

GLOBAL JUSTICE & ENVIRONMENTAL TRADE-OFFS

Ethics: The Environment

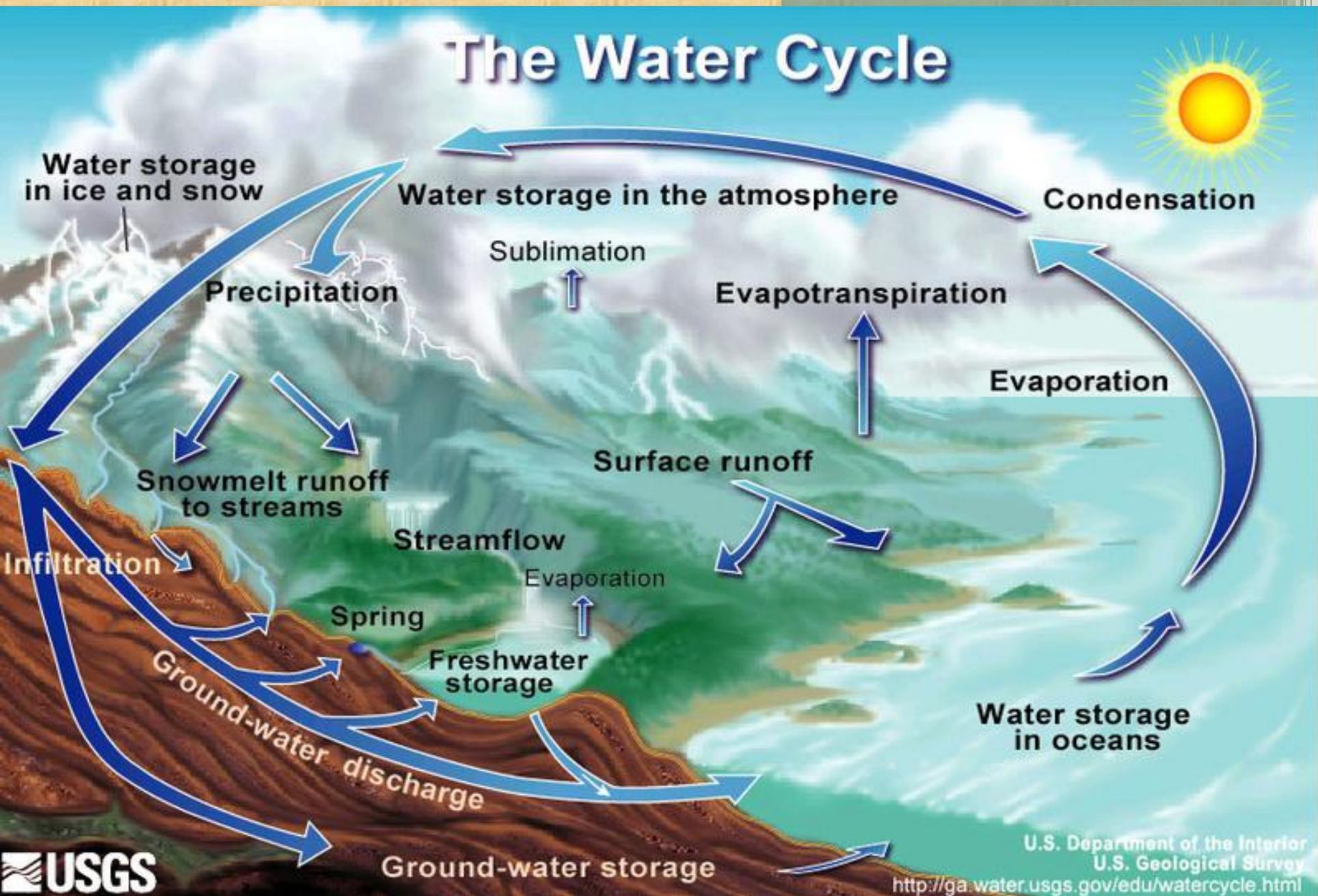
Summer 2012, Laura Guidry-Grimes

DISCUSSION

- *Flow documentary*
- Should we treat multinational corporations as international actors with similar responsibilities and liabilities?
- Do you think multinationals should have obligations to local communities that supply resources for their products? Do they have obligations to consumers?
- The World Trade Organization classified water as a commodity. What's problematic about the commodification of nature, especially essential goods like water?

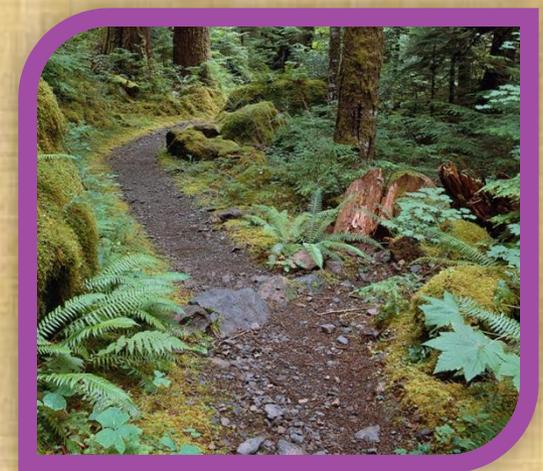
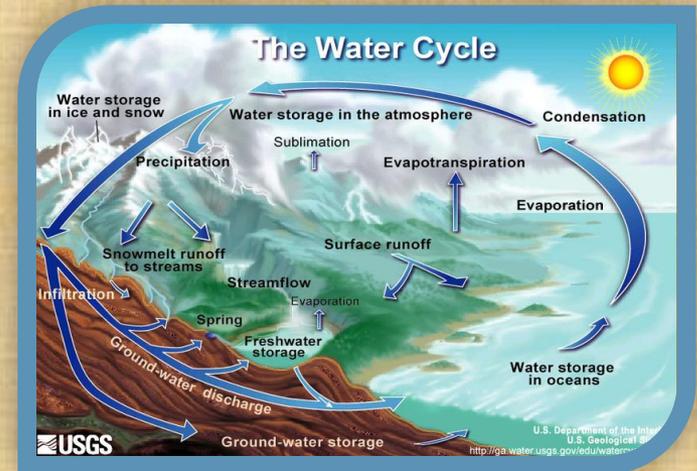


The Water Cycle



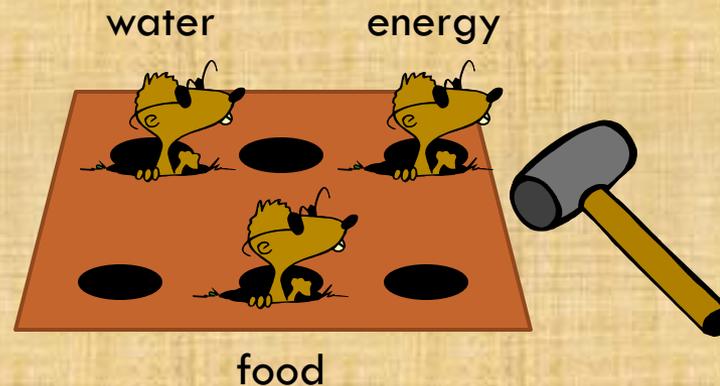
FRAGILITY OF THE HYDROLOGIC CYCLE

- Water as naturally self-correcting system
- Built environments result in rapid and expansive extraction without replacement
- Fresh ground water disappearing
- Hydrologic system permanently broken in some places, so ground water not restorable
- Example: Kenya, roses, and the World Bank



F.E.W. PROBLEM

- “Whac-a-Mole”



- Can lead to Catch-22 for resource-poor areas
- Example:
increased food production → water depletion & increased emissions

WHAT IS COERCION?

- “is not centrally a matter of producing hurt or harm, but rather of structuring the options available to another. Coercive proposals are designed to **produce compliance by making it the condition of avoiding unacceptable ‘consequences,’** so they always place severe restraints on victims’ capacities to act” (Onora O’Neill)
- Can be benign or malign, (arguably) intentional or unintentional, fair or unfair, morally permissible or impermissible

WHAT IS EXPLOITATION?

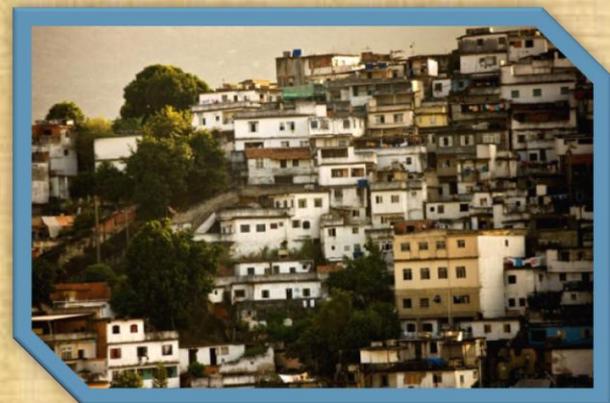
- “Exploitation, at its heart, is not just about unfair shares or garden-variety degradation; it is about **wrongfully exacting benefit from another’s actual vulnerability**” (Margaret Little & Alisa Carse)
- Never morally permissible (by definition)

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY VS. TAKING BLAME

- **Responsibility:** had some role to play (e.g., causal, complicitous, incidental) in wrong-doing
 - Can be ignorant or knowing, intentional or unintentional, proximate or removed
 - Degree based on level of involvement, power to do otherwise
 - Forward-looking
- **Blame/Praise:** should be punished or rewarded for action or inaction in moral matter
 - Knowingly and intentionally acted (or refrained to act) *and could have done otherwise*
 - Degree based on what individual did, was motivated by, or intended
 - Backward-looking

HENRY SHUE ON FAIRNESS

- Perfect equality of *moral goods* (dignity + respect), but not necessarily *material goods*
- All senses of fairness point to singular conclusion: **Costs of environmental problems “should initially be borne by the wealthy industrialized states”** (403)



HENRY SHUE: PRINCIPLES OF EQUITY



- First proposal
 - Matter of taking responsibility for extracting benefit from others having to clean up the mess of production
 - “extra burden assigned must be at least equal to the unfair advantage previously taken” (396)
- Second proposal
 - Matter of shouldering what’s fair, based on who can bear the greater burden without sinking as a result
 - Progressive rate (proportional or not)
- Third proposal
 - Matter of making sure everyone has *enough* (more than mere survival)
 - Radical inequality means providing *adequate minimum* is possible without losing incentives for the best-off

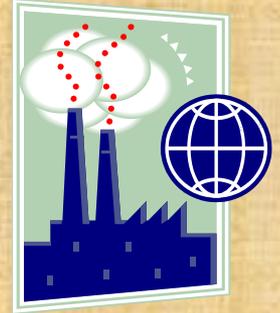
ROLSTON III: SAVING NATURE INSTEAD OF PEOPLE?



- Ethical people spend resources all the time on projects and products unrelated to alleviating poverty or hunger
 - “strong evidence that we in fact not only have these norms but think we ought to have them” (405)
 - spending time, money, and talents on these other projects is *worthwhile*—regardless of their effects on poverty



ROLSTON: SAVING NATURE INSTEAD OF PEOPLE?



- “It is better to fix the problem where it arises, within society, than to try to enlarge the sphere of society by the sacrifice of remnant natural values” (407)
 - Focus on alleviating overpopulation, overconsumption, and underdistribution.
 - Does not require expanding our hold on nature
- Restrictions on saving people from starvation
 - Cannot sacrifice conserved nature (though can find other means)
 - Poor countries cannot develop in any way whatsoever

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- If an impoverished country appears to consent to bear additional burden for a rich country's development, should we nonetheless question the consent?
- Do you find Shue's first, second, or third proposal more appealing?
 - What might be problematic about one or all of them?
- Do you agree with Rolston III that sometimes we can prioritize other projects over feeding those in most urgent need?
- When is it ethically justifiable to put "anthropocentric inequity" at the center of environmental concern, at the expense of other projects?
- Do you think our responsibility for people's death is mitigated when we have not actively caused the death but instead only spent money on (e.g.) an iPad instead of sending that money to a starving child?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Carse, Alisa L. & Margaret Olivia Little. “Exploitation and the Enterprise of Medical Research”. *Exploitation of Developing Countries and Biomedical Research*. Eds. Ezekiel J. Emanuel and Jennifer Hawkins. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007. 206-245.
- O’Neill, Onora. “Which Are the Offers You Can’t Refuse?” in *Violence, Terrorism, and Justice*. Eds. R. G. Frey & Christopher Morris. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991. 170-195.
- Powers, Madison & Ruth Faden. *Social Justice: The Moral Foundations of Public Health and Health Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?