

H360. History of the American Petroleum Industry
Jonathan Coopersmith
Fall 2009

313 History
5-8584
j-coopersmith@tamu.edu

Office hours: M, W: 3-4, and by appointment (except the 2nd Monday of each month)

We will explore the history of petroleum in the United States emphasizing technological change along with political, economic and social responses. Our goal is to cultivate awareness of the forces that have shaped petroleum exploitation and hence our contemporary society.

Reading: The books are available on reserve and at the bookstore.

Bryan Burrough, The Big Rich
Ron Chernow, Titan
T. Boone Pickens, The First Billion Is the Hardest
Upton Sinclair, Oil!
Daniel Yergin, The Prize

Grades: Your grade will be determined by class participation (25%), three typed 2-3 page reports and discussions (45%), a midterm (15%) and a final (15%). Coherency, grammar, and spelling do count. I gladly discuss drafts and outlines up to 48 hours before an assignment is due and encourage you to discuss your work with others. The work you turn in, however, is your own.¹ Papers are due at the start of class and must be typed. Electronic submissions are not accepted. Late work loses credit.

Participation consists of entering a question raised by the weekly reading into WebCT by 11 p.m. Tuesday and reading your classmates' contributions before class Wednesday. In addition to your own posting, feel free to reply to others'. Your weekly grade should be "y/y," indicating you posted a question or comment and read 90% or more of the postings. A "n/5" means you did not post anything and read only half the postings. Two other components of participation are engaging in the class discussions and submitting questions for the mid-term and final. Remember, if you do not attend class, it's hard to participate. Feel free to also discuss recent events.

¹ "An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do." I expect you to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and the Honor Council Rules and Procedures, stated at www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor.

For the papers, you should establish a central theme from the book and develop and support it.² A ‘good faith’ outline or statement about your paper will serve as the basis for class discussion and is worth a grade (i.e., without the outline the B becomes a C). You may revise and resubmit your first paper. The Sinclair paper may be written as fiction (no romance, please). If you would like to propose a topic for the third paper, please see me. For assistance in writing, take advantage of the Writing Center (uwc.tamu.edu).

I strongly encourage you to participate in class. Please ask questions (the only foolish question is the one not asked). If you are curious about or do not understand something, ask (quite likely you are not alone and others will be grateful). If you have a learning disability or are encountering problems, let me know.³ I operate under the assumption that you are a mature, responsible adult.

Part I. Introduction, Antecedents and Growth, 1859-1901

Why study the history of petroleum?

Themes

- market creation and the push-pull of the bottom line
- boom and bust cycle
- technological revolutions and evolutions
- competition among fuels
- regional, national, and international economics and (geo)politics
- national security and the state
- independents versus the "Big Boys"

Oil for illumination and medicine

Pennsylvania discoveries and the rule of capture

Monopoly and integration: John D. Rockefeller and Standard Oil

Foreign expansion and competition

Week 1. August 31 - September 2

Yergin prologue, 1

Week 2 September 7-9

guest lecture: Peter Hugill, “Geopolitics of oil”

Yergin, 2-3

²See www-personal.umich.edu/~rfrost/courses/reading.html

³The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, the legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities in Room 116B in Cain Hall or call 845-1637.

Week 3. September 14-16

Chernow, chapters 1-27

Outline of Chernow paper due September 16

Part II. Booms, Busts, and Regulation, 1901-1935/45

Spindletop and the rise of Texas and the independents

Creating markets: fuel oil and gasoline

Postwar fears of scarcity and abundance

Market collapse, hot oil, and the rise of prorationing

Evolution of the petroleum engineer and geophysics

World War II -- oil on land, air, and sea

Week 4. September 21-23

Yergin 4-5

Chernow paper due September 23

Week 5. September 28-30

Burrough 1

Yergin 6-10

Week 6. October 5-7

Burrough 2-3

Yergin 11-12

Sinclair outline due October 7

Week 7. October 12-14

Burrough 4-6

Yergin 13-15

Sinclair paper due October 14

Week 8. October 19-21

Burrough 7-8

Yergin 16-19

Part III. America Triumphant, 1945-1973

Oil, Communism, and U.S. foreign policy

Development of offshore drilling

Texas Railroad Commission, oil's Supreme Court

Domestic versus international producers: growing dependence on imported oil

Week 9. October 26-28

Burrough 9-10

Yergin 20-24

Midterm questions due October 26

Week 10. November 2-4

Burrough 11-12

Midterm due November 2

Week 11. November 9-11

Burrough 13-15

Yergin 24-27

Part IV. Old Players, New Challenges, 1973-2009

Vulnerability: the rise of OPEC and the 1973 Arab oil embargo

New oil, old oil, and federal policies

Exploration in forbidding places: Alaska and offshore

Struggles over alternative fuels and automobiles

The Persian Gulf wars - (1979-80), 1991-92, 2003-09

Oil and the environment: what price progress and preservation?

The end of oil? Hubbert curve and switching paradigms

Week 12. November 16-18

Yergin 28-32

Burrough 16-17

Week 13. November 23-25

Yergin 33-36

Burrough 18

Pickens outline due November 25

Week 14. November 30-December 2

Yergin epilogue

Final questions and Pickens paper due December 2

Final due December 14, 5 p.m.