



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

## HARRIS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

### **Hydropolitics: Water Policy and Conflict (PPHA 32750)**

Dr. Michael Tiboris

#### **Syllabus v1**

**Class Location/Time:** Keller 1002 Fridays 1:30pm-4:20pm

**Office Hours:** Friday 12:30-1:30 (Keller 3043) or by appointment on Zoom anytime.

**Contact:** [mtiboris@uchicago.edu](mailto:mtiboris@uchicago.edu). If I do not respond within 48 hours, please send me a message through Canvas. I have several email accounts forwarded to a single inbox, so sometimes things get lost.

There are three teaching assistants for this course who will help me with the grading as well as be contact points for students with (especially logistical) questions. Please feel free to reach out to them:

Connor Christensen ([ctchristensen@uchicago.edu](mailto:ctchristensen@uchicago.edu))

Alexandra Gazzalo ([agazzolo@uchicago.edu](mailto:agazzolo@uchicago.edu))

Christian Pilarski ([cpilarsk@uchicago.edu](mailto:cpilarsk@uchicago.edu))

### **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 the central challenges of water resource management policy, at the international and domestic levels, through the concept of "hydropolitics." This is 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 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 (to a lesser extent) 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



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development, and climate resilience. Topics and contexts will adjust to the interests of students in the course.

### **Assignments.**

The course will include readings, policy memos, and participation in (and construction of) simulation war games. **All assignments are due, submitted via Canvas, by the beginning of class on their assigned due date.**

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 more than one reading from David Reed's "Water, Security, and U.S. Foreign Policy," so it might pay to buy that book if you like. But these will be found in the Canvas module to which they correspond.
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. These will be found in the Canvas module to which they correspond. Sometimes these are short chunks of the lecture from previous years and can serve as a reference for finding a topic more quickly.
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. After they are finished, links to the recordings will be posted the Canvas module to which they correspond.
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, but given the size of the class this term it will not be possible. These will be uploaded to Canvas.

**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*



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*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. **Two policy briefs:** Two two-page briefs (images not included in length). Students will select a policy problem in context and produce a short policy brief with some practical responses drawn from research literature. Guiding examples will be provided.
2. **Presentation of briefs.** Choose one of your briefs to present a very short (5 minute maximum, two slide maximum) presentation. This is practice for presenting policy briefs to semi-expert audiences.
3. **Longer Paper** (5-7 pages). This longer paper will be modeled on policy research papers designed for government and NGO consumption. The topic will be more open to allow students freedom to explore issues that interest them. However, I'll encourage you to write about transboundary governance issues that come up later in the course. Guiding examples will be provided. This paper will be due during finals week, but earlier in the week than our normal class meeting to give us enough time to grade it.
4. **Participation.** Seminar participation is expected throughout the quarter. This can take many forms. 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.

### **Percentage of Grade**

**Participation: 10%**

**Briefs 50%** (15% for the first and 25% for the second)

**Presentation: 20%**

**Longer Paper: 30%**



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| <b>Assignment</b>                      | <b>Points<br/>(200)</b> | <b>Description</b>   | <b>Evaluation</b>  | <b>Due</b>               |
|--|-------------------------|--|--|--------------------------|
| <b>Participation</b>                   | 20                      | Active attendance and participation in the course  | Participating in class discussion, posting resources or discussions on Canvas, interactions with the instructor and/or TAs outside of class. | <b>End of term</b>       |
| <b>Brief 1: Rights &amp; Economics</b> | 30                      | 2-page policy brief  | Based on quality of the thesis, efficiency, and clarity of policy recommendations.   | <b>4/14 1:30 PM</b>      |
| <b>Brief 2: WASH/Agriculture</b>       | 50                      | 2-page policy brief  | Based on quality of the thesis, efficiency, and clarity of policy recommendations, as well as improvement from last brief.                   | <b>4/28 1:30 PM</b>      |
| <b>Presentation</b>                    | 40                      | Recorded presentation on one of your two policy briefs   | Based on clarity, quality of slides and visuals, efficiency  | <b>5/5 1:30 PM</b>       |
| <b>Final Paper</b>                     | 60                      | Longer, 5-7 page, paper on a water conflict issue and case of your choice, including policy recommendations. | Quality of thesis and argument, quality of research, narrow focus, analysis of recommendations, quality of writing                           | <b>5/23<br/>11:59 PM</b> |

**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 from that it may be worth purchasing if you like, but it's not required:

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

All of 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



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arguments. More technical background will be supplied in the lectures. Students interested in digging into specifics of local policy should discuss this with the instructor who may be able to direct them to further resources.

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

**COVID-19.** You are beholden to the University's COVID policies. As required, we will wear masks in the classroom. If you feel sick or have been in contact with someone who has COVID, stay home. We will get you the resources you need remotely. Take care of your classmates and yourself.

**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.

*If you have any other questions or concerns, please feel free to approach me with them.*



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**Course Schedule (subject to change – please check Canvas for any updates)**

Subject to revision. **PLEASE READ:**

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

**Readings and videos listed here are required.** I will make a note of what to focus on. Some of them can be skimmed. The modules on Canvas have many more optional resources, videos, readings, and links to external stories and tools that you can pursue if you'd like to dig further into a topic. **They are *not* required** but many of them provide useful context. It's not a terrible idea to check them out, but you won't be accountable for that material.

|      | Topic and Goals   | Readings (all found on Canvas)   | Other/Due                                     |
|------|---|--|---|
| 3/24 | <b>Introduction to Water and Hydropolitics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water as a political object</li> <li>The world's water resources</li> <li>What "Global Water Crisis?"</li> </ul>                                | No readings, but there are interesting tools to explore in the Canvas module.  |   |
| 3/31 | <b>Water as Property and Economic Resource</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water's price vs. water's value</li> <li>Doctrines of ownership</li> <li>Allocation and water markets</li> <li>Utility privatization</li> </ul> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Video: "The Meaning of Commodification"</li> <li>Ingram, Whiteley, and Perry, "The Importance of Equity and the Limits of Efficiency in Water Resources"</li> <li>Baer, "The Global Water Crisis, Privatization, and the Bolivian Water War"</li> </ol>   |   |
| 4/7  | <b>Preservation and Water as a Human Right</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-economic value</li> <li>Limitation of the human right to water</li> <li>Economic inequality and water rights</li> </ul>                     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Video: "The Meaning of the Right to Water"</li> <li>Video: "The Development of the Right to Water"</li> <li>Bluemel, "The Implications of Formulating a Human Right to Water" <i>Ecology Law Quarterly</i> <b>[This one is dense, try to get the basics]</b></li> <li>Jepson, "Advancing Human Capabilities for Water Security"</li> <li>Taylor, "Tapped Out: Threats to the Human Right to Water in the United States" <i>Georgetown Law Human Rights Institute</i> <b>[Context for discussion, can skim]</b></li> </ol> |   |
| 4/14 | <b>International WaSH and Drinking Water Development Policy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress on WASH and DW</li> <li>Water development as foreign policy</li> <li>Financing infrastructure in LIMCs</li> </ul>     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNICEF/WHO, "Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, 2000-2020 Update" <b>[Skim]</b></li> <li>Weinthal, et al., "Development and Diplomacy: Water, the SDGs, and US Foreign Policy"</li> <li>Reed, "In search of a Mission"</li> <li>Streeter, "Financing Water and Sewer Infrastructure in the Developing World"</li> </ol>  | <b>Brief 1 Due 1:30 PM uploaded to Canvas</b> |



|      |   |  |   |
|------|---|--|---|
| 4/21 | <p><b>Water Security vs. Food Security</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water impacts of agriculture</li> <li>• Food security and the water SDGs</li> <li>• High yield export agriculture and water</li> <li>• Food-water security and conflict</li> </ul>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rockstrom, <i>et al.</i> "Future Water Availability for Global Food Production" <i>Water Resources Research</i></li> <li>2. Council on Global Affairs, "Strategies to Enhance Food, Water, and Nutrition Security" <b>Skim to get a sense of the strategies available.</b></li> <li>3. FAO, "Food Loss and Waste and the Linkage to Global Ecosystems"</li> <li>4. WRI, "Creating a Sustainable Food Future"</li> <li>5. Paisley, "Winter is Coming: US Strategic Interests and the Water-Energy-Agriculture Conundrum in Central Asia"</li> </ol> |   |
| 4/28 | <p><b>Development Conflict</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure as hegemonic power</li> <li>• Pakistan vs. India vs. China</li> <li>• The Mekong</li> <li>• Aid policy as proxy conflict</li> </ul>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Chellaney, "Exploiting the Riparian Advantage," from <i>Water: Asia's New Battleground</i></li> <li>2. Tiboris, "Addressing China's Rising Influence in Africa" <i>Council on Global Affairs</i></li> <li>3. Thapan, "A Perfect Storm in the Greater Mekong Subregion: Climate Change Impacts on Food, Water, and Energy"</li> </ol>   | <p><b>Brief 2 Due 1:30 PM uploaded to Canvas</b></p>      |
| 5/5  | <p><b>Transboundary Water Conflict and Governance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trend vs systems analysis</li> <li>• Water treaties and infrastructure</li> <li>• Horizontal and substate conflict</li> </ul>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. De Stefano, <i>et al.</i> "Tracking Cooperation and Conflict in International Basins: Historic and Recent Trends" <i>Water Policy</i></li> <li>2. Zeitoun, <i>et al.</i>, "Analysis for Water Conflict Transformation"</li> <li>3. Moore, "Central Control, Localized Interests, and Interprovincial Conflict in the People's Republic of China"</li> <li>4. Garcia-Acevedo, "The Confluence of Water, Patterns of Settlement, and Constructions of the Border in the Imperial and Mexicali Valleys (1900-1999)"</li> </ol>                        | <p><b>Presentation Due 1:30 PM uploaded to Canvas</b></p> |
| 5/12 | <p><b>This session will be asynchronous. All material including lectures will be online in Canvas and we will not meet in person.</b></p> <p><b>Climate, Water Insecurity, Violence, and Migration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violence and water insecurity</li> <li>• Water and human migration</li> </ul> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Raleigh and Kniveton, "Come Rain or Shine: An Analysis of Conflict and Climate Variability in East Africa" <i>Journal of Peace Research</i></li> <li>2. Devlin and Hendrix, "Trends and Triggers Redux: Climate Change, Rainfall, and Interstate Conflict" <i>Political Geography</i></li> <li>3. WRI, "Water Security Solutions for an Increasingly Water-Insecure World"</li> </ol>  |   |
| 5/19 | <p><b>Emerging Contexts and Adaptation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crises now and in the future</li> <li>• What is adaptation?</li> </ul>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cooley, <i>et al.</i> "Global Water Governance in the Twenty-First Century" in <i>The World's Water</i></li> <li>2. Michel, "Iran's Impending Water Crisis"</li> </ol>   |   |
| 5/23 | <p><b>Final Paper Due: NOTE This paper is due 5/30 to give us enough time to grade it before the grade deadline for graduating students.</b></p>  |  |   |