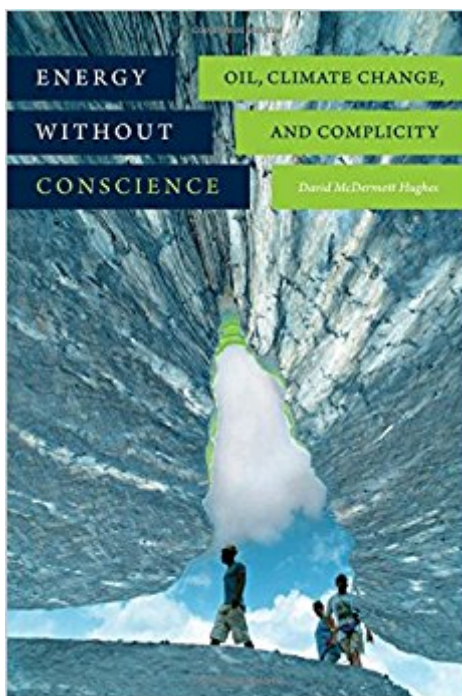


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Energy Without Conscience: Oil, Climate Change, And Complicity



Synopsis

In *Energy without Conscience* David McDermott Hughes investigates why climate change has yet to be seen as a moral issue. He examines the forces that render the use of fossil fuels ordinary and therefore exempt from ethical evaluation. Hughes centers his analysis on Trinidad and Tobago, which is the world's oldest petro-state, having drilled the first continuously producing oil well in 1866. Marrying historical research with interviews with Trinidadian petroleum scientists, policymakers, technicians, and managers, he draws parallels between Trinidad's eighteenth- and nineteenth-century slave labor energy economy and its contemporary oil industry. Hughes shows how both forms of energy rely upon a complicity that absolves producers and consumers from acknowledging the immoral nature of each. He passionately argues that like slavery, producing oil is a moral choice and that oil is at its most dangerous when it is accepted as an ordinary part of everyday life. Only by rejecting arguments that oil is economically, politically, and technologically necessary, and by acknowledging our complicity in an immoral system, can we stem the damage being done to the planet.

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"This is a fascinating exploration of uncharted and crucial intellectual ground. It is hardest for us to see that which is hidden in plain sight, as David McDermott Hughes makes powerfully clear." (Bill McKibben, author of *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet*) "An informative and entertaining work, *Energy without Conscience* probes deeply into different forms of

energy and the related social systems that sustain them. David McDermott Hughes makes it clear that energy systems are embedded in moral economies, suggesting that they can be reconfigured in relation to activist politics and ethics. Passionately arguing against the silence and unwillingness to think about the immorality of using oil, Hughes sets a high standard of engaged anthropology." (Andrew S. Mathews, author of *Instituting Nature: Authority, Expertise, and Power in Mexican Forests*)

David McDermott Hughes is Professor of Anthropology at Rutgers University and the author of *Whiteness in Zimbabwe: Race, Landscape, and the Problem of Belonging* and *From Enslavement to Environmentalism: Politics on a Southern African Frontier*.

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