**DEPARTMENT:** School of Political Studies  
**PROFESSOR:** Monica Gattinger  
**RESEARCH TITLE:** Canada’s Energy Future and Low-Emissions Energy  
**NUMBER OF STUDENT:** 2-3  
**LANGUAGE:** English (bilingualism an asset but not required)

### RESEARCH DESCRIPTION:

Canada’s energy future has become a very contentious topic. On the one hand, the country has committed to transitioning its energy system to a low-emissions configuration – this is one of the biggest challenges facing the country. On the other hand, Canada has some of the largest oil and gas reserves in the world, which brings many opportunities for economic development both at home and abroad.

Charting Canada’s energy future will require far better decision-making systems about energy and environmental policies, regulations and projects, but in an era of declining trust in governments, industry, and experts, public confidence in government authorities making energy decisions cannot be taken for granted. Recent political controversies and partisan polarization around issues like the federal carbon tax and the Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project underscore that building and maintaining public confidence in energy decision-makers will be crucial to the country’s energy and climate future.

Positive Energy, a research and engagement initiative that Professor Gattinger chairs at uOttawa (see [https://www.uottawa.ca/positive-energy/](https://www.uottawa.ca/positive-energy/)), has recently launched a new three-year project that will investigate weaknesses in Canada’s energy decision-making systems and will propose solutions to build and maintain public confidence in energy decision-making now and into the future. In particular, the project will examine the sources, consequences and ways of addressing political polarization over energy issues, the respective roles and responsibilities of public authorities involved in energy decision-making (policymakers, regulators, the courts, Indigenous governments, municipal governments), and innovative models for (and limits to) building consensus on energy issues. The project will deliver solution-focused academic research, engagement with senior energy leaders from business, government, ENGOs and Indigenous communities, and evidence-based recommendations for public decision-makers.

Students participating in this project through SCS4150 will work with a multi-disciplinary team of professors, senior researchers, postdoctoral researchers and graduate students exploring these issues. In particular, students will work directly with members of the research team to prepare and present literature reviews on areas like political polarization, roles and responsibilities of public authorities, and models of and limits to consensus-building. These will inform primary research to be undertaken in future years of the project.
KEY LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

By the end of the course the student(s) will:

- **Apply and expand their ability to summarize, analyze and succinctly present academic and grey literature:** Students will prepare literature reviews that examine key aspects of Canada’s energy decision-making system and low-emissions transition. Key literatures explored will include those on political polarization, the roles and responsibilities of policymakers, regulators and the courts at the federal, provincial-territorial, Indigenous and municipal levels, and models of and limits to consensus building in energy decision-making. These reviews will be used to inform discussions amongst research team members and will directly contribute to future research by the team.

- **Develop and refine their ability to conduct a literature review:** Students will expand and refine a key scientific communication skill - the literature review. This will be carried out in a stepwise fashion. First, students will prepare an annotated bibliography of a number of readings to improve their foundational understanding of energy decision-making in Canada and of the readings that informed the research focus of the project in question. Second, they will seek out and review relevant literature examining transition to a low-emissions energy system. Third, they will prepare an outline of a literature review to seek input from members of the research team on the manner to organize the literature. Fourth, they will prepare and present a draft of the review to seek comments from the team. Finally, they will revise and submit the final draft of the review.

- **Gain practical experience in working with a diverse research team:** Students will have the opportunity to interact with professors and other senior researchers from uOttawa and other universities in Canada and the United States as well as senior policy practitioners. This will expose students to a range of disciplines and a range of specialists in both the academic and policy worlds.

Throughout the course, regular meetings between the professor, students and members of the research team will be scheduled to assess progress, discuss and resolve challenges, and collectively review and comment on drafts of material prepared by participants in the course.