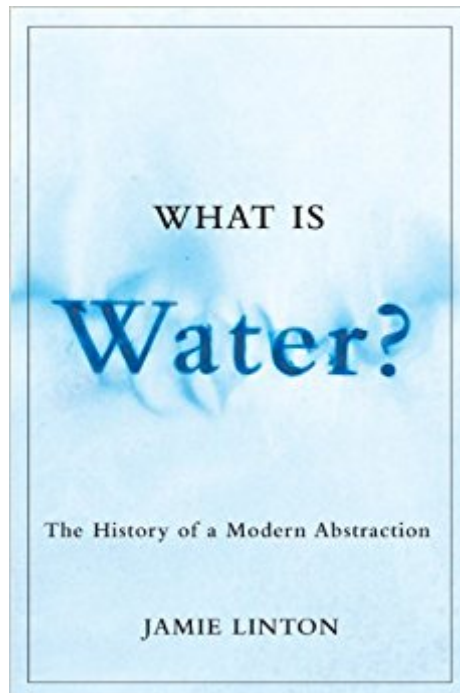


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# What Is Water?: The History Of A Modern Abstraction (Nature/History/Society)



## Synopsis

We all know what water is, and we often take it for granted. But the specter of a worldwide water crisis suggests that there might be something fundamentally wrong with the way we think about water. Jamie Linton dives into the history of water as an abstract concept, stripped of its environmental, social, and cultural contexts. Reduced to a scientific abstraction - to mere H<sub>2</sub>O - this concept has given modern society license to dam, divert, and manipulate water with apparent impunity. Part of the solution to the water crisis involves reinvesting water with social content, thus altering the way we see water. This book offers a fresh approach to a fundamental problem.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The publication of Jamie Linton's superb monograph, *What is Water?*, provides an opportunity to consider the development of relational and dialectical thought within geography and especially how this has developed around the subject of water. (Alex Loftus, Department of Geography, Royal Holloway, University of London *The Geographical Journal*) Linton's message needs to be taken seriously by anyone for whom water is something more than so many molecules of H<sub>2</sub>O. It is a message that should be incorporated into both introductory and advanced courses in a number of disciplines dealing not only with water but with all natural resources. (David B. Brooks, *Fresh Water*, Friends of the Earth, Canada Critical Policy Studies, Vol. 4, No. 4 2010-01-12) Linton presents the issues in impressive breadth and depth, and tells a

compelling story. Recommended. (Choice I.D. Sasowsky, University of Akron) Jamie Linton's excellent analysis fills a gap in the understanding of our conceptions of water. His critiques of the water crisis and the new paradigm of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) are simply brilliant and long overdue. The book is easy to read for an audience new to the literature on water from a social science perspective. (Olivier Graefe, University of Fribourg Social & Cultural Geography 2013-01-01) Every water issue is a social issue. And yet, in contrast to almost every other culture, we define water in the modern West as a substance entirely devoid of social content. How is it that we have come to think of water in this way, as an abstract compound of hydrogen and oxygen, and what are the consequences? These questions underlie Jamie Linton's *What is Water?*, a history of the particular way of conceptualizing water that predominated in the twentieth century. In this wide-ranging study, Linton shows how scientific practice, the modern state, technology, and politics produced an idea of water that helped permit its manipulation and control on a vast scale, with corresponding effects on human society. That much of the world is engulfed today in what many describe as a "water crisis" suggests the need to rethink the nature of water. By reinvesting water with social content by considering water's social nature Linton suggests a fresh approach to a fundamental problem.

"The book demonstrates, in a clear and concise fashion, the ways in which contemporary social relationships with water have constituted a crisis. The subject is of fundamental importance, and the author's emphasis on the need to posit environmental concerns within a socio-natural understanding is vital." Alex Loftus, University of London

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