

Water and the Politics of the Anthropocene

C&ES 375, Soc 496
Meets with Soc 875
Fall 2017

Professor:

Samer Alatout

Office: 336 A Agriculture Hall

Email: snalatout@wisc.edu

Office Hours:

Tuesday 2:00-4:00

Or, by appointment

Meets:

Tuesdays and Thursdays

9:30-10:45—Agriculture Hall 10

Course Description:

For decades, water has been turned into the exclusive domain of technical-rational discourses including engineering disciplines, biophysical sciences, and economics. Emphasis on efficiency legitimized institutional arrangements that turned water into an object of discipline, surveillance, control, capture and regulation. Recent attempts at broadening the reach of the 'global economy' solidified such trends, shifting emphases towards conceptualizing water as a commodity, as well as the creation of new water markets.

Yet, water's importance as a site for constructing political and cultural identities and for the management of power relations, on the local (becoming a marker of gender, ethnicity and race), national (legitimizing diverging national narratives of inclusion and exclusion) and transnational (shaping inter-state relations) scales had gone largely unnoticed. In this upper undergraduate and graduate course, we will try to bridge this gap by drawing on literature from science and technology studies (turning to the sociology of environmental knowledge, and studies of infrastructures), environmental studies (examining the potentials and limits of the language of water sustainability and water as a shared environment), geographic theories of space and territoriality (stressing the importance of space and place in water relations and governance, and the political economy of water), environmental sociology and sociology and anthropology of development (examining water development as it shapes North/South relations, and the view from global environmental justice).

I have in mind a number of bodies of water to focus on, but students are invited, as a matter of fact encouraged, to suggest water bodies that are important to them as well.

Context for discussing these particular themes: the Anthropocene

Class Content:

The main goal of the course is to understand the linkages between water and the Anthropocene. How does our conception of water and the different ways we organize our use of it (scientific, socio-political, and institutional) participate in producing the new epoch of the Anthropocene with its climates, social systems, and politics? The weekly themes of this semester will reflect on water and its encounter with different social systems.

→In discussions about *What is water?*, we will touch on the different conceptions of water and distinguish between pre-modern and modern understandings—in one, water is connected to social and cultural contexts and in the other water is abstracted into a chemical molecule H₂O. How do these different conceptions of water lead to different ways of organizing, using, and delivering it?

→In another theme we take on the Anthropocene and discuss the different ways it is conceived by biophysical scientists, especially geologists, and social scientists and humanists. We link the emergence of the Anthropocene with capitalism, colonialism, and the scientific and industrial revolutions.

→We move on to connect both, water and the Anthropocene, in one conceptual framework. For that we use the cases of rivers of the Anthropocene.

→We also critically investigate different approaches to water governance in the Anthropocene, from state-centered approaches to market-oriented approaches. We discuss the pros and cons of each approach.

In addition to these themes, we touch on water wars (case of Cochabamba), water justice (Flint and Standing Rock), social movements (Palestine/Israel, India, and others), infrastructure (in concepts and in practice, like in dams and canals), and we discuss the relationship of water and its infrastructure with the emergence of empires and colonialism.

Readings

Readings will be posted on class site on Canvas unless noted otherwise.

Learning Objectives:

1. Develop conceptual and practical knowledge of the Anthropocene as a theme that links together a technoscientific approach to the changing climate, as well as the social, economic, and political developments through the last two centuries.
2. Develop new social scientific and humanistic concepts for talking about water resources.
3. Develop an understanding of the different research and practical questions that different social studies of the water seek to answer.
4. Develop an appreciation for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives on the water.
5. Develop a critical analytical ability that does not take biophysical or social studies narratives on water for granted.
6. Following on number 5 above, acquire the ability to analyze water narratives as hybrid narratives that speak for multiple interests, be those economic, institutional, cultural, political, geographic, or scientific.
7. Appreciate the concept that narratives about water imply alternative attempts at organizing the world we live in. They are *POLITICS* by other means.

8. Finally, have an appreciation for water justice as an important outcome of analyses and interventions.
9. Develop an appreciation for the complexities surrounding discussions of water justice in the Anthropocene.

Class Rules & Information:

1. Class will be run as a seminar. Its success will depend on your participation. So, attendance is mandatory for all sections.
2. Students are expected to adhere to the university's standards of academic integrity. For more information, please visit: <https://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/academic-integrity/>
3. Your work will be screened for instances of plagiarism. Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism cannot exempt you from the consequences. To educate yourself, see: https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Acknowledging_Sources.pdf
4. **Communication:** best way to reach me will be at my office during office hours or via emails. I will try my best to respond to your emails within 24 hours. *If you do not get a response by the end of 24 hours, please send me a reminder.* It will mean that I either did not receive your email or that I got distracted by other responsibilities and that your email might have gotten buried under other urgent requests.

Assignments & Grading

1. Response Papers: 45%

Over the course of the semester, you are required to submit three reading response papers. At the beginning of a four- or three-week period, you will be given a prompt—for a total of three prompts in the semester. You will need to **keep the prompt in mind while reading** for the next three weeks. Prompts for the most part will ask you to respond by drawing on the next three or four weeks' readings and lectures—see the document on writing a reading response. Those have to be spaced out according to the following directions:

Reading-response 1: Prompt **introduced January 30** and Due on Canvas by **February 25**

Reading-response 2: Prompt **introduced February 27** and Due on Canvas by **March 25**.

Reading-response 3: Prompt **introduced March 6** and Due on Canvas by **April 22**.

Prompts will be discussed in class when they are introduced (see above for the dates) and posted in appropriate boxes on class website on Canvas.

These reading response papers should at least be 3-4 pages long. They should be submitted to the appropriate dropbox on Canvas. **PLAN AHEAD**. Submission needs to be done by **11:59 PM the evening of the due date (see above)**.

Response paper 3:	10%
Response Paper 4:	15%
Response Paper 5:	20%

3. Term Paper: 30%

Students will start thinking soon about a body of water they would like to write about. We will workshop some of the ideas throughout the semester to help one another sharpen our approach to the case we chose. Please review my “term paper guidelines” for information and let me know if you have questions. We will have ample opportunity to discuss this.

4. Participation: 15%

This course is run as a seminar and participation is not only expected, but necessary. Please review the document, “participation guidelines”, and let me know if you have any questions.

5. Class lead: 10%

Class discussions will be led by one or more students each time. Please check my the document, “leading a class discussion” on Canvas and let me know if you have any questions.

Grading Scale: Maximum grade is 100 (for all assignments)

A=93-100; AB=88-92; B=83-87; BC=78-82; C=70-77, D=60-69; F=Below 60

Course deadlines at a glance:

Important University deadlines: https://registrar.wisc.edu/dates_deadlines.htm

January 31: last day to drop courses or withdraw without DR or W grade notation on transcript

February 2: drop a Fall term course and receive 100% tuition adjustment

February 25: First response due

March 23: last day to drop courses without need for Dean's approval

March 25: Second response due

April 22: Third response due

May 3: Term paper due

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS AND EXPECTATIONS
Jan 23	Intro & Logistics	Canceled
Jan 25	Intro & Logistics	Why water and the politics of the Anthropocene? How is the course run? Goals, expectations, and style?
<p><u>Week 2: Jan 30</u> What is Water?</p> <p><u>Required:</u> Jamie Linton. 2010. <i>What is Water?</i> Vancouver, BC: UBC Press. Chapters 3, 4 (through library, online version).</p> <p><u>Week 2: Feb 1</u> Jamie Linton. 2010. <i>What is Water?</i> Vancouver, BC: UBC Press. Chapters 10, 11 (through library, online version).</p> <p><u>Recommended:</u> Linton, chapters 5 and 6, 7, 8, and 9</p> <p>Ivan Illich. 1986. <i>H2O & the Waters of Forgetfulness</i>. London: Maryon Boyars Publishers.</p>		

Week 3: Feb 6:
The Anthropocene!

Required:

Smithsonian video on the Anthropocene (3 minutes):

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/videos/category/science/what-is-the-anthropocene/>

Crutzen, P. and E. Stoermer. 2000. The “Anthropocene”. *Global Change Newsletter*

Steffen, W. et al. 2011. The Anthropocene: conceptual and historical perspectives. *Phil. Trans. R. Soc. A* (2011) 369: 842-867.

Noel Castree. 2016. Scientists have finally decided we are in the “age of humans”.

<https://qz.com/771439/scientists-have-finally-decided-we-are-in-the-age-of-humans/>

Week 3: Feb 8:
Or, is it the Anthropocene?

Jason Moore. 2017. The Capitalocene, Part I: On the Nature and Origin of the Ecological Crisis. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 44, 3: 594-630.

Donna Haraway. 2015. Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthucene: Making Kin. *Environmental Humanities* 6: 159-165.

Recommended:

Donna Haraway. 2016. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Anna Tsing. 2015. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: on the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Week 4: Feb 13:
Water and the Anthropocene: the case of rivers I

Required:

Jason Kelly et al. 2018. *Rivers of the Anthropocene*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press (Open Access), *select excerpts*

Week 4: Feb 15:
Water and the Anthropocene: the case of rivers II

Required:

Jason Kelly et al. 2018. *Rivers of the Anthropocene*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press (Open Access), *select excerpts*

Week 5: Feb 20:

Politics of knowledge: the case of water abundance and scarcity I

Required:

Sandra Postel. 2000. Entering an Era of Water Scarcity: The Challenges Ahead. *Ecological Applications* 10, 4: 941-948.

Samer Alatout. 2009. Bringing Abundance into Environmental Politics. *Social Studies of Science* 39, 3: 363-394.

Week 5: Feb 22:

Politics of knowledge: the case of water abundance and scarcity II

Lyla Mehta. 2003. Contexts and Constructions of Water Scarcity. *Economic and Political Weekly* 38, 48: 5066-5072.

Required:

Samer Alatout. 'States' of Scarcity: Water, Space, and Identity Politics in Israel, 1948-59. *Environment and Planning D* 26, 6: 959-982.

Recommended:

Nicholas Xenos. 1989. *Scarcity and Modernity*. London: Routledge.

Lyla Mehta. *The Limits to Scarcity: Contesting the Politics of Allocation*. London: Earthscan.

Week 6: Feb 27:

Water governance and the State

Required:

Erik Swyngedouw. 2015. *Liquid Power: Contested Hydro-Modernities in Twentieth Century Spain*. The MIT Press. *Chapters 3 and 4*.

Week 6: Mar 1:

Water governance and the State

Required:

Samer Alatout. 2008. Locating the Fragments of the State and Their Limits: Water Policymaking in Israel during the 1950s. *Israel Studies Forum* 23, 1: 40-65.

Week 8: Mar 6

Water Governance: privatization

Required:

Tony Allan. Virtual Water: A Strategic Resource—Global Solutions to Regional Problems

Karen Bakker. Archipelagos and Networks: Urbanization and Water Privatization in the South. *The Geographical Journal* 169: 328-341.

Erik Swyngedouw. 2005. Dispossessing H2O: The Contested Terrain of Water Privatization. *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 16, 1: 81-98.

Week 8: Mar 8

Water wars

Required:

Watch: *Even the Rain*. (it's on Netflix—we can organize a screening together over snacks one evening?)

Assies, Willem. "David versus Goliath in Cochabamba: water rights, neoliberalism, and the revival of social protest in Bolivia." *Latin American Perspectives* 30, no. 3 (2003): 14-36.

Week 9: Mar 13

Water, race, and identity: Flint

Required:

Merrit Kennedy, "Lead-Laced Water In Flint: A Step-By-Step Look At The Makings Of A Crisis," April 20, 2016 <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/04/20/465545378/lead-laced-water-in-flint-a-step-by-step-look-at-the-makings-of-a-crisis>

Evan Osnos, The Crisis in Flint Goes Deeper than the Water, January 20, 2016, <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-crisis-in-flint-goes-deeper-than-the-water>

Week 9: Mar 15

Water, race, and identity: Standing Rock

Required:

[Christopher F. Petrella](http://www.aaihs.org/standing-rock-flint-and-the-color-of-water/), "Standing Rock, Flint, and the Color of Water," November 2, 2016, <http://www.aaihs.org/standing-rock-flint-and-the-color-of-water/>

Saul Elbein, "The Youth Group That Launched a Movement at Standing Rock," January 31, 2017 https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/31/magazine/the-youth-group-that-launched-a-movement-at-standing-rock.html?_r=0

Charles Carlin, "Ethics of Ceremony at Standing Rock," October 16, 2016. <http://edgeeffects.net/ceremony-at-standing-rock/>

Week 10: Mar 20

Water and social movements

Required:

Samer Alatout. 2006. Towards a Bioterritorial Conception of Power: Territory, Population, and Environmental Narratives in Palestine and Israel. *Political Geography*, 25, 6: 601-621.

Faber, Daniel. "Building A Transnational Environmental Justice Movement: Obstacles And Opportunities In The Age Of Globalization". *Coalitions Across Borders: Transnational Protest And The Neoliberal Order*, Joe Bandy and Jackie Smith, 1st ed., Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Oxford, 2005, pp. 43-68,.

Week 10: Mar 22

Water and social movements

Required:

Hiskes, Richard P. "The Right To A Green Future: Human Rights, Environmentalism, And Intergenerational Justice". *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol 27, no. 4, 2005, pp. 1346-1364. *Johns Hopkins University Press*, doi:10.1353/hrq.2005.0049.

Martínez-Alier, Joan. "Environmental Justice And Economic Degrowth: An Alliance Between Two Movements". *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, vol 23, no. 1, 2012, pp. 51-73. *Informa UK Limited*, doi:10.1080/10455752.2011.648839.

Week 11: April 3

Water and Infrastructure: Concepts and cases—Dams and Canals

Required:

Daniel Sage et al. Securing and Scaling Resilient Futures: Neoliberalization, Infrastructure, and the Topologies of Power. *Environment and Planning D* 33: 494-511.

Jacques Leslie, *Deep Water: The Epic Struggle over Dams, Displaced People, and the Environment* (New York: Picador, 2005). *Selected excerpts*.

Richard Stone. “Three Gorges Dam: Into the Unknown” *Science, New Series*, Vol. 321, No. 5889 (Aug. 1, 2008), pp. 628-632

Week 11: April 5

Water and Infrastructure: Dams and Canals

Required:

Peter Taylor Klein, “Engaging the Brazilian State: the Belo Monte Dam and the Struggle for Political Voice,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 2015, Vol. 42, No. 6, 1137-1156

Timothy Mitchell. *Rules of Experts: Egypt, Technopolitics, Modernity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. *Select excerpts*.

Recommended:

Patrick McCully, *Silenced Rivers: the Ecology and Politics of Large Dams* (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2001).

Jessica Barnes. 2014. *Cultivating the Nile: the Everyday Politics of Water in Egypt*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. *Select excerpts*.

Ashley Carse. 2014. *Beyond the Big Ditch: Politics, Ecology, and Infrastructure at the Panama Canal*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. *Select excerpts*.

Week 12: April 10

Water and Infrastructure: Fluid Technologies

Marianne De Laet and Annemarie Mol. 2000. The Zimbabwe Bush Pump: Mechanics of a Fluid Technology. *Social Studies of Science* 30, 2: 225-263.

Week 12: April 12

Water and Infrastructure: Fluid Technologies

Peter Redfield. 2016. Fluid Technologies: The Bush Pump, the LifeStraw and Microworlds of Humanitarian Design. *Social Studies of Science*. 46, 2: 159-183.

Week 13: April 17

Water and empire

Stefan Helmreich. *Alien Ocean: Anthropological Voyages in Microbial Seas*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. *Select excerpts*.

Week 13: April 19

Water and empire

Astrida Neimanis. *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, Plc. *Select excerpts*.

	PART II	CASE STUDIES
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Week 14: April 24 & 26

Presentations

Week 15: May 1

Presentations

May 3:

Concluding discussion