

Pols 3213 X1 – “The Politics of Water”

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Office hours: MW 12:30-3:30

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Class meetings: MWF 10:30-11:30, HSH 420

Overview:

In the early 1990s, a vice-president of the World Bank predicted that: “The wars of the 21st century will be fought over water.” So far, however, no wars fought explicitly over water issues have occurred. On the other hand, a major report released earlier this year projected that between 2 and 7 BILLION people will face water scarcity by 2050. Thus, in spite of the apparent lack of armed conflict, it should be clear that we stand on the brink of (if not already in) a global water crisis, and that the distribution of water in the world today is already a highly contentious political issue.

This course will explore the political dimensions of the global water crisis, with a focus on issues of political economy (the interaction of states and markets). We will attempt to develop a political economic (or political ecological) perspective that integrates scientific, economic, and cultural approaches to the study of water. Following a brief introduction to these different approaches, we will map out the global contours of the water crisis. Then we will put this map in motion, examining the roots of the crisis, its evolution, and some possible trajectories. As we examine the impacts of contemporary processes of globalization on water issues, we will also shift to examining the politics of water at different scales – national, regional and local as well as global. The final sections of the course, which will incorporate student group presentations, will examine specific water issues in Canada, and possible ways of averting or mitigating water crisis.

Assignments & Grading:

There are 4 major components to your grade in this class:

- Essay: 30%
- Group presentation & paper: 20%
- Final (take-home) exam: 35%
- Participation: 15%

More information about each of these is available on the ACME site under “Assignments”

Course Readings:

With a few exceptions, all the readings in the “Detailed Course Outline” (below) are required. Readings should be done by the beginning of the week in which they will be discussed. Unfortunately, there is no single text for this course: the readings are scattered across a variety of sources. But all the readings are easily accessible.

- Readings listed as “kit” are in the Coursepack (available for purchase at the Campus store);
- Readings listed as “Kyoto Report” are from the executive summary of a UN report – “Water for People, Water for Life” – released at the 2003 World Water Forum, which was held last March in Kyoto, Japan. Download the executive summary via the ACME site (under Notes), or the web (under Links).
- Other readings are on reserve via the ACME site

Detailed Course Outline (all readings below are **required** unless otherwise noted):

Sept. 3, 5

Intro + Perspectives on Water

(see readings for week of Sept. 8-12)

Sept. 8, 10, 12

Perspectives on Water

Kyoto report, "The Natural Water Cycle" (pp8-11)

Joachim Blatter et al, "Expanding Perspectives on Transboundary Water" (kit)

Sept. 15, 17, 19

Global Water Scarcity

Kyoto Report "Challenge 1: Securing Basic Needs" & "Challenge 2: Protecting Ecosystems" (pp11-14)

Sandra Postel, "Illusion of Plenty" and "Signs of Scarcity" (kit)

Sept. 22, 24, 26

Water Regimes – Historical Overview

Donald Worster, "Taxonomy: The Flow of Water in History" (kit)

Sept. 29, Oct 1, 3

Water Regimes – Current Directions

Karen Bakker, "Political Ecology of Water Privatization"

Gilberto Gallopin & Frank Rijsberman, "3 Global Water Scenarios"

Oct. 6, 8, 10

Water, Urbanization & Development (case of Los Angeles/Southern California)

Kyoto Report, "Challenge 3: Cities" (pp15-16)

Marc Reisner, "Chinatown" (kit)

Oct. 15, 17

Globalization, Free Trade and Water Privatization

Karen Bakker, "Privatizing Water, Producing Scarcity"

Maude Barlow & Tony Clarke, "Who Owns Water"

Oct. 20, 22, 24

Global Water Corporations

Gil Yaron, "Final Frontier" (selections)

Oct. 27, 29, 31

Water, Gender and Global Justice

Margaret Zwarteveen, "Water: From Basic Need to Commodity" (kit)

(ESSAYS DUE OCT 27)

Nov. 3, 5, 7

Water politics in Canada I (group presentations on: NAFTA/exports; fisheries; flood/drought)

Judith McKenzie, excerpt from *Environmental Politics in Canada* (kit)

Ming-Ko Woo, "Water in Canada, Water for Canada"

Recommended:

David Johansen "Bulk Water Removals, Water Exports and the NAFTA"

Peter Clancy, "The H2Woes of the DFO"

Rob de Loe, "Floodplain management in Canada"

Nov. 10, 12, 14

Water politics in Canada II (group presentations on: pollution; municipal delivery/privatization)

McKenzie (see previous week)

Woo (see previous week)

Kyoto Report "Challenge 7: Mitigating Risk"

Recommended:

Walkerton Report, Part 2, chapter 1 (overview of recommendations – pp1-32)

Nov. 17, 19, 21

Alternatives I (group presentations on: technology; economics)

DeVilliers, "Solutions and Manifestoes" (kit)

Kyoto Report, "Challenge 9: Recognizing and Valuing the Many Faces of Water"

Recommended:

Sandra Postel, *Last Oasis*, ch 13

Peter Gleick, "Soft Path for Water Use"

Nov. 24, 26, 28

Alternatives II (group presentations on: ethics/culture; political institutions)

Riccardo Petrella, "Building a Different Future" (kit)

Vandana Shiva, "Converting Scarcity into Abundance" (kit)

Kyoto Report, "Challenge 11: Governing Water Wisely"

Recommended:

Sandra Postel *Last Oasis*, ch 14

John Donahue & Barbara Rose Johnston, "Conclusion" (from *Water, Culture and Power*)

Dec. 1

Review and Conclusions (no readings)

TAKE HOME EXAM QUESTIONS DISTRIBUTED – EXAM DUE DEC. 17TH