
GCSC Seminar Series

210 ASB
(Aline Skaggs
Building)

ALL ARE WELCOME

Refreshments &
meet the speaker at
3:45

Tuesday, November 19, 2019
4:00-5:00 PM

Juliet Carlisle

Associate Professor, Political Science, University of Utah

"Driving the Agenda? California Drought in the 21st Century"



Source: California Dept. of Water Resources

What are the political consequences of slow-moving crises, such as droughts?

Abstract

The theory of punctuated equilibrium and agenda setting has been widely used to help explain why various laws are adopted or fail to be adopted in the U.S. and elsewhere. A key variable in the multiple-streams model is “focusing events,” which are “sudden shocks” that grab the public’s attention. A number of scholars have written about the concept, trying to define it more clearly. Most prominently, Thomas Birkland (1997) argues that focusing events are “sudden, relatively rare, can be reasonably defined as harmful or revealing the possibility of potentially greater future harms.” He also adds that they become known to politicians and the general public nearly simultaneously. In this paper, we use the concept of focusing episodes to look at how Californians, their elected officials, and policy advocates responded to the drought conditions in the state in the twenty-first century. What we find is that even a slow-moving disaster can have a big impact.

Bio

Juliet Carlisle is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science and the Environmental and Sustainability Studies Program. Her research substantively deals with political behavior and public opinion with an emphasis on environmental politics and policy. In particular, Dr. Carlisle broadly considers public opinion and has investigated the interplay of demographic, cognitive, psychological, and contextual factors on attitudes regarding the environment, offshore oil drilling, large-scale solar development, and vaccines.

Her co-authored book, *The Politics of Energy Crises* (2017), published by Oxford University Press applies the theories of agenda setting and punctuated equilibrium to energy crises and explores energy policy during energy crises with specific attention on the role of public opinion, business interests and environmental activists.