

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY - FALL 2007
WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
Undergraduate - 01:450:491:03 - Index #35201
Graduate - 16:450:510:01 - Index #35202

Time: M-TH 10:20-11:40 a.m.
Place: B266
Instructor: Trevor Birkenholtz, Assistant Professor
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Credits: 3

The history and geography of water development the world over is a turbulent one. In the western US, for example, rivers are so politically contested and heavily engineered that the tap can be turned off at any time, allowing some areas to hoard water while others go dry. But in spite of these massive engineering feats, such as the Hoover Dam, the UN predicts that by 2025 50% of the world's population will face water scarcity.



In light of this global water-scarcity problem and given the fact that the flow of water is imbued with social power relations, the question becomes who is actually facing water scarcity? Is water scarcity a natural or social phenomenon? Or both? Why does water often flow *uphill* towards power and wealth? And what can be done to rectify this situation? This course examines these broad questions in three interrelated parts.



In **Part I**, we will introduce the physical aspects of water, including the hydrologic cycle. We will also establish the *de jure* and *de facto* management institutions for water, the social character of water, and its relationship to social power relations. In **Part II**, we will apply these concepts to the examination of water development in the western United States, where water is intensely managed and heavily contested. In this part of the course we will rely on case-study readings, field trips and

films, such as Jack Nicholson's 1974 thriller – *Chinatown* – which chronicles Los Angeles' tumultuous will to western water hegemony. In **Part III**, we will shift focus to the international arena of interstate water disputes, global water scarcity, issues of equity and access, global warming and the privatization of water resources. This part of the course takes on these considerable issues, but rather than leaving the course in a sense of despair we will examine global examples of effective water management that do not include placing the control of water into the hands of multinational corporations.