

Water, Culture, Power

Spring 2005, Wednesdays 8-9:50
65 Fifth Avenue, Room A619

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Course Description

What is the relationship between water, culture and societal development? How might we understand the contemporary narratives and discourses around water? What are the emerging relationship between water, governance and socio-ecological justice? This course provides analytical frameworks for understanding historical and modern re-configurations of society through its imaginations, productive transformations, and governance of water.

In Part I we explore nature-society theories that focus on production and the materiality of nature such as cultural ecology, the hydraulic thesis, and political ecology. By transforming nature through the organization of water, society transforms itself. What are the processes of that transformation and what do these water societies look like?

In Part II we examine approaches to rethinking the relationship between water and society through an analysis of modernity. The emergence of water science, hydraulic expertise, large scale dam projects and transboundary conflicts are emblematic of water modernities. We unpack the rationalities underlying the era of the dam and examine critically the discourses and practices of small-scale alternatives such as tanks, micro-dams and community irrigation.

In Part III, we will examine cases of new modes of water regulation and societal responses under globalization. You will be expected to contribute substantively by presenting a well researched case study from another part of the world.

Major Texts:

- 1) Mosse, David. 2003. *The Rule of Water: Statecraft, Ecology, and Collective Action in South India*.
- 2) Swyngedouw, Eric. 2004. *Social Power and the Urbanization of Water*. Oxford University Press. This text will be available in our course packet due to its prohibitive cost.

3) Course packet will be available to be purchased at East Side copy on 13th Street.

Course Evaluation

To receive a grade in this class you are required to:

1. **Submit** a 1.5 page single spaced response for each week's reading by email to the instructor. Each posting is to a) summarize what you consider to be the main points of the readings and to offer b) a brief critical examination. The responses are by the night before each class. These are graded with a check system (check, check plus, check minus) (20%).
2. **Write** a five page double spaced papers at the end of section I and Section II, and a slightly longer paper (7-10 pages) at the end of Section III. The first two papers are based on questions to be handed out in class at the end of each section. The third paper will allow you to explore a case study of your choice. These are graded with a letter grade. On the dates that the papers are due there will be no additional reading. However, you must come to class prepared to discuss your paper with your colleagues. For this reason, late papers are not acceptable. (60%).
3. **Attend and participate** for the remaining 20% of your grade (and because you want to).

Course Schedule:

- * All readings unless otherwise indicated are required. Most will be found in the course packet (CP)
- * **This syllabus is subject to change!** Additional readings may be assigned or substituted. If you miss a class, always check to make sure of the next week's readings. If a reading is not part of the course packet, it will be on reserve at the GPIA office on the 9th floor or online through the portal.

Part I Water and Society: History, Geography and the Present

1. Jan. 26 Introduction/Overview: Water and the Research Imagination

Orlove, Ben. Preface to *Lines in the Water: Nature and Culture at Lake Titicaca*
Available online at <http://www.ucpress.edu/books/pages/9404/9404.pref.pdf>

Peet, John. 2003. "Priceless". *The Economist*. July. (Handout)

2. Feb. 2 Water and Social Development

Wittfogel, K. *Oriental Despotism*. Selections.

Worster, Donald. 1985. Chapter 2. "Taxonomy: The Flow of Power in History.", *Rivers of Empire*. pp. 19-60.

3. Feb. 9 Cultures of Water

Butzer, K. "Cultural Ecology".

Orlove, Ben. Chapter 6 from *Lines in the Water: Nature and Culture at Lake Titicaca* (Peruvian Andes).

Available online at: <http://www.des.ucdavis.edu/faculty/Orlove/book/chapter/index.html>.

Lansing, Stephen. Excerpt from *From Priests to Programmers: Technologies of Power in the Engineered Landscape of Bali* (on Balinese water temples).

4. Feb. 16 The Rule of Water

Mosse, David. 2003. Excerpt from *Statecraft, Ecology and Collective Action in South India*. Oxford University Press.

5. Feb. 23 Critical Essay #1 Due: In Class Discussion.

Part II Water Modernities, Technoscience, Alternatives

6. Mar. 2 The Waterscape

Castree, Noel and Bruce Braun. 1998. "The Construction of Nature and the Nature of Construction" in *Remaking Reality* .pp. 3-42.

Swyngedouw, E. 1999. "Modernity and hybridity: nature, regeneracionismo, and the production of the Spanish waterscape, 1890-1930", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 89, pp. 443-465.

7. Mar. 9 Circulating Water, Circulating Power

Mitchell, Timothy. 2002. Introduction and Chapter 1 "Can the Mosquito Speak?" in *Rule of Experts*, [pp. 1-53].

Swyngedouw, E. 2004. *Social Power and the Urbanization of Water* (on urban water supply of the city of Guayaquil, Ecuador), pp. 1-50

8. Mar. 16 Water for Cities

Swyngedouw, E. 2004. *Social Power and the Urbanization of Water* (on urban water supply of the city of Guayquil, Ecuador), pp. 51-184.

Spring Break (March 21-28th)

9. Mar. 30 Transboundary Water Conflicts

Case studies: The Nile Basin

TBA: other case studies and readings

10. Apr. 6 Paper #2 Due and In-Class Discussion

Part III: Privatization and Water Rights

11. Apr. 13 Water Rights

Barlow, Maude. *Blue Gold: The Global Water Crisis and the Commodification of the World's Water Supply*

12. Apr. 20 Private Versus Public in Historical Perspective

Castro, et al. 2003. "London: Structural Continuities and Institutional Change in Water Management", *European Planning Studies*, Special issue on "Water for the city: trends, policy issues and the challenge of sustainability", Vol. 11, 3.

13. Apr. 27

Guest Speaker: Peter Keonig, The World Bank.

14. May 4 Video: TBA

15. May 11 Final paper: Case Study of Water Due/In Class Discussion