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STUDY: Fossil fuels contribute to 'petro-masculinity'



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on Jul 06, 2018 at 3:45 PM EDT

- Professor Cara Daggett, who teaches classes on politics and global security at Virginia Tech, is warning that fossil fuels are contributing to a warped sense of “masculine identity” and “authoritarianism” among men.
- Writing in response to the 2016 election, Daggett coins the term “petro-masculinity” to describe what she sees as a convergence of “climate change, a threatened fossil fuel system, and an increasingly fragile Western hypermasculinity.”



A feminist professor at Virginia Tech University is warning that fossil fuels are contributing to a warped sense of “masculine identity” and “authoritarianism” among men.

Cara Daggett, who teaches classes on politics and global security at Virginia Tech, penned her criticism of petro-masculinity in an essay “**Petro-masculinity: Fossil Fuels and Authoritarian Desire**” for the most recent issue of *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*.

Writing in response to the 2016 election, Daggett coins the term “petro-masculinity” to describe what she sees as a convergence of “climate change, a threatened fossil fuel system, and an increasingly fragile Western hypermasculinity.”

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“Petro-masculinity, like fossil fuel systems, arguably has global dimensions,” Daggett asserts. “However, like other masculinities, petro-masculinity should be understood as manifesting in multiple, and locally specific, ways.”

“Petro-masculinity approaches masculinity as a socially constructed identity that emerges ‘within a gender order that defines masculinity in opposition to femininity, and in so doing, sustains a power relation between men and women as groups,’” she adds, quoting other academic literature on the topic.

Unlike the “hegemonic masculinity” of the past—which is a general term to describe masculinity under patriarchy—Daggett claims that petro-masculinity is a recent phenomenon, specifically triggered by global warming.

Petro-masculinity, she claims, ultimately aims “to defend the endangered status quo, entrenching the petrocultures that have historically propped up Anglo-European fossil-burning men.”

“In this context, burning fossil fuels can come to function as a knowingly violent experience, a reassertion of white masculine power on an unruly planet that is perceived to be increasingly in need of violent, authoritarian order,” Daggett argues.

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According to the professor, men’s desire to burn fossil fuels can also explain the concept of misogyny.

“Fossil-fuelled life has always been violent,” she says, later adding that “fossil violence” should “also be appreciated as a misogynist tactic, if we follow Kate Manne to think of misogyny not as an individual belief—the hatred of women—but instead as a set of practices.”

Prior to her essay on petro-masculinity, Daggett’s most notable publication was a 2015 article titled, “**Drone Disorientations: How ‘Unmanned’ Weapons Queer the Experience of Killing in War.**”

The academic declined an interview with *Campus Reform*.

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Toni Airaksinen is a New Jersey based Correspondent for Campus Reform, and her reporting focuses on campus First Amendment, Title IX, Equal Opportunity, and due process issues. Her stories have appeared numerous times on the front page of the Drudge Report, and has been profiled by numerous outlets including Fox News, The New York Post, PBS News, and the Washington Examiner. As the first person in her family to attend college, she's also given numerous radio and TV interviews on the "first gen" experience. Features can be found on NPR, WNYC, the German newspaper Süddeutschen Zeitung, and more.

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