

# BURNOUT

Wesleyan University (Spring 2025)



## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Moderns have excelled at exhausting themselves, their others, and the planet. In this seminar we will explore the disposition toward depletion as a constitutive problem of life and thought in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Why does the prevailing form of life wear its world out and who do we become in the process? We will examine "burnout" as a condition connecting environmental, psychic, political, and aesthetic distress in a simultaneously listless and overexcited historical present. In doing so, we will critically explore and reconsider the deep-seated grammars of energy, temporality, vitality, and finitude that organize modernist culture and politics.

## READINGS

Hannah Arendt, *Imperialism*  
J.G. Ballard, "The Garden of Time"  
On Barak, *Powering Empire*  
Lauren Berlant, "Risky Bigness"  
Lucas Bessire, *Running Out*  
Cara Daggett, *The Birth of Energy*  
Byung-Chul Han, *Burnout Society*  
R.G. Collingwood, *Essay on Metaphysics*  
Abou Farman, *On Not Dying*  
Daena Funahashi, *Untimely Sacrifices*  
Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy*  
Michelle Murphy, *The Economization of Life*  
Sianne Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories*  
Jason Pine, *The Alchemy of Meth: A Decomposition*  
Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor*  
David Scott, *Omens of Adversity*  
E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism."  
Shiv Visvanathan, "Between Cosmology and System"