**WATER, SOCIETY, ECOLOGY**

Situated Knowledges of Flows Across Places

**Course Description**

**Dates 27 September to 4 October 2023**

How do scholars work across disciplines to better understand the complexities of environmental challenges as they materialise across geographies of difference and inequality?

Water is vital for life; it has also long been pulled into political projects. Attending to the centrality of water to colonial expansion and contemporary political economy, this course focuses specifically on the materiality of water – liquid flows around hard surfaces; flows through bodies; urban streams and oceans; urban biogeochemistries – with the aim of further developing our critical thinking skills about water, its many political, social, and economic framings, and their enactment in water-related infrastructures. It will explore different disciplinary knowledges and conceptualisations of water, and different ways of understanding both the histories and the futures of water.

By its very design, this course encourages participants to think comparatively and connectively across disciplines and places. Taking two river-scapes as its starting point – one in Oslo, Norway, and the other in Cape Town, South Africa – the course explores water-related histories, property relations, ecological assemblages at each site. Participants will also meet online to discuss the sites’ similarities, differences and connections, while considering how such cross-site thinking can deepen our analyses of environmental issues.

Taught simultaneously at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of OsloandEnvironmental Humanities South/Anthropology at the University of Cape Town,this course aims to prepare graduates for ecological dialogue and environmental governance questions across North-South divides – specifically seeking to be alert to where and how local ecologies intersect with colonial histories of water control, contemporary neoliberal approaches to the privatisation of water, and their effects on environmental justice.

The course does not require a specific interest in water. Instead, it is designed to be broadly relevant to students interested in environmental anthropology, STS/infrastructure, political ecology, and North-South relations, as its main objective is to encourage participants to think from and across empirical cases in new ways.

Because water exceeds disciplinary boundaries, the course will introduce different practices for knowing river-scapes. This includes moving beyond rivers themselves, as waters are by their very nature connected. At both sites, we will also consider terrestrial links and interfaces with bays and fjords, alerting us to the necessity of systemic thinking about water. Field activities will include mapping, stream walks, and talks by diverse regional experts. Students will learn how to use observation techniques drawn from both ethnographic and scientific methods.

The course is both ***transdisciplinary*** – to prepare students to reach beyond traditional disciplines – and ***hemispheric*** – to facilitate, in a teaching context, a stronger understanding of what capacitates and/or impedes North-South conversations. Students will study very similar curricula in Oslo and Cape Town, while exploring river-based field sites in their respective cities. Projects based on field research will be shared in video-conference and web-based discussions to enable comparisons about human-land-water interfaces, both between rivers and between cities.

Teaching will be done collectively by [Kregg Hetherington](https://www.concordia.ca/artsci/sociology-anthropology/faculty.html?fpid=kregg-hetherington) (Concordia University), [Lesley Green](https://humanities.uct.ac.za/department-anthropology/people-academic-staff-academic-staff-overview/lesley-j-f-green) (University of Cape Town), [Nikiwe Solomon](https://humanities.uct.ac.za/department-anthropology/people-academic-staff-academic-staff-overview/nikiwe-solomon) (University of Cape Town), [Heather Swanson](https://pure.au.dk/portal/en/persons/heather-anne-swanson(76bc700a-3df2-4c7d-8b97-f5301e638402).html) (UiO and Aarhus University), [Gro Ween](https://www.khm.uio.no/english/about/organisation/ethnography-numismatic-and-classical-archaeology/staff/grobw/index.html) (University of Oslo), [Pierre du Plessis](https://www.hf.uio.no/ikos/english/people/aca/environmental-humanities/temporary/pierreld/) (University of Oslo) and [Knut G Nustad](https://www.sv.uio.no/sai/english/people/aca/knutnus/index.html) (University of Oslo). Knut G Nustad is responsible for the course.

**Course Requirements**

To attend this course, you need to be physically present in either Oslo or Cape Town.

It is possible to receive credits via University of Oslo (ECTS for European PhD students) or University of Cape Town (for MA/PhD students needing credits in South Africa).

For University of Oslo credits:

Within two months after the course, participants must submit the following written material for evaluation. Total length: 6-7000 Words +/- 10 percent, including footnotes. Full participation (and pass) equals 5 credits (5 ECTS).

Written materials are to consist of the following (with more detailed instructions provided after course enrolment):

* Three short reading responses, engaging with assigned texts (approximately 500 words each, about 1500 words in all)
* One illustrated observational project based on field trips (mapping the flows, infrastructures, multi-species interactions and/or human-water relations at a specific section of a local waterway)
* One longer essay that uses course readings, discussions, and/or field experiences in relation to the student’s own research project