Current Events

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**How Does the United States Govern Land?**

**Urban & Suburban Land**

... is the most intensely used land in most nations

American Land use regulation: **Zoning**

**Urban sprawl**

sprawl occurs when the rate at which land is converted to non-agricultural or non-natural uses exceeds the rate of population growth

**Sprawl in St, Louis**

**Is sprawl a problem?**

Potential costs:

- air & water pollution
- loss of natural areas and farmland
- water quantity
- infrastructure (roads, schools, sewers, electricity)
- health?

**Case study:** Sprawl, Houston, and Hurricane Harvey
What Public Policies Contribute to Sprawl?
Housing, Transportation, Special Districts, economic competition among towns

Public Lands

The national government retains control of land that cannot be farmed – The federal government owns 29% of the American landscape.

Wilderness

How Does the United States Govern Energy? Fossil Fuels

Energy in the United States - an overview

Energy is big business –

Energy shapes the standpoints of many Americans toward the environment

Energy is a commodity, and sometimes has volatile prices

Moving energy requires public policy

The electrical grid

Oil, natural gas Pipelines, Tankers
U.S. policy has emphasized the extraction and production of natural energy resources. So energy is now the central political battleground between the dominant priority of economic prosperity and growth and other environmental priorities.

Energy Policy and Politics

The Political Geography of Energy Matters because Federalism and Congress’s Localism are defenses for existing energy policy interests.

Environmental priorities can activate strong resistance in Congress and the states.

Example: high-sulfur coal (eastern coal)

Coal

The Political Geography: Appalachian Mountains, south central states, California

Coal and the Clean Air Acts

The Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977

The Coal Industry Today

“Clean” Coal?

Oil

The Political Geography: South Central U.S., North Dakota, Alaska, California, New Mexico, Colorado; offshore: Gulf of Mexico

The central problem for the industry: volatile prices
How can you organize the market to control production and prices?

· Solution 1: The Large Corporation
How the Standard Oil Company governed oil

· Solution 2: Government Regulation

How the Texas Railroad Commission came to govern oil

OPEC, the Oil Crises of the 1970s and the environmental agenda

The Oil Industry Today

Natural gas

Political geography: same as oil & coal, + Pennsylvania, Ohio, Arkansas

Fracking

We will discuss Taking Sides, pages 258-275,
"Is the Fracking Industry Adequately Regulated for Public Safety?"