The introduction of electricity in South Africa led to the foundation coal mining towns like Witbank which contained racialized enclaves made up of the country’s poor and black people vulnerable to water scarcity and pollution. Due to the importance of electricity to the country’s economy and the high demand for water in electricity production, water users like the Electricity Supply Commission (Eskom), and coal mines were allocated a position of strategic water user, legally underwritten and protected to the detriment of human consumption. There has been very little success in redressing this repressive and unsustainable system in the post-apartheid era because systems in place have endured and distribute resources in ways which continue to impoverish these marginalized communities. Furthermore, South Africa is plagued by endless water crises that pose a threat to the country’s future water supply. Using Witbank as a case study, my paper examines and responds to South Africa’s current and impending water crises and failures at redress by investigating the role played by the electricity industry in perpetuating these historical water challenges. I seek to understand how over time, the stakeholders involved in the electricity industry have combined to exacerbate these conditions.

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Friday, March 12, 2021
12pm-1pm CST (Online)
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