Problem 1: Electrification and the challenges of technology adoption

As you’ve seen in class, by 1910, the industrialization of North America was well under way, and nearly all technologies that make up the current energy system have been invented (including turbines, electrical generators, and grid systems for electricity transmission and distribution). But new business owners still faced a difficult choice about how to power their factories – no single new technology was clearly a winner.

Re-read the Montreal section of the industrial revolution reading of lecture 6 (the last link from that reading), and use that information to write a business argument for powering a new factory in one of three ways: 1) waterpower or steam (your choice) and direct-drive transmission, 2) an in-house steam engine or waterwheel (your choice) and generator + electric motors, and 3) purchased electric power from an electric company relying on hydro. If your last name begins with A-G, take option 1), if H-O, take 2), if P-Z, take 3). Be persuasive. You may vilify other technologies if your info is sound. If you need to role-play, pretend you are a consultant to a factory owner thinking of expanding – let this be a business school case study of 1910.

Two solid paragraphs is enough for this. It’s not a thesis, just a fun exercise, and the TAs don’t want to read volumes. You need not absorb every detail of the reading, just pull out the ammunition you need to make a convincing argument.