

**California State University, San Marcos**

**BRS 453, Border Water Conflicts  
Professor Vivienne Bennett**

**Phone:** 760-750-4190

**Email:** [vbennett@csusm.edu](mailto:vbennett@csusm.edu)

**Office:** Craven 6121

**CSUSM Catalog Course Description**

Explores conflicts over water in international border regions. Rivers and aquifers do not stop at international borders! Many neighboring countries face complex issues co-managing boundary waters, and water becomes a contested resource. This course studies political economic facets of transfrontier water issues to understand how water conflicts arise and are addressed. Cases may include U.S.-Mexico border; Jordan River Basin in the Middle East; Nile in Sudan, Ethiopia, and Egypt; Euphrates in Turkey, Syria, and Iraq; and others.

**Expanded Course Description**

This course examines conflicts over water resources along two transnational border areas: the U.S. - Mexico border, and the Palestine - Israel - Jordan borders. Water is the most vital natural resource, essential for human survival as well as for agriculture, industry, and environmental sustainability. Worldwide, countries are facing water scarcity and contaminated water supplies, which indicates tremendous mismanagement of this vital resource. The complexities of managing scarce water increase when bodies of water cross international borders where nations with different social, legal, and political systems may also have different priorities regarding water management. Rivers, oceans, lakes and aquifers do not stop at international borders! Many neighboring countries thus face very complex issues in co-managing their boundary waters, and water often becomes a contested resource. This course examines and compares the political, economic, social, and historical facets of water management, and how water conflicts arise and are addressed, along two important international borders zones with very distinct characteristics.

**Student Learning Objectives**

1. To understand why water is a vital natural resource.
2. To understand how water is used for human needs, industry, agriculture, and environmental sustainability.
3. To understand the natural vs. man-made causes of water scarcity.
4. To understand how political processes shape water management.
5. To understand how social and cultural characteristics shape water use in different regions and countries.
6. To understand the history of water resources along the U.S.- Mexico border, and along the Palestine - Israel- Jordan borders.
7. To understand the political economy of water conflicts and how conflicts are addressed along the U.S.- Mexico border, and along the Palestine - Israel- Jordan borders.
8. To improve analytical skills and deepen understanding of social science concepts.

9. To improve writing skills.

**Required Reading** (*Required books may change from semester to semester.*)

The three books and the course reader are available at the CSUSM Bookstore and on two-hour reserve at the CSUSM Library.

1. Lowi, Miriam. Water and Power. The politics of a scarce resource in the Jordan River Basin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

2. Michel, Suzanne (ed.) The U.S.-Mexican Border Environment: Binational Water Management Planning. San Diego: Southeast Center for Environmental Research and Policy (SCERP) Monograph Series, no.8, San Diego State University Press, 2003.

3. Shlaim, Avi. War and Peace in the Middle East: A Concise History. N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1995.

4. BRS 453 Course Reader.

**Research Material**

1. I have placed numerous books on two-hour reserve in the Kellogg Library. This way, key items in our library collection that are pertinent to the research papers assigned for this class will be available to all students, and cannot be monopolized by individuals who keep them past their due dates.

2. I have developed an extensive list of reputable websites that provide useful material for the assignments in this course. You should become familiar with these sites and routinely spend time exploring them. You can access them as follows:

Go to the CSUSM home page

Click on Library (on the left side of the page)

Click on Subject and Course Guides (in the middle of the page)

On the left, under Course Guides, click on BRS 453.

You will see a heading titled "Recommended Websites for BRS 453"

Click on the subheading for either the U.S.-Mexico Border or for the Middle East.

**Points toward your final grade will be awarded as follows:**

1. Research paper on a water problem along the U.S.-Mexico border (five pages, 20 points). Students will select their research topic from a list provided by the instructor. Due Week Six.

2. Focus questions on the assigned reading (5 points each, total of 25 points). Five times during the semester I will hand out focus questions to guide you as you do the assigned reading. You will write brief responses to the focus questions after you complete the reading. You will bring your responses on their due dates and to be able to discuss them in class.

3. Middle East geography/hydrology map exercise (10 points). This map exercise later becomes part of your final research paper. Due Week Eight.
4. Country water supply and water needs paper (1-2 pages, 10 points). This short paper later becomes part of your final research paper. Due Week Ten.
5. Jordan River Basin Water Summit (15 points)—last two weeks of class. Students will be graded on their contributions to the preparation and success of their team’s presentations and negotiations during the two Summit days.
6. Research paper on the water situation and needs of one of the groups in the Jordan River Basin: Israelis, Palestinians or Jordanians (8-10 pages, 20 points). Due last day of the class.

### **Summary of Assignments in Chronological Order**

January 30	Focus Question Response due	5 points
February 6	Focus Question Response due	5 points
March 6	Focus Question Response due	5 points
March 13	Focus Question Response due	5 points
March 13	Research Paper 1 due	20 points
March 20	Geography/Hydrology exercise due	10 points
April 5	Focus Question Response due	5 points
April 17	Water Supply/Water Needs paper due	10 points
May 3	Water Summit, Part One	
May 8	Summit, Part Two – [Total for summit =	15 points
May 10	Research Paper 2 due	20 points
<b>Total Points for Course:</b>		<b>100 points</b>

### **Grading Scale**

A = 95-100
A- = 90-94
B+ = 87-89
B = 84-86
B- = 80-83
C+ = 77-79
C = 74-76
C- = 70-73
D = 60-69
F = 0-59

### **Comments on the Writing Assignments**

1. One of the goals of this class is to help you improve your social science writing skills. This includes your abilities to understand the assigned topics, conceptualize an argument and present it effectively in writing, provide relevant and appropriate evidence to illustrate your points, employ correct grammar, syntax, and spelling, provide citations in the text of your written work correctly, and provide a complete bibliography. Writing is a very important talent and skill. Virtually all careers and all jobs include some writing. The skills you hone in this class will serve you well for the rest of your life. Good writing is essential for the social sciences, the sciences, and the humanities.

2. I spend a lot of time reading each paper you write and I provide extensive feedback. I expect you to take my feedback seriously and to demonstrate improvement over the course of the semester. It is possible to get a high grade in this class even if you don't do well on the first paper, but only if you put the effort in to improve your work. I am always willing to work with your schedule so that we can meet and you can get help directly from me. The Writing Center also provides free writing tutors and is a terrific resource that I strongly recommend you use. However, no one can help you if you are unwilling to help yourself by taking my feedback seriously, making appointments for help and keeping them, and then working on your own as needed. In the end, your grade depends completely on your own efforts.

3. The exact requirements for all assignments will be provided to students in handouts distributed in class well in advance of their due dates. The syllabus tells you exactly when these handouts will be distributed. It is each student's responsibility to make sure she/he gets the handout describing each assignment.

### **My Criteria for Grading Written Work**

1. Does your written work build a coherent discussion directly related to the assignment and to your particular topic?
2. Does your written work demonstrate that you understand the course material?
3. Are the main ideas of your written work explained clearly? Are they backed up by relevant examples and evidence that helps illuminate your main points?
4. Does your written work provide substantive content as well as insightful analysis?
5. Do you provide a complete presentation of the assigned topic?
6. Is your written work coherently organized?
7. Did you use an adequately wide variety of scholarly sources (if needed for the given assignment) and do you effectively synthesize material from these sources?
8. Is your work clearly written, with a fluent style using syntactic variety and correct grammar, syntax, and spelling? Do you move from one idea to the next with effective transitions?
9. Do you employ proper citation and bibliographic style (if citations and bibliography are appropriate to the assignment)?

### **Attendance Policy**

I take attendance at the start of each class session for two reasons: (1) it enables me to learn your names, and (2) when I grade your written work I can look back to see how often you were in class. I expect you to attend every class session. Attendance is your responsibility; if you choose not to attend class and do less well in the course because you have missed in-class content, you must accept the consequences.

### **University Academic Honesty Policies**

Academic dishonesty is a serious offense. Plagiarism (presenting the words or ideas of others as your own), fabrication (falsification or invention of information) and cheating (using or attempting to use unauthorized material in any academic exercise) will result in a failing grade in this course, and can also lead to expulsion from the University. In addition, a letter regarding the incident will be placed in your file in the office of the Dean of Students. For example, in written assignments, exact quotes must be placed in quotation marks; and all quoted and paraphrased work must be accompanied by a citation in the text and a full reference in the bibliography. Failure to do so is an example of academic dishonesty. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, fabrication, and cheating, please consult the section on Academic Honesty in the CSUSM General Catalog, and feel free to consult me. A claim of “I didn’t know that was plagiarism, etc.” will not be accepted.

**There is never a good time to engage in academic dishonesty. If you think you will ‘save’ your grade by doing so, come see me first to talk it over. Do not risk an ‘F’ in this course or possible expulsion from the university! Whatever you are facing that may lead to academic dishonesty has a solution. Do not be afraid to ask for help.**

### **Missing class, turning in assignments late, emergencies, etc**

- All assignments are always due in class on their due dates as listed above.
- If you have an emergency that prevents you from attending class or from turning in an assignment on its due date, please contact me as soon as you can, and before class when possible. When you have a valid emergency I will give you an excused absence and allow you to turn in papers late. There are many valid emergencies including illness, family emergency, flat tire with receipt from gas station, etc.
- When you have a valid reason for an absence or an extension I am open to hearing it and flexible in working out solutions. Don’t be shy about asking because I will say yes whenever your request is reasonable, and I won’t hesitate to say no if your reason is unacceptable.

**Students With Disabilities** are encouraged to meet with me as soon as possible to discuss special homework, testing, seating, or other arrangements that might be necessary.

## Course Schedule

(Dates change every semester)

**Tues Jan 23**                      **Course Introduction**  
 Syllabus handed out.  
 Focus questions on Herzog chapter handed out, due Jan. 30.

### PART ONE: Water Issues Across the U.S. – Mexico Border

**Thurs Jan 25**                      **The U.S.-Mexico Border I: Historical Overview**  
 Readings:                              In the Course Reader:  
    Lorey, “Distinguishing Characteristics and Early History”  
    Lorey, “Economic Trends Since 1950: Legacies of the Wartime  
    Economy”  
 Focus questions on Herzog chapter handed out to new students, due Jan. 30.  
 Focus questions on Specter article handed out, due Feb 6.

**Tues Jan 30**                      **The U.S.-Mexico Border II: Transfrontier Politics**  
 Readings:                              In the Course Reader:  
    Herzog, “The Politics of Space in a Transfrontier Urban  
    Ecosystem”  
 Focus question responses on Herzog article due today.

**Thurs Feb.1**                      **Visualizing Border Water Issues and Conflicts**  
*Video*                                      Border Visions (57”)  
 Readings:                              In the Course Reader:  
    Ohlsson, “The Role of Water...”  
    Gleick, Peter. “Basic Water Requirements...”

**Tues Feb. 6**                      **Water 101**  
 Readings:                              In the Course Reader:  
    Specter, “The Last Drop”  
 Focus question responses on Specter article due today.

**Thurs Feb 8**                      **San Diego Hydrology, Geology, and Water Systems**  
 Guest Speaker :                      Jeff Stephenson, San Diego County Water Authority  
 Readings:                              U.S.-Mexico Border Environment: Executive Summary (pp. 1-22)  
    And, in the Course Reader:  
    Dzurik, “Hydrologic Fundamentals”  
    Peterson, “Infrastructure: What is It?”  
 Guidelines for Research Paper 1 handed out today; paper due March 13.

- Tues Feb 13**                    **San Diego-Tijuana: One Watershed, Two Cities**  
 Guest speaker:                Suzanne Michel  
 Readings:                      U.S.-Mexico Border Environment: Chapter 1
- Thurs Feb 15**                   **Library Workshop, Librarian Melanie Chu – Kellogg 2303**  
 Readings:                      U.S.-Mexico Border Environment: Chapter 3
- Tues Feb 20**                   **Library Workshop, Librarian Melanie Chu - Kellogg 2303**  
 Readings:                      U.S.-Mexico Border Environment: Chapter 5
- Thurs Feb 22**                   **Mexico’s Political System**  
 Readings:                      In the Course Reader:  
                                       García Acevedo, “The Confluence of Water...”  
**Focus questions handed out on Cohen and Pitt articles, due March 6**
- Tues Feb 27**                   **Water Conflict in Tijuana, Part I**  
 Video:                          “Everyone Their Grain of Sand” (watch 65” of 86” film)  
 No assigned reading for today.
- Thurs March 1**                 **Water Conflict in Tijuana**  
 Video/discussion              “Everyone Their Grain of Sand” (watch 21” of 86” film)  
 No assigned reading for today.  
**Focus questions handed out on McCool, Mumme/Brown, and Michel articles, due March 13.**
- Tues March 6**                 **The ‘Law of the River’ and the Colorado River Delta**  
 Readings:                      In the Course Reader:  
                                       Cohen, “Managing Across Boundaries...”  
                                       Pitt et al., “Two Nations, One River...”  
**Focus question responses on Cohen and Pitt articles due today.**
- Thurs March 8**               **Is Desalination an Option?**  
 Guest Speaker:                Conner Everts, Desal Response Group, Executive Director of  
     Southern California Watershed Alliance  
 No assigned reading for today.
- Tues March 13**               **U.S.-Mexico Border Water Issues: Looking Ahead**  
 Readings:                      U.S.-Mexico Border Environment: Chapter 7  
                                       In the Course Reader:  
                                       Mumme and Brown, “Decentralizing Water Policy...”  
                                       Michel, ”Defining Hydrocommons Governance...”  
**Focus question responses on McCool, Mumme/Brown, and Michel due today.**  
**Research Paper 1 due today.**

## **PART TWO: Water Conflict in the Jordan River Basin**

**Thurs March 15**      **A. Overview of assignments and water summit.**  
**B. Country teams formed. Teams begin group contracts.**

No assigned reading for today.

**Geography/hydrology exercise handed out today, due on March 20.**

**Contract templates handed out. Finalized team contracts are due April 5.**

**Guidelines for paper on water supply and water needs handed out today; paper due April 17.**

**Guidelines for Research Paper 2 handed out today; paper due May 10.**

**Guidelines for Water Summit handed out today.**

**Tues March 20**      **Geography and Hydrology of the Middle East**

Reading:

Lowi, pp. 19-28

Shlaim, Introduction (pp. 1-9) and Chapter 1 (pp. 11-26)

And, in the Course Reader:

Lindholm, "Water and the Arab-Israeli Conflict"

**Geography/Hydrology Exercise due today.**

**Focus Question on Lowi and Shlaim handed out, due April 5.**

**Thurs March 22**      **A. Lecture: Brief Synopsis of Middle East History**

**B. Team Meetings to Finalize Contracts**

Reading:

Shlaim, Chapter 2 (pp. 27-36) and Chapter 3 (pp. 37-59)

**Tues March 27**      **\*\*\* Spring Break \*\*\***

**Thur March 29**      **\*\*\* Spring Break \*\*\***

**Tues April 3**      **Advanced Library Workshop, Librarian Melanie Chu  
Kellogg 2303**

Reading:

Lowi, Chapter 1

**Thurs April 5**      **Development of Israel and Jordan in an Arid Environment**

Reading: Lowi, Chapter 2 (pp. 29-53)

**Focus question responses on Lowi and Shlaim due today.**

**Finalized team contracts are due today.**

**Tues April 10**      **Library Work Day – Kellogg 2303**

Reading:

Lowi, Chapter 4

**Thurs April 12**      **The Johnston Mission, 1953 to 1956: It's Lasting Effects**



Reading: Lowi, Chapter 5 (you can skip from p. 132 to bottom of p. 143)  
**Tues April 17**  
**A. Lecture: The Jordan basin Since 1967** (10:30-11:00am)  
**B. Instructor conference with Jordanian team** (11:00-11:45am)  
**C. Individual research or team-work for the Israeli and Palestinian teams** (11:00-11:45am)

Reading: Lowi, Chapters 6 (Chapter 7 is optional)  
**Paper on water supply and water needs due today.**

**Thurs April 19**  
**A. Lecture: The Jordan basin Since 1967** (10:30-11:00am)  
**B. Instructor conference with Palestinian team** (11:00-11:45am)  
**C. Individual research or team-work for the Israeli and and Jordanian teams** (11:00-11:45am)

Reading: Lowi, Chapter 8

**Tues April 24**  
**A. Lecture: The Jordan basin Since 1967** (10:30-11:00am)  
**B. Instructor conference with Israeli team** (11:00-11:45am)  
**C. Individual research or team-work for the Jordanian and and Palestinian teams** (11:00-11:45am)

No assigned reading for today.

**Thurs April 26** **Team Preparation for Water Summit (in class)**

No assigned reading for today.

**Tues May 1** **Team Preparation for Water Summit (in class)**

No assigned reading for today.

**Thurs May 3** **Middle East Water Summit: Preparatory Meeting**  
 (Teams present hydrology, water needs, and demands)

No assigned reading for today.

**Tues May 8** **Middle East Water Negotiation Summit**  
 (Teams negotiate based on data presented at preparatory meeting)

No assigned reading for today.

**Thurs May 10** **The U.S.-Mexico Border and Jordan River Basin Compared**  
**LAST DAY OF CLASS!!**

No assigned reading for today.

**Research Paper 2 due today.**

**THERE IS NO FINAL EXAM IN THIS CLASS**