Writing and Communication QuickTakes

Materializing Energy: Energy Humanities and First-Year Composition

Brittain Postdoctoral Fellows lead the way in Georgia Tech Writing and Communication Program by designing rhetorically based courses with a WOVEN (*written–oral–visual–electronic–nonverbal*) emphasis. Students use multimodality to explore cultural studies of science and technology in various communities and periods—past, present, and future. This poster spotlights a classroom project designed by Brittain Fellow Dr. Kent Linthicum.

English 1102 – Energy and Entropy in Anthropocene Cultures

Complex systems of fossil and other fuels underpin and shape modern human cultures. The rapid expansion of energy consumption in the 20th century is one argument for the designation of a new geological epoch, the Anthropocene. This course explores the ways energy is represented in and shapes culture through 19th and 20th century science-fiction novels, and through projects which analyze the relationship between energy and culture.

Materializing bodies of energy "requires not only a conviction that bodies matter in social history and in the production of culture but also a willingness to accept that bodies can be made to *seem* to appear—in relation to other bodies, in partial view—but not made to appear fully in language" (Stephanie LeMenager, *Living Oil,* 2014, pg. 185).

"CrankToast" by Marc Minotto, Chitrita Saxena, & Jacob Varner

"Conscious" by Brian Feldman, Gabriel Krikorian, & Brooke Mckenzie

Inputs Project

A key impediment to understanding energy is its opacity: the fuels we burn are obscured from view by the infrastructure of production and containment. Yet, any action to grapple with our energy usage needs to start with recognition of how we burn.

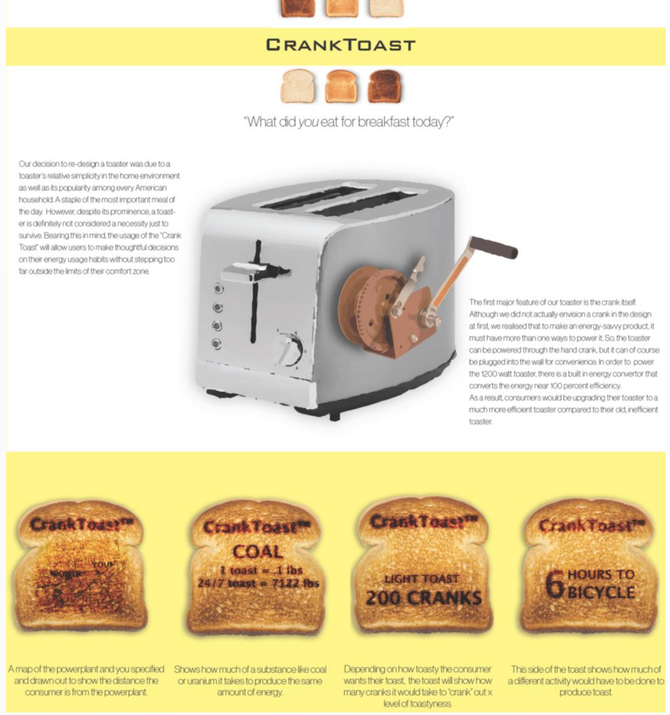
- In order to analyze how energy is obscured from a user's view and practice visual/electronic rhetoric, students created new devices and products in groups which attempted to "materialize" energy in the way that LeMenager suggests above.
- "CrankToast" attempts to make its users aware of the energy for toasting bread through labor juxtaposed with other energy, whereas "Conscious" tries to outline the energy required to create a single-use plastic water bottle on its packaging.

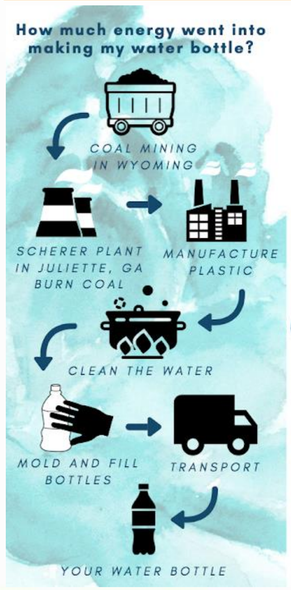
Multimodality in this Class

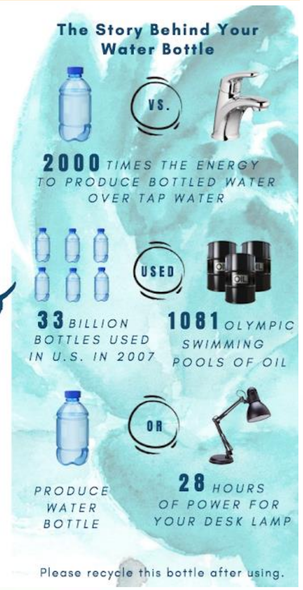
W Write climate fiction using non-fiction genres like memos and peer reviewed articles.

O/N Debate policy solutions to climate change by recreating the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference.

V/E Create visuals and websites that make the energy we use visible.







Teaching Philosophy

Resilience is a primary focus of my teaching: preparing students to move through fluid rhetorical situations, to respond to defeat positively, and giving them the humanistic tools they need to critique the complex systems that shape culture and environment.

Kent Linthicum *(PhD, Arizona State University)* Research interests include environmental humanities and 19th century literature.

Georgia Tech

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