

GLC Speaker Series
Spring 2009

energy for research/ research on energy

February 20th

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Engineering Science and
Mechanics

Future Energy Scenarios:

How We Are Being Myopic, How We
Are Thinking Incrementally, and What We
Should Do to Find Non-Oxymoronic Solutions

Descriptions of current energy uses span the spectrum from “crisis” to “addiction” to “planetary disaster”. Much of the discourse is driven by the politics and use of oil, which is intertwined with discussions about transfer of wealth and national security. While it is generally recognized that the overwhelming use of fossil fuels for energy uses is problematic, there is no consensus about the consequences or even the nature of the problem. Indeed, solutions such as carbon sequestration and “clean coal” that should be transitional are instead touted as long term panaceas. An influential minority has rejected future projections of global climate change. Thus, while there has been a change in administration in the United States, there are yet there are few governmental strategies to improve renewable technologies, there is lingering public unease over the construction of new nuclear power plants, corporate projections of hydrogen fuel cell vehicles in the next few years are based on unrealistic estimates of the hydrogen infrastructure, and so on. Therefore, whereas it is widely accepted that in the fields of information technologies and medicine the future will be different from the past due to cutting edge developments, it is quite unclear what the future of energy use will be since such developments do not yet exist in the face of drastically declining support for energy research and misguided investments over the past thirty years. We must also recognize that viable energy technologies will not conquer markets by virtue of their advantages for individual consumers and society at large but that the market conditions for energy innovations are largely shaped by government policies. This talk discusses future energy scenarios in this context.



Abstracts available at:
<http://www.glc.vt.edu/speakers.html>

Each 45 minute talk begins at 4:00 PM
in Room F of the Graduate Life Center

Coffee and Cookies Provided