

## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**T**HIS BOOK grew out of a series of talks I gave between 2019 and 2021 on the politics of the green-energy transition. (The 2020 version of that talk can be found at <https://www.energytradeoffs.com/why-all-this-is-important/>.) Those talks, in turn, reflected my sense that modern media were making it more difficult for students to develop a deeper understanding of energy law and policy. Each year, more and more of the information they see comes to them from sources whose first objective is to persuade them rather than to educate them. Most are aware of this fact, and that awareness feeds cynicism in some. At the same time, many people who are not on social media seem not to appreciate how fundamentally online political discussion is affecting regulatory politics. So I decided to dive more deeply into the academic research on these questions. The upshot of that research is this book.

### HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The intended audience for this book is the set of people who want a deep understanding of the green-energy transition—past, present, and future. It is meant to be useful not only to students and faculty

in courses on energy or environmental policy but also to anyone who aspires to be an energy- or climate-policy wonk.

Because the book draws on research from a variety of academic disciplines (and tries to speak to a similarly broad audience), I have supplemented the text in three ways. First, energy policy is a jargon-laden subject, so there is a glossary of acronyms provided at the front of the book. Second, many of the endnotes are explanatory and elaborate on points made in the text. Referring to them may help some readers understand the book's analysis and argument better. Last, there are seven appendices that can be found on the book website, at <http://www.ClimateOfContempt.com/>. The appendices provide support for parts of the analysis in longer form than could be included in the book. All of these supplemental features are intended to serve as a resource for readers of varying backgrounds who want to get into the weeds of energy-transition law, politics, and policy—in all their beautiful, messy complexity.

The book cites real-world examples of divisive online rhetoric to illustrate some of the propositions advanced in the academic literature. Of course, speech posted on social media platforms is public speech. However, I have chosen to cite by name only those social media posters who are energy-thought leaders or public figures. I assume that most of the people cited are smart, well-meaning people who make positive contributions to policy debate. Therefore, the use of their statements as illustrative examples of “what not to do” does not signify any broader critique of those people. To the contrary, some of the examples come from podcasters and writers I follow. Nevertheless, their words illustrate how norms of online discussion contribute to negative partisanship and misunderstanding of a complex problem.

Finally, one of the premises of the analysis is that a clear-eyed understanding of energy-transition politics requires distinguishing what *is* from what *ought to be* or “what is true” from “what I think ought to be so.” In our pluralistic democracy, where *voters* disagree over what ought to be, separating the normative from the analytical is fundamentally important. But the modern information environment pushes us all to conflate the two. Indeed, some people reject this distinction altogether. But this book proceeds on the premise

that critical thinkers need to be able to make that distinction. For additional discussion of this issue, see the introduction.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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