

# The Energy Conundrum

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This assignment is aimed at non-majors in an introductory physical geology class. It comes near the end of the semester after students have spent time on plate tectonics and the basics of petroleum formation. The attached lecture is drawn from in large part from two books, **Beyond Oil** by Kenneth Defeyes, and **Promises Not Kept** by John Isbister. Its goal is to have students integrate the scientific knowledge they have gained into their worldview on the use of natural resources. After the lecture, they are given an essay assignment, such as one of the following:

- How does the abundance of natural resources relate to the well-being of a society?
- Do the environmental hazards associated with using coal to generate electricity justify the expansion of nuclear power?
- Should ethanol production from corn be encouraged or discouraged? Why or why not?
- How are natural resources best utilized? What is the best means by which a government can encourage that use?
- Choose a natural resource (water, soil, petroleum, etc.) and a location (L.A., Louisiana, Qatar, etc.). Explain the relationship between the natural resource and the development of the area.

I typically require a classic five-paragraph format, such as at <http://www.geocities.com/daleeasley/Profess/Essaywri.htm>