

WATER POLITICS & GOVERNANCE

Summer School 2026



SYLLABUS

VU Amsterdam Summer School

20 – 24 July 2026

Course Details

Title	Water Politics and Governance
Coordinator	Jampel Dell'Angelo
Form(s) of tuition	Lectures, discussions, group exercises, presentations, excursion
Approximate contact hours	24

Teaching staff

- [Dr. Jampel Dell'Angelo](#) (course coordinator)

Contact info

- For issues regarding course content, contact Jampel.dellangelo@vu.nl
- For general issues and administration regarding the summer school: amsterdamsummerschool@vu.nl (tel +31 20 59 84717).

Course description

Water is central for ecosystems, human wellbeing and development. The relationship between society and water resources is critical and complex. Water issues have been historically treated as a technical problem, something to be resolved through hydraulic and engineering solutions. However, the increasing and exacerbating competition over water resources due to expanding global population, climate change and conflicting production activities raises new political and democratic challenges. Understanding water governance implies developing interdisciplinary knowledge about the different problems, approaches, perspectives and controversies related to how societies cooperate and compete over water resources.

The main objective of this course is for you to build an expert understanding of the multidimensional challenges of governance of water resources. Collectively as a class, and individually, you will develop expertise in the water governance world by engaging with the core scientific literature, discussing, and tackling real world problems and independent research activities. By the end of the course, you will have gained an understanding of the complexity of water governance: the various models of governance, its structures and institutions at multiple scales, the different values and uses of water, and the main frames and debates from multiple perspectives.

During this course you will engage with the leading theories, concepts, proposed solutions, controversies, and current trends and debates of water governance. You will study challenges and opportunities on multiple scales from the global level, to regional, national, and local approaches in the Netherlands and in the Global South. Additionally, this course will feature guest speakers from diverse backgrounds, offering varied perspectives on global water challenges with a preference for water justice framings. An excursion will provide practical insights into water management in the Netherlands. By incorporating different theoretical and (hydro)political perspectives and real-world experiences, the course aims to enrich critical analysis, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the complex issues involved in water politics and governance.

Learning objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Describe various principles and theories for water governance and management.
- Apply these to analyze different water policy and governance interventions, by analyzing them from diverse and diverging perspectives.
- Formulate your own analysis and suggestions regarding water-governance interventions on multiple scales: local, national and international.
- Synthesize and communicate your water governance expertise.

Forms of tuition

The course will further introduce you to the leading theories, concepts, proposed solutions, and current governance trends and debates of water governance. You will study challenges and opportunities on multiple scales from the global level, to regional, national, and local approaches in the Netherlands and in the Global South. The course works on academic writing and presentation skills. It represents an excellent opportunity to be fully immersed in water related debates, ideal for master and phd students as well as for professionals that have an academic interest. Students will be expected to self study 3-4 hours per day during the course and additionally spend ~12 more hours to complete their essay which will be submitted the week after the end of the course.

There will be sessions both in the morning as well as in the afternoon, allowing time for self study. The structure of each session, generally, consists of lectures at the start, where we will first highlight concepts and key questions related to the topics we are working on. We will engage in-group discussions associated with the key issues addressed in each session. The group activities will include simulations and team work.

Readings are assigned for each session and it will be essential to be well prepared in order to successfully participate and address key questions that we will tackle in the discussions. Finally, writing exercises, and debates will be an integral part of the course too.

Assignments and Assessment

The workload includes three assessments:

- Active participation in the course (20%)
- Team presentation at the end of the course (30%)
- An individual written essay of 1000 words (50%). The student will discuss with the lecturer the topic of the essay which can relate to research or professional interests in connection with the topics treated in the course.

Students must pass *all* assignments (a minimum of 5.5/10) in order to receive a certification of passing this course.

Course schedule

This is the **schedule** but please note that this schedule remains subject to changes due to last-minute shifting availabilities. Any such changes will be communicated in an updated syllabus as well as on the digital learning platform (Canvas).

Program 20/7 – 24/7			
When	Activity	Readings (please study before class)	Who
Mon. 20			
10:00-12:30	Presentations, introduction to the course, introduction to water governance	-	JDA
15:00-16:30	Water politics and critical perspectives	- Gupta, J., and C. Pahl-Wostl. (2013). - Zwarteveen, M., et al. (2017).	-
Tue. 21			
10:00-12:30	Neoliberalism and privatization	- Harvey, D. 2007 Study introduction (pages 1-4) and Chapter 1 (pages 5-38).	JDA
15:00-16:30	Commons Theory and Rural Water Governance	- Dell’Angelo, J., et al. (2016). - Dietz, T., Ostrom, E. & Stern, P. (2003).	JDA
Wed. 22			
9:00-12:00	Excursion to WATERNET (logistics will be communicated separately)	- Geagea, D., Kaika, M., & Dell’Angelo, J. (2023).	Kasper Spaan
12:30 -	VU Amsterdam Summer School Social Program		-
Thu. 23			
9:00-12:00	Water rights and water law	- Hodgson, S. (2006).	JDA
14:00-15:30	Water Wars, Water Conflict and Water Grabbing	- Dell’Angelo, J., et al. (2018). - D’Odorico, P., et al. (2024).	JDA
15:30-	Students work on their group presentations		
Fri. 24			
10:00-12:00	Drinking water, sanitation and hygiene for health	- Howard, G., (2021). - Wolf, J., et al., (2023)	Carmen Anthonj
13:30-15:00	Students present	-	-

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED READINGS

Water politics and critical perspectives

- Gupta, J., and C. Pahl-Wostl. (2013). Global water governance in the context of global and multilevel governance: its need, form, and challenges. *Ecology and Society* 18(4): 53
- Woodhouse, P., & Muller, M. (2017). Water Governance—An Historical Perspective on Current Debates. *World Development*. Elsevier Ltd.
- Zwarteveen, M., Kemerink-Seyoum, J. S., Kooy, M., Evers, J., Guerrero, T. A., Batubara, B., ... & Cuadrado-Quesada, G. (2017). Engaging with the politics of water governance. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Water*, 4(6), e1245.
- Boelens, R., Hoogesteger, J., Swyngedouw, E., Vos, J. & Wester, P. (2016). Hydrosocial territories: a political ecology perspective. *Water International* vol 41, No.1

Commons Theory and Community Irrigation Schemes

- McCord, P., Dell'Angelo, J., Baldwin, E., & Evans, T. (2017). Polycentric Transformation in Kenyan Water Governance: A Dynamic Analysis of Institutional and Social-Ecological Change. *Policy Studies Journal*, 45(4)
- Hodgson, S. (2006). Modern water rights: Theory and practice (Vol. 92). Food & Agriculture Organization.
- Peter H. Gleick, 2007. "The Human Right to Water." Oakland, CA: Pacific Institute
- Dietz, T., Ostrom, E. & Stern, P. The Struggle to Govern the Commons. *Science* 302, (2003).
- Dell Angelo, J., McCord, P., Gower, D., Carpenter, S., Caylor, K., Evans, T. 2016 "Community-based Water Governance on Mount Kenya: An Assessment Based on Ostrom's Design Principles of Natural Resource

Management,” in press at Mountain Research and Development.

- Zagorski, N. Profile of Elinor Ostrom. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 103 (2006).

Water Grabbing

- Dell'Angelo, J., Rulli, M. C., & D'Odorico, P. (2018). The global water grabbing syndrome. *Ecological Economics*, 143.

Water Commoning and Remunicipalization

- Geagea, Dona, Maria Kaika, and Jampel Dell'Angelo. "Recommoning water: Crossing thresholds under citizen-driven remunicipalisation." *Urban Studies* 60.16 (2023): 3294-3311.

International cooperation and water conflicts

- Wolf, Aaron T. "Shared waters: Conflict and cooperation." *Annu. Rev. Environ. Resour.* 32 (2007).
- Rodríguez-Labajos, Beatriz, and Joan Martínez-Alier. "Political ecology of water conflicts." *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Water* 2.5 (2015).
- Zeitoun, M., N. Mirumachi, J. Warner, M. Kirkegaard and A. Cascão. (2020). Analysis for water conflict transformation. *Water International* 45(4).
- Del Bene, D., Scheidel, A., & Temper, L. (2018). More dams, more violence? A global analysis on resistances and repression around conflictive dams through co-produced knowledge. *Sustainability Science*, 13(3).

NEXUS, global virtual water trade, water war and peace

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- Dell'Angelo, J., D'Odorico, P., & Rulli, M. C. (2018). The neglected costs of water peace. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Water*, 5(6), e1316
 - Barnaby, W. (2009). Do nations go to war over water? *Nature*, 458(7236).
 - Allan, J.A. (2003). Virtual Water the Water, Food, and Trade Nexus. Useful Concept or Misleading Metaphor? *Water International*, 28(1).
 - The United Nations World Water Development Report 2014. Water and Energy (2014) Volume 1:
 - Selby, Jan. "Oil and water: the contrasting anatomies of resource conflicts." *Government and opposition* 40.2 (2005).
 - Hoekstra, A. Y., & Mekonnen, M. M. (2012). The water footprint of humanity. *Proceedings of the national academy of sciences*, 109(9).
 - Sojamo, S., Keulertz, M., Warner, J., & Allan, J. A. (2012). Virtual water hegemony: the role of agribusiness in global water governance. *Water International*, 37(2).
 - Hussey, K., and J. Pittock (2012). The Energy–Water Nexus: Managing the Links between Energy and Water for a Sustainable Future. *Ecology and Society* 17(1): 31.
 - Mirja Schoderer, Marlen Ott (2022) Contested water- and miningscapes – Explaining the high intensity of water and mining conflicts in a meta-study, *World Development*, 154
-

Here there are more reading recommendations related to other themes and topics:

Introduction to water governance, global dimensions of water governance

- Bogardi J.J., Dudgeon D., Lawford R. et al. (2012) Water security for a planet under pressure: interconnected challenges of a changing world call for sustainable solutions. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability* 4, 35-43
- Özerol, G., Vinke-de Kruijf, J., Brisbois, M. C., Casiano Flores, C., Deekshit, P., Girard, C., ... & Schröder, N. (2018). Comparative studies of water governance: a systematic review. *Ecology and Society*, 23(4).
- Teisman, G., van Buuren, A., Edelenbos, J and Warner, J. (2013) Water governance: Facing the limits of managerialism, determinism, water-centricity, and technocratic problem-solving. *International Journal of Water Governance* 1(1): 1-11
- The United Nations World Water Development Report 2014. Water and Energy (2014) Volume 1. Read pages 2 to 10; 12 to 20; 22 to 26
- E&S special issue: Global Water Governance: Challenges and Future Scope
 - a. <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/issues/view.php/feature/65>
- Tortajada C. (2010) Water governance: some critical issues. *International Journal of Water Resources Development* 26, 297-307.
- Managing Water under Uncertainty and Risk, The United Nations World Water Development Report 4 (2012), Volume 1, Chapter 1, pp 22-42.
- Postel S.L., Daily G.C., Ehrlich P.R. (1996) Human appropriation of renewable fresh water. *Science* 271, 785-788.
- UN Water, 2010. Climate Change Adaptation: The Pivotal Role of Water. UN Water Policy Brief. Available at http://www.unwater.org/downloads/unw_ccpol_web.pdf
- United Nations. (2006) Water for human consumption. Human Development Report 2006 Beyond Scarcity: Power, Poverty, and the Global Water Crisis. UNDP.
- OECD Studies on Water (2014) Water Governance in the Netherlands: Fit for the Future? Available online
- Reinhard, S., & Folmer, H. (Eds.). (2009). Water Policy in the Netherlands: Integrated Management in a densely populated delta. Earthscan.

Adaptive Governance and Management

- Woodhouse, P., & Muller, M. (2017). Water Governance—An Historical Perspective on Current Debates. *World Development*. 225-241
- Folke, C., Hahn, T., Olsson, P., & Norberg, J. (2005). Adaptive governance of social-ecological systems. *Annu. Rev. Environ. Resour.*, 30, 441-473.
- E&S Special Issue: New Methods for Adaptive Water Management: <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/issues/view.php?sf=31>
- Saleth, R. M., & Dinar, A. (2005). Water institutional reforms: theory and practice. *Water Policy*, 7, 1-19.
- Engle, N. L., Johns, O. R., Lemos, M. C., & Nelson, D. R. (2011).

Integrated ^[L]_{SEP} and adaptive management of water resources: tensions, legacies, and the ^[L]_{SEP} next best thing. *Ecology and society*, 16(1), 19. **11 pages** ^[L]_{SEP}

Integration, participation and democracy

- Warner, J. F. (2006). More sustainable participation? Multi-stakeholder platforms for integrated catchment management. *Water resources development*, 22(1), **15-35**.
- Rhett Larson (2011). Panacea or Platitude: Integrated Water Resource ^[L]_{SEP} Management – Conceptually Sound But Fundamentally Flawed, The ^[L]_{SEP} Sustainability Review, Issue One, Volume 3.
- Engle, N. L., Johns, O. R., Lemos, M. C., & Nelson, D. R. (2011). Integrated ^[L]_{SEP} and adaptive management of water resources: tensions, legacies, and the ^[L]_{SEP} next best thing. *Ecology and society*, 16(1), 19.
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 2014. Towards Integrated Water Resources Management. International experience in development of river basin organisations.
- Online tutorial for IWRM as a tool for adapting to a changing ^[L]_{SEP} climate: <http://www.thewaterchannel.tv/tutorial/index.html>. ^[L]_{SEP}
- Huitema, D., van de Kerkhof, M., Bos-Gorter, L., & Ovaa, E. (2009). Public participation in water management. An analysis of innovative approaches from The Netherlands. *Water problems and policies in The Netherlands*, **225-248**.

Water politics, privatization and controversies

- Dicke, W., S. Meijerink (2008) Editorial: The Public-private divide in flood management. *International Journal of Water Resources Development* 24(4): **495-497**.
- Grafton, R. Q., Libecap, G. D., Edwards, E. C., O'Brien, R. J., & ^[L]_{SEP} Landry, C. (2012). Comparative assessment of water markets: insights from the Murray Darling Basin of Australia and the Western USA. *Water Policy*, 14(2), 175.
- Swyngedouw, Erik. "Authoritarian governance, power, and the politics of rescaling." *Environment and Planning D: society and space* 18.1 (2000): 63-76.
- Ken Conca's, 'Governing Water. Contentious Transnational Politics and Global Institution. Building. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press' (2006) on the World Commission on Dams.
- Pierce, G. (2012). The political economy of water service privatization in Mexico City, 1994–2011. *International Journal of Water Resources Development*, 28(4), 675E691. ^[L]_{SEP}
- Finnegan, W., "Leasing the Rain," *The New Yorker*, 78(7): 43E53, April 2002, http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2002/04/08/020408fa_FACT1

Urban dimensions of Water Governance

Urban:

- Gleick P .H. (2003) Global freshwater resources: soft-path solutions for the 21st century. *Science* 302, **1524-1528**.
- Derkzen, M., Nagendra, H., Van Teeffelen, A., Purushotham, A., & Verburg, P. (2017). Shifts in ecosystem services in deprived urban areas: understanding people's responses and consequences for well-being. *Ecology and Society*, 22(1). **1-24**
- World Bank, 2012. Integrated urban water management: A summary note.
- OECD (2016) Water Governance in Cities:
<http://www.oecd.org/environment/water-governance-in-cities-9789264251090-en.htm>
- “Water Use; Helping Cities Adapt to Climate Change Risks.” Program on Negotiation, Harvard Law School.
- E&S special issue on Urban Water Governance:
<http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/issues/view.php/feature/80>

Rural water governance and river basins coordination

- Cox, M., G. Arnold, and S. Villamayor Tomás. 2010. A review of design principles for community-based natural resource management. *Ecology and Society* 15(4): 38. [online] URL: <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol15/iss4/art38/>
- Ostrom, Elinor. Governing the commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action. Cambridge university press, (1990): pp. **69-101**
- Lam, Wai Fung. "Institutional design of public agencies and coproduction: a study of irrigation associations in Taiwan." *World development* 24.6 (1996): 1039-1054.
- United Nations Development Programme, 2006. Beyond Scarcity: Power, Poverty and the Global Water Crisis. Human Development Report 2006. New York: UNDP. Available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2006/> [Focus on Chapter 5, “Water Competition in Agriculture,” pp. 171-200]
- International Water Management Institute, 2007. Water for Food, Water for Life: A Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture. Colombo, Sri Lanka: IWMI. Available at <http://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/assessment/> [Focus on the “Summary in English”]
- OECD (2016) Water Governance in Cities:
<http://www.oecd.org/environment/water-governance-in-cities-9789264251090-en.htm>
- “Water Use; Helping Cities Adapt to Climate Change Risks.” Program on Negotiation, Harvard Law School.
- E&S special issue on Urban Water Governance:
<http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/issues/view.php/feature/80>

Commons

- Varvarousis, A. (2020). The rhizomatic expansion of commoning through social movements. *Ecological Economics*, 171, 106596.

- Yeh, E. T. (2009). Greening western China: A critical view. *Geoforum*, 40(5), 884-894.

International Cooperation

- Schmeier, S. (2010). Governing international watercourses-Perspectives from different disciplines: A comprehensive literature review. Hertie School of Governance Working Paper, (53): **1-34**
- Blatter, J., & Ingram, H. M. (2001). Reflections on water: New approaches to transboundary conflicts and cooperation. MIT Press. Chapter 1: **3-31**
- Ken Conca, 2006. "Transnational Dimensions of Freshwater Ecosystem Governance," in A.R. Turton, J. Hattingh, G.A. Maree, D.J. Roux, M. Claassen, and W.F. Strydom, eds., *Governance as a Dialogue: Government Society and Science in Transition*.
- David Michel, 2009. "A River Runs Through It: Climate Change, Security Challenges, and Shared Water Resources," in David Michel and Amit Pandya, eds., *Troubled Waters: Climate Change, Hydropolitics, and Transboundary Resources*. Washington: Henry L. Stimson Center.
- Aaron T. Wolf, Shira B. Yoffe, and Mark Giordano, 2003. "International Waters: Identifying Basins at Risk," *Water Policy* 5: 29-60.
- Salman M. A. Salman, 2007. "The Helsinki Rules, the UN Watercourses Convention and the Berlin Rules: Perspectives on International Water Law," *Water Resources Development* vol. 23 no. 4 (December): 625-640.

Global Virtual Water Trade, Conflicts, Water War and Water Peace

- Rahaman, M.M. (2012). Water wars in 21st century: speculation or reality? *International Journal of Sustainable Society*, 4(1), 3-10.
- Serageldin, I. (2009). Water: conflicts set to arise within as well as between states. *Nature*, 459(7244), 163-163.
- Subramanian, A., Brown, B., & Wolf, A. (2012). *Reaching Across the Waters: Facing the Risks of Cooperation in International Waters*. World Bank Publications.
- Zeitoun, M., Allan, J. T., & Mohieldeen, Y. (2010). Virtual water 'flows' of the Nile Basin, 1998-2004: A first approximation and implications for water security. *Global Environmental Change*, 20(2), 229-242.
- Sojamo, S., Keulertz, M., Warner, J., & Allan, J. A. (2012). Virtual water hegemony: the role of agribusiness in global water governance. *Water International*, 37(2), 169-182.
- Ansink, E. (2010). Refuting two claims about virtual water trade. *Ecological Economics*, 69(10), 2027-2032.
- Alam, U. Z. (2002). Questioning the water wars rationale: a case study of the Indus Waters Treaty. *The Geographical Journal*, 168(4),
- Aaron T. Wolf, 2000. "Indigenous approaches to water conflict negotiations and implications for international waters," *International Negotiation: A Journal of*

Theory and Practice, Volume 5:2, December 2000. Available at
<http://www.transboundarywaters.orst.edu/publications/indigenous>

- Conca K., (2006) “The New Face of Water Conflict.” Policy Brief no. 3 of the Navigating Peace Initiative, Environmental Change and Security Program.

Water Law and Water Rights

- Joseph W. Dellapenna and Joyeeta Gupta, eds., 2008. The Evolution of the Law and Politics of Water. New York: Springer.
- European Commission, “The EU Water Framework Directive.”
- Sophocleous, M. (2012). Conserving and Extending the Useful Life of the Largest Aquifer in North America: The Future of the High Plains/Ogallala Aquifer.
- Groundwater Governance: Wijnen M., Augeard B., Hiller B., Ward C., Huntjens P. (2012) Managing the Invisible: Understanding and Improving Groundwater Governance. World Bank. Chapters 4, 6, and 7. <http://water.worldbank.org/publications/managingEinvisibleEunderstandingEandEimprovingEgroundwaterEgovernance>

Water & Energy, Dams

- The Water Footprint Assessment Manual (2011):
 - Introduction: **1-5.**
 - Ch. 2, Water Footprint Assessment: **7-15.**
- Moore, D., Dore, J., & Gyawali, D. (2010). The World Commission on Dams+ 10: Revisiting the large dam controversy. Water Alternatives, 3(2), **3-13**
- Hoekstra, A. Y., & Mekonnen, M. M. (2012). The water footprint of humanity. Proceedings of the national academy of sciences, 109(9), **3232-3237.**
- Rulli, Maria Cristina, and Paolo D’Odorico. “The water footprint of land grabbing.” Geophysical Research Letters 40.23 (2013): 6130-6135
- Sojamo, S., Keulertz, M., Warner, J., & Allan, J. A. (2012). Virtual water hegemony: the role of agribusiness in global water governance. Water International, 37(2), 169-182.
- Hussey, K., and J. Pittock (2012). The Energy–Water Nexus: Managing the Links between Energy and Water for a Sustainable Future. Ecology and Society 17(1): 31.
- World Commission on Dams (2000). Dams and Development: A New Framework for Decision Making. London: Earthscan.
- Water Alternatives (2010) Special Issue, Volume 3, Issue 2: WCD+10: Revisiting the large dam controversy. Guest editors: Deborah Moore, John Dore, Dipak Gyawali

