



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

HARRIS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

Hydropolitics: Water Policy and Conflict (PPHA 32750)

Dr. Michael Tiboris

DRAFT Syllabus

Class Location/Time: Keller 0001 Fridays 1:30pm-4:20pm

Office Hours: Friday 12:30-1:30 (in person) or by appointment on Zoom.

Introduction.

Water resources are increasingly contested in nearly all parts of the world. In some cases, this is because water is scarce. In other cases, it is because there is inadequate infrastructure, inefficient and conflicting use patterns, or because *too much* water overwhelms a population's capacity to manage it safely. In nearly all cases, however, the consequences of this for humans, economies, and the environment is mediated by policy decisions. Some of the driest regions of the planet carefully manage their water resources, in some instances well enough to export reserves to their neighbors. Some of the wettest have severe access issues.

This course introduces students to some of the central challenges of water resource management, at the international and domestic levels, through the concept of “hydropolitics” — the idea that water resource management is an essentially social and political activity that must negotiate between science and society. The course does not presume any non-general knowledge about water resources or even environmental resource policy. The goal will be to establish a firm knowledge basis about water politics from which students interested in development or environmental resource policy can work.

Despite its fundamental importance for human life, water is frequently left unregulated or managed in conflicting and contested ways. The course begins with an introduction to key concepts in water resource policy at the international, national, and civic scales. The course then looks at specific management challenges and responses in sanitation (WaSH), drinking water, agricultural development, inter-sectoral use conflict, international treaties, hydropower development, and climate resilience. Topics and contexts will adjust to the interests of students in the course.



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Assignments.

The course will include readings, policy memos, and participation in (and construction of) simulation war games.

1. **Readings:** The readings will be available to you online via the Canvas site. I don't use a single text and I tend to shuffle readings in and out term to term, so make sure you're using this term's syllabus. I take a number of readings from David Reed's "Water, Security, and U.S. Foreign Policy," so it might pay to buy that book if you like.
2. **Recorded Mini-Lectures:** I will frequently post short videos on specific topics related to the weekly issue. Slides will accompany these short recordings to help you retain what you're hearing. This is intended to make discussion more possible as you'll come to class with some of the background information in hand.
3. **In-Person Sessions:** The class will meet in person, but I will also record lectures via Zoom so that you can watch them later or have them if you must miss a session. Attendance in person is important, however, as the class will be interactive and remote viewers will miss this aspect of it.
4. **Office Hours/Tutorial Appointments:** I will hold office hours the day of class for in-person meetings. But I am happy to set up remote meetings at other times. Please schedule an appointment with me to meet over Zoom. The goal of private appointments can be tutorial in nature. I can give more focused direction one-on-one to students who have specific interests in areas of water management that I'm not able to cover in the course. You're also welcome to schedule private appointments for any other reason that you need.
5. **Recorded Presentations:** Students will be asked to record some short presentations of their work. In the past, I have had students present to the class. I will provide students with a choice about this as some enjoy having practice presenting memos.
6. **Wargame Session:** We use the last class session to run a wargame simulating policy conflict around water management at the state planning level. A subset of students may elect to design this game as an alternative final project. More information will be available about this later in the term.

Timing.

1. The syllabus (you're reading it) is available at the beginning of the course.
2. All of the course readings will be posted at the beginning of the course on the Canvas site. These may be updated as we progress.



3. Short lectures will be uploaded at least a week before they are the class topic and placed into the appropriate “Module.” I won’t, however, post them all at the beginning because I don’t want students to get too far apart from one another within the course.
4. Assignments will be posted near the beginning of the course. They are due on the date indicated in the syllabus by the beginning of the time class was scheduled to meet.

Requirements. Attendance and active participation in the seminar are expected, of course. Students should complete all readings before class and be prepared to discuss them. *This is a graduate level course and, as such, I expect that I don’t need to discipline you into doing the readings. They are there to give you what you need to join the conversation. Your participation and work must originate in your own initiative.*

I require students to participate regularly and vocally in the class, but I do not assume that being quiet is a sign of incapacity. Hence, one should feel free to fulfill the requirement of class participation by approaching me outside of class or over email to discuss their thoughts on course topics. Written assignments are as follows:

1. **Memos on policy problem and interventions:** Two single spaced pages (images not included). Students will select from a set of policy problems in context and produce a short policy brief with some practical responses drawn from research literature. Guiding examples will be provided. Depending on class size we may do the second brief in groups.
2. **Presentation of case studies.** Starting later in the quarter, students will begin giving a short (**strictly enforced 5-minute speaking**) presentation on one of their briefs. Students will be allowed to record these and submit them to me digitally or present them to the class to practice public speaking. **Slides are required and limited to 2 maximum.**
3. **Longer Paper** (~5 pages). This slightly longer paper will be modeled on policy research papers designed for government and NGO consumption. The topic will be more open ended to allow students freedom to explore issues that interest them. Guiding examples will be provided. This paper will be due during finals week instead of a final exam.
4. **Participation.** Seminar participation is expected throughout the quarter. If you are uncomfortable speaking openly in class, please communicate this to me and we will make alternate arrangements.

Evaluation.

Evaluation of your written work will be based on your ability to craft a clear thesis and execute well-written and compelling analysis. I expect students to be writing and doing argumentative work at a graduate level. The value of the briefs increases as the term progresses to allow you to benefit from improved performance. I will provide as much guidance as I can in the instructions for the assignments and I am available to discuss drafts.



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Participation: 10%

Briefs (2): 40% (15% for the first and 25% for the second)

Presentation: 20%

Longer Paper: 30%

Texts. There is no authoritative text on water conflict as yet. So, we will largely read journal articles, policy reports, well-researched journalism, and book chapters. There is one book which I draw enough readings from that it may be worth purchasing:

Reed, David. "Water, Security, and U.S. Foreign Policy" Routledge, 2017.

However, all the readings will be available as PDFs on the Canvas site. It's your responsibility to retrieve the relevant texts and read them before class. **Please check this frequently as the readings may be adjusted throughout the quarter, though announcements will be made about this.** I will make an announcement if there are changes to the syllabus. The readings will emphasize cases and arguments. More technical background will be supplied in the lectures.

Contacting Me



Course Schedule
 Subject to revision.

All readings and assignments are due at the beginning of the class on the day they are due.

W	Topic and Goals	Readings	Other/Due
1	Introduction to Water Resources, Politics, and Policy: Background on the world’s water resources and what we mean by “water policy”; how it operates at the local, state, national, and international levels.	1. Reed, “Chapter One: In Search of a Mission” and “Framing Note: The Social Dimensions of Water”	
2	Water as Property and Economic Resource: Water’s contested status as a commodity, entitlement, and natural good casts a long shadow over claims made on the resource by different groups. Focus cases: Mexico and Bolivia	1. Ingram, Whiteley, and Perry, “The Importance of Equity and the Limits of Efficiency in Water Resources” 2. Cosio, “Mexico’s Pursuit of Water Security” 3. Baer, “The Global Water Crisis, Privatization, and the Bolivian Water War”	
3	Water as a Right: While universally supported, the humanitarian effort to make water access complete has proved to be a practical, legal, and political challenge. Is a human right to water coherent? And if so, can it be effectively instituted and protected? Focus case: Detroit, MI	1. Bluemel, “The Implications of Formulating a Human Right to Water” <i>Ecology Law Quarterly</i> 2. Bakker, “The ‘Commons’ Versus the ‘Commodity’: Alter-globalization, Anti-privatization, and the Human Right to Water in the Global South” <i>Antipode</i> 3. Taylor, “Tapped Out: Threats to the Human Right to Water in the United States” <i>Georgetown Law Human Rights Institute</i>	Brief 1 Handout
4	International WaSH and Drinking Water Policy: The key tasks of international development and how they engender conflict both globally and domestically, in the US. Focus Cases: Mexico, India, Kenya	1. Weinthal, et al., “Development and Diplomacy: Water, the SDGs, and US Foreign Policy” 2. UNICEF/WHO, “Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, 2000-2020 Update” 3. Streeter, “Financing Water and Sewer Infrastructure in the Developing World”	Brief 1 Due
5	Agricultural Intensification and Food Security Policy: How can the world meet nutrition security demands without overextending the water resource base? How are agricultural water policy and social stability connected? Focus Case: Central Asia, United States	1. Rockstrom, <i>et al.</i> “Future Water Availability for Global Food Production” <i>Water Resources Research</i> 2. Paisley “Winter is Coming: US Strategic Interests and the Water-Energy-Agriculture Conundrum in Central Asia” 3. Willett, et al., “Food in the Anthropocene” <i>the Lancet</i> 4. Antle and Ray, “Challenges of Sustainable Agricultural Development in High-Income Countries”	



6	Development Conflict: Unilateral or uncoordinated infrastructure development of shared resources is a major source of interstate (and sub-state) conflict. International development is a political and strategic act. Focus cases: The Tibetan Plateau, China in Africa, and the Greater Mekong	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Chellaney, “Exploiting the Riparian Advantage,” from <i>Water: Asia’s New Battleground</i> Tiboris, “Addressing China’s Rising Influence in Africa” <i>Council on Global Affairs</i> Thapan, “A Perfect Storm in the Greater Mekong Subregion: Climate Change Impacts on Food, Water, and Energy” 	Brief 2 Handout
7	Transboundary Water Governance: National-level legal and treaty interactions and sub-national mechanisms. What are the strengths and weaknesses of assessing water security through this lens? Focus case: China	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> De Stefano, <i>et al.</i> “Tracking Cooperation and Conflict in International Basins: Historic and Recent Trends” <i>Water Policy</i> Moore, “Central Control, Localized Interests, and Interprovincial Conflict in the People’s Republic of China” Garcia-Acevedo, “The Confluence of Water, Patterns of Settlement, and Constructions of the Border in the Imperial and Mexicali Valleys (1900-1999)” 	Brief 2 Due
8	Water Insecurity and Extremism: What do we know about the water-migration-extremism connection? How should it factor into policy? Focus cases: East and West Africa	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Raleigh and Kniveton, “Come Rain or Shine: An Analysis of Conflict and Climate Variability in East Africa” <i>Journal of Peace Research</i> [C] Devlin and Hendrix, “Trends and Triggers Redux: Climate Change, Rainfall, and Interstate Conflict” <i>Political Geography</i> [C] King, “Water Stress, Instability, and Violent Extremism in Nigeria” [R] 	Presentation Due
9	Adaptation, Cooperation, and National Security: This will be a forward-looking discussion about the future of global water policy in a world with escalating tensions and climate changes. We will attempt to define goals and strategies for preventing water conflict from a variety of perspectives.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Cooley, <i>et al.</i> “Global Water Governance in the Twenty-First Century” in <i>The World’s Water</i> Michel, “Iran’s Impending Water Crisis” Reed, “Paths of Influence” and “Recommendations for Water, Security, and US Foreign Policy” 	
10	Wargame		
F	Final Paper Due		

Additional Fine Print, Please Read Carefully

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism. You will be beholden to the University’s code of conduct, definitions, and consequences as outlined here:

<https://college.uchicago.edu/advising/academic-integrity-student-conduct>.

But much more importantly, from my perspective, is that you do your own work honestly and with earnest effort because anything else is a waste of your time and mine. There is little



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daylight between dishonest work and dishonest character. Think about the kind of person you want to be and act accordingly.

Disabilities and Other Special Accommodation. If you have any concerns or needs here please approach me about them as soon as is convenient. I want to make the class equally accessible to all students. See also the University guidelines on disability accommodation here: <https://disabilities.uchicago.edu/accommodations>.

Late Assignments. My policy on late assignments is that **I don't accept them at all if you have not made prior arrangements with me to turn them in at another time.** This means contacting me at least 48 hours in advance. (i.e. You can't just fire off an email to me the night before and say "sorry, I'm not turning it in," the matter must be *settled between us 48 hours in advance*.) That said, you will find I am very willing to be flexible if the reasons are sensible and you approach me with enough time. Emergencies will be handled on a case-by-case basis.