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PHL-500, Honours Day Presentation
Title: The ethical landscape of nuclear power development in the USA

Abstract

My thesis project and Honours Day presentation will cover why nuclear energy is a relevant priority within the landscape of renewable energy sources. Different factors make nuclear technology one of the most reliable, consistent, and efficient energy resources, yet those same factors contribute to its risks. While the technology's benefits may outweigh its disadvantages, solutions to safeguarding all facets of the nuclear fuel cycle need to be taken into consideration alongside their new externalities and ethical ramifications. Additionally, businesses, government, civilians, foreign investors, industry competitors, and other key stakeholders in the nuclear industry all have different individual interests in their participation. It is the responsibility of the law to address each of these parties' perspectives to some degree, however this is not always carried out with equity in mind.

I will explore the legal landscape of developing nuclear technology, including its barriers, such as public perception. When weighing the costs and benefits of the energy source, it is important to decide whether public stigma should be considered as a factor equivalent to or on par with objective technological risks, or as a utilitarian barrier to making nuclear technology more safe and efficient. Advancements, their benefits included, create their own accumulating additional risks. I will examine these risks and criticize how they are balanced with safeguarding, economic interest, and external public demand within the law. I will achieve this by examining several court cases in the United States centering around the regulation of specific nuclear energy developments to build a criticism of their ethical implications. This illustration of how this technology is considered legally will contextualize the industry, its future, and how to most ethically regulate it considering all its externalities.