Current Events

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**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
Coal

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

Coal and the Clean Air Acts

The Coal Industry Today – a “war” on coal?

“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 control the production and price of oil?

· Solution 1: Using the Large Corporation to control markets, production & prices
  Standard Oil

· Solution 2: Using Government to control markets, production & prices
  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

Discussion: Fracking
You should be prepared to explain the author’s standpoint, why they take that standpoint, and whether more fracking should be encouraged

Taking Sides, pages 261-267, "The Liberal War on American Energy Independence"
Tiara Burtin Marielle Esquivel
Meagan Burwell Brandon Fenton
Harlee Custer Christian Haskenhoff
Chadwick Eaton Sadie Hill

Taking Sides, pages 268-274, "What’s Killing the Babies of Vernal, Utah?"
Senad Mujkic Adam Wever
Becca Oswald Elizabeth Willett
Jenna Perryman Nicole Wolff
Angie Quiroga Ari Zarkoff
Rachel Weldon

Nuclear Power

Nuclear power emerged after World War II, led by the U.S. federal government

US Navy Admiral Hyman Rickover: A policy entrepreneur who promoted a nuclear navy & a nuclear energy industry to power it

Rickover built an “iron triangle” of support for nuclear power consisting of:
Bureaucracy (The Atomic Energy Commission), Congress (Joint Committee on Atomic Energy), and private interests (Westinghouse, General Electric)

How about liability for accidental damage?
Congress passed the **Price Amendment (1957)**
- limits the liability of private power companies

1975: Nuclear Power reached the height of its popularity

But highly publicized accidents generated a negative issue-attention cycle.
  - 1979: Three Mile Island
  - 1986: Chernobyl
  - 2011: Fukushima

Lasting problems with nuclear power
  - Technical Problems – Humans run nuclear power
  - Economic Problems
  - Security problems
  - Nuclear Waste

**Discussion:** You should be prepared to explain the author’s standpoint, why they take that standpoint, and whether the U.S. should increase or decrease the use of nuclear power.

- Tiara Burtin
- Meagan Burwell
- Harlee Custer
- Chadwick Eaton

*Taking Sides*, pages 321-325, "Testimony … on Nuclear Power Decommissioning: Stakeholder Views"
- Senad Mujkic
- Becca Oswald
- Jenna Perryman
- Angie Quiroga
- Rachel Weldon
- Marielle Esquivel
- Brandon Fenton
- Christian Haskenhoff
- Sadie Hill
- Adam Weaver
- Elizabeth Willett
- Nicole Wolff
- Ari Zarkoff
- Rachel Weldon