

7-2008

Innovation in Teaching Transboundary Water Courses – An Interdisciplinary Approach

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Recommended Citation

Silva et al., Lynette de, "Innovation in Teaching Transboundary Water Courses – An Interdisciplinary Approach" (2008). 2008. Paper 42.
http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/ucowrconfs_2008/42

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Panel Title

"Innovation in Teaching Transboundary Water Courses – An Interdisciplinary Approach."

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Abstract

Failure to adequately address the way we manage our water resources will continue to degrade the integrity of our basins', cause social harm, impact the economy, possibly lead to conflicts, and ultimately result in unsustainability of the water resources in the world's river basins. And, as both water quality and quantity degrade, we find ourselves challenged to find ways to address our water needs, and address ways of working with our limited natural resources. While such challenges are overwhelming when addressed by decision makers on a domestic scale, they may become much more complicated and difficult to handle at a transboundary scale, when water is shared among several sovereign states. It is the realm of increased scarcity, and the ability to

manage it that makes the distinction between sustainable development and use of transboundary water.

Training professionals in transboundary water is a relatively new academic field. It gains momentum in parallel to the increased scarcity of water among those that “share” transboundary water. Naturally, the subject of transboundary water is taught in different ways. We believe that water management education must go beyond the traditional physical systems approach to water resources management, it must also include ways of improving agency coordination, public participation and multi-objective decision-making – elements of ecology management that are often left out of formal water resources education programs.

Additionally, when dealing with transboundary water, adding legal, international relations, strategic behavior, modeling and regional economics is essential for a balanced curriculum leaving students more prepared to grasp with real world issues. In other words, we call for an interdisciplinary-integrative approach for teaching transboundary water courses. Providing analytical tools to cope with existing scarce/conflict situations and analyze possible policy interventions are proposed, rather than the examples of single case studies.

In this session we will present 4 curriculum-approaches to transboundary courses that exemplify nuances of the philosophy that was stated above. Each of the speakers will share the methodologies used in their program and/or class (majors in geography, water engineering, international relations, and international policies). Tools such as class discussions and simulations, student research benefiting from exchange with real world transboundary officials, use of special software for planning and evaluating cooperation, will be discussed and demonstrated.