

Is the party over? How will – and how should -- the United States address oil depletion?

You have just graduated from college and been hired by your favorite environmental organization, where your first assignment is to write a report educating American citizens and lawmakers about “peak oil” and advising the national government leaders why, how, and when they should go about planning for a sustainable future given what you have conveyed to them about peak oil.

In writing your report, here are several questions to consider (but you do not need to address all of them – they are intended to provide you with some direction on what to write and how to organize your paper): What is the concept of peak oil, and why is it important for lawmakers to understand the expert knowledge of peak oil? Can breakthroughs in technology or existing supplies of other fuels make up for the energy supplies lost by oil depletion? Or is Heinberg correct that humans will have no choice but to reduce our standard of living this century and/or face major population declines globally? (Why) has this issue barely even entered citizens’ or lawmakers’ “problem formation” or “agenda setting” stages of the policy-making process? What powerful political forces are blocking lawmakers from adopting the long-term solutions you embrace, and how would you advise government leaders to overcome these obstacles?

Your report should demonstrate your command of the course material, drawing extensively from Heinberg’s *The Party’s Over* book and Kurt Cobb’s guest lecture in addition to the other readings from Week 4 through Week 6 on the syllabus. The best papers will demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the course material and will anticipate and respond to the strongest critiques of your own argument.

The *recommended* length of your paper is between 6 and 8 pages (double-spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point font). Please *number the pages* and *staple the document*. Your paper will be due by Monday, February 25 (Week 8), at 10am. You may turn in a paper copy in class or you may email the paper as an attachment to me at dlipson@kzoo.edu. If you email the paper, please save the document in Word format and name the file LastnameFirstnamePaper2.doc (e.g. JaneSmithPaper1.doc).