

UNST 124g spring 2011

*And his answer trickled through my head,
Like water through a sieve*

1 introduction

Access to freshwater is a fundamental human need, for drinking and agriculture, sanitation, and the production of goods. Water can also be a hazard. For example, when more rain falls (or snow melts) than can be accommodated by surface water systems, the resulting floods have adverse health and infrastructure effects. Freshwater resources, storm events, and drought are all changing due to population growth and global warming (IPCC, 2007; Postel, 2010).

2 assignment

Read the article by Sandra Postel (2010) and answer the following questions. In answering these questions, think about how you would talk about this issue with one of your peers or a member of your family. What do you think they need to know to be well informed on this topic?

1. Explain what Postel means by “the past is no longer a reliable guide to the future.” Why does this represent a change in how water managers think about their work? Why is that change important?
2. Are there similarities between some issues discussed by Postel and environmental challenges faced by ancient civilizations? Support your answer with at least one example (referenced correctly) from the winter term readings.
3. Postel writes that the first step in addressing 21st century water challenges is asking the right questions. She groups those questions in two categories, working with nature and improving water productivity. Use an examples from the reading to explain what is meant by each category.
4. Does Postel favor market-based or regulatory solutions to water supply challenges?

3 references

IPCC. (2007). Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report **Summary for Policymakers**. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Core Writing Team, Pachauri, R.K and Reisinger, A. (Eds.). IPCC: Geneva, Switzerland. Retrieved from http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr_spm.pdf

Postel, S. (2010). Water: adapting to a new normal, In *The Post-Carbon Reader*. Watershed Media. <http://www.postcarbon.org/reader/toc>