

Electrification

HIS 350L — 39340
Fall 2011
GAR 1.134
MW 2:00–3:30

Prof. Bruce J. Hunt
GAR 2.106 232–6109
Office hours: MW 3:30–4:00,
F 10–11, and by appt.
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In this seminar, we will examine how electrical technologies have changed the workings of the world and the lives of ordinary people over the past 150 years. We will give particular attention to the electrical history of Texas and the Austin area.

After our first few meetings, our sessions will alternate: on most Mondays, I will present background material on a topic, and on most Wednesdays, a pair of students will make a brief presentation and lead our discussion of the assigned readings on that topic. We will allocate discussion topics on 7 Sept., so you should start looking over the syllabus for ones that might interest you. Reading assignments (from David Nye, *Electrifying America*, and from a packet available at Abel's Copies, 715 W. 23rd Street) are listed below. You should read the selections *before* the Wednesday on which we will discuss them.

This is a “Writing Flag” course, and we will emphasize good writing on all assignments. Besides helping make a class presentation, you will be asked to write a 4–5 page paper on a related topic; a 16–20 page research paper on a topic of your choice, which you will present to the class in draft form toward the end of the term and then revise before final submission; and a 2–3 page critique of another student's draft paper. Equivalent alternative writing assignments may, with my permission, be substituted for any or all of these. Course grades will be +/- and will be based on your presentation (10%), short paper (15%), research paper (45%), critique (10%), and participation in class discussions (20%). Everyone will be expected to attend all class meetings and take an active part in our discussions; your attendance will figure in your participation score.

- Aug. 24 Aims and structure of the course. The role of electrical technologies in shaping the modern world; daily life in the pre-electrical world, c. 1835.
- Aug. 29 Early electrical science and technology; discuss Caro, “Sad Irons.”
- Aug. 31 The beginnings of electric communications and power: telegraphs; dynamos; arc lights; Edison's incandescent light bulb; central power stations; AC vs. DC.
- Sept. 7 Discuss: Nye, 1–84; Hunt, “Electric Power and Light”; allocate presentation topics.
- Sept. 12 Austin's electrical boom of the 1890s: the Austin Dam; the “moonlight towers”; Monroe Shipe, Hyde Park, and Austin's electric streetcar system.
- Sept. 14 Discuss: Nye, 85–184; Humphrey, “Austin Dam”; Sevcik, “Selling the Austin Dam”; Pietzsch, et al., “The Austin Electric Railway System.”
- Sept. 19 The telephone: Bell; growth of urban and long-distance networks; “universal service.”

- Sept. 21 Discuss: Fischer, “Touch Someone”; O’Connor, “The San Marcos Telephone War.”
- Sept. 26 How to select a topic, locate source materials, conduct research, frame an historical argument, and prepare your major paper; allocate dates to present draft papers.
- Sept. 28 — to be announced —
- Oct. 3 The growth of electric power systems, 1900–1930. AEG in Germany; Insull in Chicago. The economics of electric power: loads, costs, and rates.
- Oct. 5 Discuss: Nye, 185–237; Hughes, “Chicago.”
- Oct. 10 Public power: TVA, REA, LCRA; Alvin Wirtz, LBJ, and the Central Texas dams.
- Oct. 12 Discuss: Nye, 287–338; Caro, “The Dam” and “I’ll Get It for You.”
- Oct. 17 Progress reports on research papers.
- Oct. 19 Progress reports on research papers.
- Oct. 24 From wireless telegraphy to radio broadcasting; political uses of radio in the 1930s: Huey Long, Pappy O’Daniel, FDR, Hitler.
- Oct. 26 Discuss: Czitrom, “The Ethereal Hearth”; Bormann, “Huey P. Long”; Fowler and Crawford, “Pappy.”
- Oct. 31 The electrification of the home; air conditioning and Southern life.
- Nov. 2 Discuss: Nye, 238–86, 339–91; Arsenault, “The End of the Long Hot Summer.”
- Nov. 7 Electronics and modern life: media, computers, mobile phones, and the Internet.
- Nov. 9 Presentation and discussion of draft papers.
- Nov. 14 /
- Nov. 16 /
- Nov. 21 /
- Nov. 23 /
- Nov. 28 /
- Nov. 30 /; course evaluation
- Dec. 7 Final papers due in Prof. Hunt’s office by 4:00 pm

Religious holy days: If a religious holy day will force you to miss a class, notify Prof. Hunt at least two weeks in advance and he will give you an opportunity to make up the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Students with disabilities: On request, UT provides appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 or 232-2937 (video phone).