoddstafford

Course Description

Students in this research seminar will work in small groups to develop an understanding of the relationships between “clean coal” and broader cultural and sociopolitical contexts. Each research group will focus on a different aspect of “clean coal,” including but not limited to,

- Political rhetoric concerning “clean coal” technologies
- Industry and activist group’s representations of “clean coal” technologies
- News media representations of “clean coal” technologies
- Legal and regulatory context for “clean coal” technologies
- Ethics of implementing “clean coal” technologies
- Economics of “clean coal” technologies
- Risk perceptions, risk communication, and “clean coal” technologies

While this class requires group work, student group meetings occur during regularly scheduled class times. In consultation with the instructor, groups will investigate the ongoing scholarly conversations about a broad topical area related to “clean coal” together. Building off of this secondary research, students will propose and pursue an individually-managed research project that calls on them to conduct some form of original analysis or primary research. The final deliverables in this class include: class presentations, in-class discussions of our research findings, and written investigations to be included in a public-facing website.

Learning Objectives

Students will
- Effectively communicate with those who do not share their disciplinary and/or professional perspectives during the process of both group- and individual-based inquiry.
- Demonstrate collaborative skills necessary to the coordination and development of complementary research projects with a small group
- Articulate and refine a focused and manageable research question that draws on the scholarly literature relevant to some aspect of the intersection between “clean coal” and culture, society, the economy, or its institutions.
By appropriately adapting research strategies, methods, and/or theories from the scholarship, design a research project that has the potential to contribute to our understanding of the question.

Discover, reason and write analytically about secondary and/or primary evidence responsive to their question.

Distinguish between personal beliefs, opinions, claims, and evidence when engaging with multiple differing perspectives in this evidence

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**Grading**

Though assignments have a weighted value in the final grade, all assignments are required; failure to complete an assignment may result in failure for the course.

1. **Participation:** 25%
2. **Comments and Replies Portfolio (Blog Participation):** 20%
3. **Research Project: Total of 55%**
   a. **Individual** Annotations Portfolio: 10%
   b. **Group** State of the Knowledge Blog Post: 5%
   c. **Group** State of the Knowledge Discussion: 5%
   d. **Individual** Research Proposal Blog Post: 10%
   e. **Group** Research Proposal Presentation: 5%
   f. **Group** Introducing Research Findings Blog Post: 5%
   g. **Individual** Research Findings Blog Post: 10%
   h. **Group:** Research Findings Discussion: 5%

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**Major Assignment Descriptions**

**Individual Annotation Portfolio**

Students will be individually responsible for composing annotations of six sources and circulating them to their working groups on our discussion forums. After revision, annotations should be 400-600 words in length. 250 words is definitely much too short.

The first three sources you work with will be provided by me and will generally involve the shared scientific, technical, economic, and public health background we all need to study pollution mitigation technologies in the coal industry from a cultural perspective.

The next three sources will be source that you have located that are helping you understand your group’s research mandate. No two members in your group should work with same source, so you will need to collaborate and coordinate with your peers to identify which sources you will work on. In most cases, these sources will be scholarly, peer reviewed literature, but in some cases, I might be willing to approve such alternative documents as government reports, scholarly publications by nonprofits or NGOs, court decisions, and the like.

I will provide feedback on the first annotation so that you know what to expect from my annotation grading, but this will just be a provisional grade, as the Annotations will be graded as a portfolio after all six are complete.

You will be permitted to revise/edit these annotations until they are submitted as a complete portfolio on 2/22. They will be graded as a single portfolio grade at that time.

Each time you annotate a source, your job is to communicate effectively to your peers what they need to know about the source to use it. You need to give them context necessary to understand the source
without assuming that they have read it -- or will read it. You will be giving informal presentations to your group about each source you annotate during the class period in which they are due, so you will need to know the source quite well by then.

**Group State of the Knowledge Blog Post**

Each group will be responsible for synthesizing the sources that they have annotated into a 1500-1750 word blog post, excluding citations.

In this post, you will teach an audience who has not read this literature about three to four major themes, debates, unresolved questions, contradictions, tensions, issues, or problems in the scholarship related to your topic. It will be better to focus closely on a more narrowly construed version of the topic, rather than trying to cover everything relevant to a group’s mandate. This may mean that some of the annotations don’t end up “fitting” very well and/or that additional sources are necessary to fill in gaps, but it is expected that the the state of the knowledge post will primarily involve bringing the annotations into conversation with each other.

The purpose of this blog post is to educate your audience: you will want to characterize how these threads relate to each other and explain them clearly to someone who might not read beyond your report.

Charting the relationships between the major themes and/or major concepts from the literature with some kind of concept map is strongly recommended.

**Group State of the Knowledge Discussion**

The whole class will read your State of the Knowledge blog post. In class, your group will lead a 30 minute discussion of your topic.

Your job will be to develop a series of interpretive questions that a group of students who have read your State of the Knowledge post, but who may otherwise be relatively unfamiliar with your topic, will be able to discuss meaningfully.

It is a good idea to have questions that would be productive to discuss as a whole class, questions that would be productive for working groups to discuss (e.g. questions that call on working groups to explore connections between your research and their own), and questions that would be productive for us to discuss in pairs.

**Individual Research Proposal Blog Post**

Each individual will write a 1000-1250 word blog post, excluding citations. You will explain the necessary background concerning the aspect of the topic they are studying, state the specific research question you are investigating, explain the social significance of the question, describe the specific research methods you plan to use and/or evidence that you plan to look at, and briefly describe how answering this question in this way will enable them to contribute to some specific body of related scholarship. The longest and most detailed section should have to do with the research methods and evidence. Talk to me during class meetings to run these ideas by me before you post your research proposals.

**Group Research Proposal Presentations**

The whole class will read your individual research proposals in advance of class. In class, your group will give a 30-40 minute presentation about your research.

Your presentation should be broken up in the following way:

1. Broader context for what your group is doing and why it matters (3 min)
2. Individual presentations of each of your research proposals (5 min each)
3. A discussion of how these projects complement each other and are distinct from each other (3 minutes)
4. A period of audience-initiated questions and answers (10 minutes)

**Group Introducing Research Findings Blog Post**

Each group will write a 900-1000 word introduction to their research findings.

This will build upon the work in the state of the knowledge report, but will generally be updated and will re-shape this material specifically to show how your individual projects emerge from the secondary literature. Towards the conclusion of the post, it will briefly describe the questions that each of you have raised, the methods you’ve used, and your findings. The purpose of this is to let readers know in broad outlines what each of you have found while also helping them decide which of the individual research findings they are most interested in reading in full.

Charting the relationships between your projects with some kind of visualization is recommended.

**Individual Research Findings Blog Post**

Each individual report should be approximately 2700-3000 words.

This is really what it is all building up to: your individual report of your research findings. There is no one right final deliverable for this class, but it should demonstrate a genuine analytical engagement with the evidence you have found and clearly communicate how you’ve produced/located that evidence and what you’ve done with it to arrive at this analysis.

**Group Research Findings Presentation**

Each group has a whole class period devoted to their research. The class will have read your group’s introducing research findings post, but each individual in the class will only read one individual research finding blog post prior to class.

- You will give a 5 minute presentation introducing your group’s topical focus, discussing the significance of the topic, the scholarly conversations to which you’ve been contributing as a group, and how your projects fit together.
- Then each group member will give a 7-10 minute presentation about their individual research, including background unique to the individual research, the research question, a discussion of your methods or approach, a discussion of your evidence, and then a conclusion interpreting this evidence.
- Following each group member’s presentation will be a 5 minute question and answer period.
- Then, at the end of the class, your group will facilitate a 15 minute class discussion. This will require that you develop discussion questions that engage the group as a whole.

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**Policy**

If learning will be supported by the addition or revision of policies, assignment descriptions, or the schedule during the semester, I may choose to do so. In these cases, revisions will be reflected in the up-to-date version of the syllabus on Blackboard. Significant updates to policies, assignments, or due dates will additionally be announced in class.

**Participation**

This is a participation-driven research seminar and will be a painful trudge for everyone if even a small fraction of the class fails actively participate in research groups, discussions, or in-class activities. Consequently, thoughtful participation in all class meetings, including those that take place on the due date
of major assignments, is expected from all students. This includes asking meaningful questions of your peers during student presentations.

If you take a look at the learning objectives, many of them are social skills. In order to assess your progress towards meeting these objectives, participation will be taken very seriously in this course.

Absences
You are expected to attend and participate in all classes.

However, I recognize that there are times when students must miss a class. Religious observances and holidays, personal medical issues, illness of someone who materially depends on you, death or severe illness of someone very close to you, certain University activities, jury duty, military service, and personal emergencies are examples of some of the many good reasons for absence, tardiness, or early departure.

In order to participate meaningfully, you need to be present for the entire class period; consequently, absence, tardiness, or early departure will be taken as evidence of non-participation in that class period. Let’s just consider them all the same thing because they all involve being out of class -- and all tend to disrupt our learning community.

But, here’s the thing: I’d rather respect your privacy than have you report to me every time you have something going on. Things come up from time to time. So, if you are out of class up to twice in a semester, there’s really no reason to provide me an excuse, unless we were expecting you to present or something like that. However, if you are out of class three or more times, that starts to look like a pattern, so you will want to touch base with me.

When out of class, you will be responsible for reaching out to a classmate to learn what you missed.

Working Groups
Non-participation or problematic participation in a working group will be grounds for grade deductions or failure in the course. This includes both your participation in during class and the work you do for the group outside of class.

Social Issues
The collaborative and communication skills that are at the core of several of the learning objectives (see above) take practice and develop by experiencing challenge. They reflect the kinds of demands that are placed on you in your civic, political, personal, and professional lives. So working to address social issues that come up in your working group is definitely part of the class: this is an expected part of working collaboratively.

However, from time to time really serious issues come up in a group. If you are comfortable talking with me about the underlying issues as they begin to emerge, I am more likely to be able to help resolve them. If possible, don’t wait until they become a huge issue: let me know early on.

That said, there are some kinds of social issues that emerge suddenly and are completely intractable. Let me know.

Assignments Due to Working Group Members
In many cases, the learning of your working group members depends on your timely submission of assignments. This means I am less flexible about due dates in this class than in more individually focused classes.
If you have some longer-term personal issues – whether they are emotional, social, or physical – that are a barrier to completing something that your group members are expecting, I need you to email them and CC me letting them know that you are falling behind: don’t just ghost people depending on you. That said, you don’t have to over-explain yourself: again, let’s respect each other’s privacy.

But also, let’s be realistic here: many of us experience emotional, social, or physical challenges. Overcoming minor challenges is something you are expected to be able to do, within reason. It takes practice.

If things are getting too serious to manage on your own -- it happens! -- earlier notice is preferred so we can figure something out together: don’t wait until the last minute if you can avoid it. I’d rather direct you to the resources that will help than have you “disappear” from class.

And, of course, short-term emergencies can happen. If you encounter one that is preventing you from completing work in a timely way, let me know as soon as you are able and be sure to keep you working group in the loop.

Peer Review
You will be asked to provide peer review services to your working group and/or other class members. Willingness to provide timely and meaningful feedback to those in your working group is a condition for taking this class. Failure to do so will result in failure for the class.

Class Preparedness
To succeed in this class, you should expect to spend at least 5 to 6 hours outside of class each week, but there is considerable variation in the time that it takes students to complete reading and writing assignments: few students will find that they can complete assignments in 4 hours and receive a passing grade. If you find that you are spending, an average of 9 or more hours per week outside of class across the semester, please reach out to me. As in most classes, there may be some weeks which demand more time than this and others which demand less.

It will be your responsibility to maintain awareness of upcoming long readings and written assignments so that you can be prepared for each class period.

Readings
In many cases, you may be the only person in class reading a source. In other cases, you will be reading a source written by one of your peers. I reserve the right to hold “pop” reading quizzes that to assess completion of such work, but would really rather not do so.

Some of your readings this semester may be quite challenging. Others may be quite long. Very few of them can be completed in a noisy, distraction-filled environment or in short blocks of time punctuated by social media or entertainment. To understand them, you will need to set aside a quiet block of time. You may often need to google keywords, historical figures or events, or other background information in order to make it through a reading. Most students find it useful to take notes after reading a source or write a paragraph or two summary or commentary on a source to assist with understanding and to ensure that the knowledge has been internalized, whether or not a discussion preparedness assignment has specifically required them to do so.

Writing
You will write an average of about 750 words a week, but many students will write a great deal more than this in the drafting and revising process and some weeks require more writing than others.
Office Hours
If you are having difficulty with a concept or reading, would like to explore a reading or idea in more depth, or would like help with your research or writing, please make an appointment to meet with me during office hours. My office hours are by appointment using Calendly: https://calendly.com/richardtoddstafford. However, if you look at my calendar for appointments and there are none available for the next two weeks, please email me so I can try to make some more space for additional appointments.

Late Policy
I want to work with each student to help them meet the learning objectives in the course. However, it is your responsibility to reach out to me (and, as relevant, your group members) as soon as possible to let us know that you are unable to follow the assignment schedule, so that we can handle your late assignment on a case-by-case basis. Do keep in mind what I said above in the “Assignments Due to Working Group Members” section.

I may, under certain circumstances, offer individual extensions on assignments when asked in advance, but the conditions for these extensions may vary. In extraordinary circumstances, I may choose to offer no-penalty extensions after the fact. However, in general, unexcused late submission of assignments will lead to significant grade penalties of at least one letter grade per day, to be determined at my discretion: I reserve the right to give a 0 for assignments submitted late, especially if it is a particularly important assignment, you have been late on an assignment before, or if you are 5 or more days late.

In all cases of late work and extensions, whether under an approved extension or not, grading and assessment will be significantly delayed; in some cases, this may mean that you must wait until the end of the semester to receive these grades.

Computers and Mobile Devices in the Classroom
We will being using computers in class pretty frequently.

In general, I think these digital devices can be used by motivated students to support learning in the classroom. In fact, I would prefer if you brought your laptop to class, if you have one. Let me know if you don’t have a computer or tablet (not a mobile phone) that you can bring to class. We may be able to have you check one out at the library laptop checkout or to come to some other solution.

It is, however, quite rude to surf the internet on unrelated topics, work on other assignments, look at Blackboard sites for other classes, answer emails, check social media, write text messages, or receive phone calls during class.

I may ask you to stop and/or leave the class for the remainder of a class period if you are misusing technologies. Misuse of computers and mobile devices in the classroom will adversely impact your participation grade.

Privacy
Since this is a discussion-based course, do not record class using audio or video technologies, unless you have written permission from everyone in the class or a documented disability accommodation that you have disclosed to me. Likewise, if I decide that I would like an audio or video recording of a class period, I will ask for your permission.

To ensure that I follow federal privacy law, I prefer not to respond to emails from non-Mason accounts.

Academic Integrity
Correctly acknowledging sources of information and concepts is a core value of civil intellectual discourse. The University Honor Code (http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/) specifically prohibits
1. plagiarism, which includes quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing without appropriate acknowledgement of sources.
2. “patch writing,” a special case of plagiarism which involves the selective appropriation of short snippets or paraphrases of the work of others where this is not explicitly called for by the assignment
3. representing work done by others as your own
4. submitting work you have completed for another class without permission of both instructors
5. giving false excuses regarding assignments or otherwise misrepresenting yourself in academically significant ways
6. making up data, evidence, or sources
7. negligent or intentional misattribution of data, evidence, or sources

Perhaps more importantly, providing acknowledgement of your sources helps your readers and viewers follow up on any ideas or facts you make use of and is, consequently, important to meaningfully communicating with your audience.

Class Conduct
This class may include material that some students may find controversial. Because of this possibility, it is important that in-class discussions and any work generated for the course be conducted in a civil and respectful manner.

Disability Accommodations
If you have a documented learning disability, health issue, or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with Office of Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 4205; 993-2474; http://ods.gmu.edu) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

Diversity Statement
Diversity is broadly defined at Mason to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, class background, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Additionally, we recognize the diversity of viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives found in our learning community.

Attention to these aspects of diversity will help us promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where a diversity of opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard, and respected.

Each course offers an opportunity for us to develop this commitment together, not just as an attitude but a mode of critical practice that can involve, among other things:
  ● listening to other perspectives and hearing criticism of one’s own views;
  ● expressing criticisms and differences of opinion in ways that are not personal or hurtful and that leave space for other voices;
  ● evaluating different positions and avoiding premature certainty;
  ● grounding one’s own views in evidence, but being willing to consider countervailing evidence or arguments;
  ● basing critical comments or questions on as good an understanding of another perspective as one can manage;
  ● and being willing to accept that at any particular time, there will always be things one cannot see or understand.

An important aspect of the commitment to diversity is that it does not mean we should avoid being critical: respecting others means taking their views seriously, i.e., treating them as worthy of close attention, critical interrogation, and evaluation. It also means being open to the ways in which the views of others can challenge and change our own existing views and commitments.
### Getting Started

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<td>1/23</td>
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<td>Class introduction, part 1: “... and culture?”</td>
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<td>1/25</td>
<td>Required Readings:</td>
<td>Class introduction, part 2: “Clean coal . . .?”</td>
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<td>Setup Blackboard Profile Photograph</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1/30</td>
<td>Required readings:</td>
<td>Getting into groups</td>
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<td>● Group Descriptions</td>
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### Annotations

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<td>2/1</td>
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<td>Annotation Assignment 1</td>
<td>Annotation Activity</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2/6</td>
<td>Annotation Assignment 2</td>
<td>Annotation Activity</td>
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<td>Annotation Assignment 3</td>
<td>Annotation Activity</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2/13</td>
<td>Annotation Assignment 4</td>
<td>Annotation Activity</td>
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<td>Sorting out sources for Annotation 6</td>
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<td>Annotation Assignment 5</td>
<td>Annotation Activity</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2/20</td>
<td>Annotation Assignment 6</td>
<td>Annotation Activity</td>
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### Working Group Meetings: Preparing the State of the Knowledge Blog Post

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>2/22</td>
<td>Annotation Portfolio due</td>
<td>Working Group Meetings</td>
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<td>Working Group: State of Knowledge Report</td>
<td>Development</td>
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### Secondary Research Discussions

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<tr>
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<th>State of the Knowledge Blog Posts Due</th>
<th>Preparing discussion questions for state of the knowledge discussions</th>
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</table>
| 7 | 3/1 | Read state of the knowledge blog posts:  
- *Representations, Rhetoric, and Clean Coal Group*  
- *Economics, Labor, and Clean Coal Group*  
- *Place-based and Geographical Approaches to Clean Coal Group* | State of the knowledge Discussions:  
- *Representations, Rhetoric, and Clean Coal Group*  
- *Economics, Labor, and Clean Coal Group*  
- *Place-based and Geographical Approaches to Clean Coal Group* |
|   | 3/6 | Comment on these blog posts |  |

|   |    | Read Group V and VI state of the knowledge blog posts  
- *Knowledge and Understanding of Clean Coal Group*  
- *Government, Politics, Law, Ethics of Coal Pollution Mitigation Group* | State of the knowledge Discussions:  
- *Knowledge and Understanding of Clean Coal Group*  
- *Government, Politics, Law, Ethics of Coal Pollution Mitigation Group* |
|   | 3/8 | Comment on these blog posts |  |

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<th>Spring Break</th>
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<td>8</td>
<td>3/13</td>
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### Working Group Meetings: Preparing the Research Proposal Posts

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<th>Research Proposal Post Development</th>
<th>Working Group Meetings</th>
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<td>9</td>
<td>3/20</td>
<td>Working Group Meetings</td>
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<td>3/22</td>
<td>Working Group Meetings</td>
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### Primary Research Proposal Presentations

|   |    | Read research proposal blog posts:  
- *Representations, Rhetoric, and Clean Coal Group*  
- *Economics, Labor, and Clean Coal* | Research Proposals  
- *Representations, Rhetoric, and Clean Coal Group* |
| 10 | 3/27 | Working Group Meetings |  |
Comment on one post from each of the two groups. Pick the post that is most interesting to you for one of the two; for the other, pick the one post that has the fewest comments at the time that you are commenting.

- **Economics, Labor, and Clean Coal Group**

3/29

Read research proposal blog posts

- *Place-based and Geographical Approaches to Clean Coal Group*
- *Government, Politics, Law, Ethics of Coal Pollution Mitigation Group*

Comment on one post from each of the two groups. Pick the post that is most interesting to you for one of the two; for the other, pick the one post that has the fewest comments at the time that you are commenting.

- Research Proposals
  - *Place-based and Geographical Approaches to Clean Coal Group*
  - *Knowledge and Understanding of Clean Coal Group*

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4/3

Read Group V and VI research proposal blog posts

- *Knowledge and Understanding of Clean Coal Group*

Comment on one post for this group. Pick the one post that has the fewest comments at the time that you are commenting.

- Research Proposals
  - *Government, Politics, Law, Ethics of Coal Pollution Mitigation Group*

### Working Group Meetings: Preparing the Findings Posts

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>Working Group findings posts development</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Working Group findings posts development</td>
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<td>4/10</td>
<td>Working Group findings posts development</td>
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<td>4/12</td>
<td>Working Group findings posts development</td>
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### Final Discussions and Activities

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<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Read <em>Representations, Rhetoric, and Clean Coal Group’s</em> findings introduction. Read at least one of the individual findings posts and craft a substantial comment on this post.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/17</td>
<td>Student Discussion and Activities, <em>Representations, Rhetoric, and the Coal Industry</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>4/19</td>
<td>Read <em>Economics, Labor, and Clean Coal Group’s</em> findings introduction Read at least one of the individual findings posts and craft a substantial comment on this post.</td>
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<td>Student Discussion and Activities, <em>Economics, Labor, and Clean Coal</em></td>
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| 14 | 4/24 | Read *Place-based and Geographical Approaches to Clean Coal Group’s* introduction  
Read at least one of the individual findings posts and craft a substantial comment on this post. | Student Discussion and Activities, *Place-based and Geographical Approaches to Clean Coal Group* |
|   | 4/26 | Read *Knowledge and Understanding of Clean Coal Group’s* introduction  
Read at least one of the individual findings posts and craft a substantial comment on this post. | Student Discussion and Activities, *Knowledge and Understanding of Clean Coal Group* |
| 15 | 5/1 | Read *Government, Politics, Law, Ethics of Coal Pollution Mitigation Group’s* findings introduction  
Read at least one of the individual findings posts and craft a substantial comment on this post. | Student Discussion and Activities, *Government, Politics, Law, and Ethics* |
|   |   | **Reflecting** |   |
|   | 5/3 | Final reflections | Class-Wrap Up |