

CAMDEN CONFERENCE DISCUSSION SERIES

Fresh Water Scarcity – The Global Crisis of Our Time

James Bowditch and Meg Malmberg, Facilitators

Reading List

Essential Articles and Videos

1. [Why Care About Water](#) (2010). National Geographic video. 2:29 minutes.

A brief pictorial depiction with accompanying narrative of the threats to freshwater around the world.

Facilitator’s note: This is useful as an opening piece on why water is important, particularly in areas where there are issues surrounding availability.

2. [The Global Water Crisis and the Coming Battle for the Right to Water](#) (2008). Article in Foreign Policy in Focus. Maude Barlow, 4 pages.

The article, an excerpt of Chapter 5 in Maude Barlow’s book, Blue Covenant, identifies three water crises—dwindling freshwater supplies, inequitable access to water and the corporate control of water—as the greatest threat of our time to the planet and to our survival and makes a case for alternative water futures.

Facilitator’s note: While this article is 5 years old, it very clearly illustrates the problems ahead of the world, particularly the global south, and proposes a “blue covenant” that people and their governments recognize the right for everyone to have clean water, and find peaceful solutions to water disputes between countries.

Note: To print out this article, click on the small printer icon that appears just below the title and description of the article.

3. [Water—Adapting to a New Normal](#) (2010). Excerpted chapter from the Post Carbon Reader Series: Water; Managing the 21st Century’s Sustainability Crises. Sandra Postel, 13 pages.

This chapter depicts factors that contribute to water shortages, including policies and rules that encourage inefficiency and misallocation. Sandra Postel is a leading expert in international water issues.

Facilitator’s note: A good way to read the Postel article is to first look at the tables and charts, and then read the article. The tables and charts alert the reader to the important issues.

Note: To print out this article, simply print the page using your computer’s print command.

4. [Fresh Water](#) (April 2010). Article in National Geographic. Barbara Kingsolver, 5 pages.

While the amount of moisture on Earth has not changed since dinosaurs drank millions of years ago, will there be enough water for a more crowded world? The author contends that civilization has been slow to give up the myth of the Earth’s infinite generosity. The “Tragedy of the Commons” demonstrates that where rationale pursuit of individual self-interest leads to

collective ruin, problems can only be solved by “a change of human values or ideas of morality”.

Facilitator’s note: The subheading under “Fresh Water” acknowledges the finite nature of water and wonders whether there will be enough for a more crowded world. This is an important lens to consider as the article is read.

Note: To print out this article, click on the small printer icon that appears at the bottom of the first page just below the word “CONTINUE.”

Optional Readings and Videos

1. [The Growing Global Water Crisis](#) (2010). YouTube video of an interview with Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. 5:44 minutes.

The thesis here is that water is for fighting. Among the factors contributing to water scarcity are diminishing aquifers, contamination, population distribution, water distribution, and the privatization of water. An argument is made that water is part of the common

Facilitator’s note: The Kennedy interview is a good companion to the Global Water Crisis article by Maude Barlow. It underscores the notion, like the Blue Covenant, that water belongs to all living creatures.

Note: To print out a transcript of this video, click on the “Show more” link found just above the comments. The beginning comments will be transcribed. At the end of these few comments is a link to the Full transcript. Click on that link to reveal the entire transcript. The text can now be printed using the print command on your computer. About 5 pages.

2. [Coping with water scarcity: An action framework for agricultural and Food security](#) (2012). United Nations Report FOA Water Report; Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. 60 pages of text (seven page synopsis)

The impact of water scarcity on agricultural production and food security serves as the focus of the report. Driving forces behind water scarcity are identified and policy options to respond to water scarcity are examined. Issues of scale and the interdependency of response options are highlighted as key factors in policy considerations.

Facilitator’s note: This article appears more formidable than it is. While the pages ix to xvi provide an executive summary, the body of the article amplifies the options left to the world, and how to cope with the issues at hand, ending up with the policy changes coming from the specific issues. The body, while comprehensive, has charts and graphs, and the last 18 pages are references and end material.

Note: To print out this article, simply print the page using your computer’s print command.

3. [Without Water, Revolution](#) (2013) YouTube video with Tom Friedman at the Aspen Institute. 70 minutes.

Description of the forthcoming TV documentary series created by Tom Friedman on the impacts of climate change around the world. Film with narrative dramatizing the impacts of water scarcity in various parts of the world. The thesis here is that water scarcity is at the heart of political unrest, migration, and war.

Facilitator’s note: The 70 minute panel with four video clips outlines the effects of water disruption. While most of it is concerned with scarcity, some of it includes the inability to cope with dramatic oversupplies of water. While it is right on target for this year’s Camden Conference, it is also the precursor to the upcoming TV documentary series. Without Water, Revolution is not a “slick” piece of videography, a lot of the discourse is punctuated with “um” and “ah”, making it a challenge to follow.

4. [U.S. Policy Still All Wet](#) (2012). Article in Foreign Policy in Focus. Shiney Varghese, 4 pages.

What does it mean to recognize water as a human right? If food and water security are linked, how are the barriers to recognizing water as a human right influencing current and future practices in the United States and, by implication, throughout the world?

Facilitator’s note: The Shiney Varghese article compares a corporate vs. a non-corporate approach to solving water problems. The author makes no attempt to be neutral about her assessment regarding the appropriate approach to follow; the article comes across as an opinion piece. The point she makes is that compared to other countries, the US is far behind in water policy.

Note: To print out this article, click on the small printer icon that appears just below the title and description of the article.

For assistance or more information about the Camden Conference Discussion Series, please contact the Camden Conference Office by email to info@camdenconference.org, or call 207-236-1034.

The 27th Annual Camden Conference will be held February 21 through 23, 2014. The mission of the Camden Conference is to foster informed discourse on world affairs through year-round community events, public and student engagement, and an annual weekend conference. For more information, visit www.camdenconference.org, email info@camdenconference.org, or call 207-236-1034.