

Oil and Gas in the Gulf of Mexico:
*Rights and Corporate Responsibility for Drilling and
Production*

Maham Sewani and Sania Shahid

Junior Division

Group Website

Process Paper

Why we chose this topic?

The 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico sparked our interest in the oil and gas industry. The incident received immense media coverage. It ignited questions in our minds including why was this industry getting so much attention? Is it so important to our economy and society? In recent years there has been vast media coverage on U.S. Energy Independence and record levels of oil production. In addition, we followed the 2012 U.S. Presidential elections closely and the same was a topic of great interest and debate. Since the mid-1900s to present, regulations for oil and gas industry in Gulf of Mexico have evolved, along-with governmental agencies. This industry impacts a multitude of stakeholders. When the theme for NHD “Rights and Responsibilities in history” was announced, we took this opportunity to research further and build our knowledge on a subject that has been on our minds for the past few years.

How we conducted research?

We initially focused our research through the internet and found many valuable sources. Some of the primary sources included the BOEM and BSEE organizations’ websites. These governmental agencies regulate development of resources and enforce rules and regulations for offshore operations. In addition, we found some original legislation documents pertaining to this industry on the Library of Congress and other government websites. We conducted seven interviews to get diversified perspectives, including a UT Austin lecturer who teaches oil and gas law, a law firm partner who specializes in oil and gas corporations’, senior oil and gas executive, a few government officials including Governor of Texas and State Representative and Senior Members

of Public Interest Organization. We have researched several secondary sources as well, including a book “Pioneering Offshore: The early years” by F. Jay Schempf.

How we selected the presentation category and created the project

Our presentation category is a website. We selected this as it seemed the most organized way to display information. Through research we had collected multiple aspects and data and wanted to display it in a structured fashion so viewers could benefit from it. We created a high-level framework for the project and depicted the same in the initial structure of the website, with sub-sections including: Home, Thesis, Historical Perspective, Key Players, Debate, and Research. The Home page and Thesis gives an overview of the topic and introduction to the industry. The Historical Perspective presents what are the key events over the past few decades, how they have shaped regulations and jurisdictions. Key Players page presents key stakeholders and outlines rights and responsibilities for each. Lastly, the Research section provides all the support and interview clips and transcripts.

How our project relates to the theme

Our project investigates rights and responsibilities of the oil and gas industry from the mid-1900s to present day - an industry which has wider impacts on all and is a major source of revenue in the Gulf of Mexico. Our topic aligns with the NHD theme “Rights and Responsibilities in History” as it explores economical rights, social rights of stakeholders, illuminates key aspects of corporate and governmental responsibility and how these have evolved over time.