

MALAS 600B: WATER WARS: ENVIRONMENTAL EXPLOITATION, RESOURCE SCARCITY, AND HUMAN RIGHTS

SYLLABUS

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SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY, SPRING 2014
SSW-3630, W 4:00PM-6:40PM

DESCRIPTION

MALAS seminars are divided into four general areas with content that varies semester to semester. Each course may be repeated once with new content. See Class Schedule for specific content. Maximum credit six units for MALAS 600B.

PREREQUISITES

Graduate standing

INTRODUCTION

Southern California should be impossible. Annual rainfall here is similar to Iraq, and the main sources of water are a vast and expensive system of aqueducts (some of which are 1,400 miles long, drawing water from the Colorado River basin) propped up by a massive energy system and a management system which is not entirely democratic or technocratic. And yet, it is one of the most successful desert civilizations in the history of the planet. As the population swells, water consumption is on pace to far exceed current supply. In other parts of the world, for example India and Bolivia, similar crises have degenerated into, at times, violent political conflict. Why does this seem unlikely to happen here, or is it just a matter of time, or of history repeating itself? What does the history of water conflict in California's past say about the same in its future?

This course blends resources from history, philosophy, economics, environmental science, and a little bit of poetry to investigate issues of justice in times of resource scarcity. Students will learn about the surprisingly fraught history of water reclamation in the western United States. They will confront questions about whether water is a private commodity or a public good, what it means to "preserve" a "natural" environment, and whether access to water is a basic human right. Course texts include works of social history, environmentalist journalism, economics, philosophy, and contemporary research in the natural sciences all aimed at answering the question: who owns the water and what do we do when it runs out?

TEXTS

- (1) Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and its Disappearing Water*
- (2) Vandana Shiva, *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution, and Profit*
- (3) David Zetland, *The End of Abundance: Economic Solutions to Water Scarcity*
- (4) Chellaney, Brahma, *Water, Peace, and War: Confronting the Global Water Crisis*
- (5) Diamond, Jared, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*
- (6) Barlow, Maude, *Blue Covenant: The Global Water Crisis and the Coming Battle for the Right to Water*
- (7) Other excerpts of texts and articles will be available in digital form on the course's Blackboard page.