

**INTERNATIONAL STUDIES 393-SA  
Development in the Global Context:  
Participation, Power and Social Change**

**Instructor:**

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Course Description

This course combines intensive classroom and structured experiential learning to examine international development in the "global south" with an emphasis on participatory, community-based development approaches. The course sets contemporary development practice in the context of fundamental debates over the nature and goals of international development, the causes of global poverty, and the history of development, with particular attention to the relationships between power, participation and social change. In addition, students will be introduced to the political, social, economic, cultural and geographic characteristics of their specific host country, with consideration to how these factors may influence their community-based work. Overall, the course seeks to give students the intellectual, emotional and practical readiness and frameworks to pursue and reflect critically on their field experience and in-country research. Through a series of written assignments, students will analyze the structural dimensions of global poverty and examine how current trends in development may relate to issues of systems change and personal responsibility.

The principles and controversies you are introduced to in this class will help to prepare you to contribute constructively to the work of your host organization and in your collaborations with the program's community partners. Written assignments will encourage you to reflect and explore fundamental theoretical questions and practical considerations in your fieldwork and immersion experience.

After your time abroad, we will reconvene at Northwestern to compare and contrast your field experiences across the program and to contextualize your community development internships within the larger dynamics of development theory and practice. Critical reflection is integral to your study abroad/immersion experience and reintegration process. Among other topics, we will analyze the dynamics of North-South partnerships and discuss alternative pathways to engaging global issues at home and abroad as we look ahead to next steps beyond the program.

*Students take this course as part of the Global Engagement Studies Institute (GESI) program. Enrollment is by application only.*

Course Objectives

- To think critically about development concepts and paradigms; analyze theories, policies, and strategies to address global poverty and how they limit or support the potential for social change.
- To think critically about intercultural learning and global community engagement.
- To examine the social structures, conditions of power and privilege that influence development outcomes and possibilities for social change, including opportunities to examine one's own positionality in these contexts.
- To think critically about one's place and role in global development and social change efforts.
- To prepare students to work collaboratively and equitably with global community partners in developing small-scale, sustainable community development projects.
- To explore the development strategies of GESI's community partners and how they fit into the changing development trends, specifically asset-based, participatory and movement-based approaches.

Course Learning Goals

- Demonstrate an ability to analyze and critique theories and debates associated with the concept and discourse of "development."
- Demonstrate an ability to integrate theory, discussions, and field/site experiences in writing assignments, group work, discussion and activities.

- Demonstrate an ability to articulate the roles, responsibilities, and challenges of those who ethically engage global communities around development.
- Demonstrate an ability to engage diverse perspectives and collaborate equitably with peer groups and community partners in a context of shared, project-based work.

### Course Structure and Components

This quarter long course has four integrated components:

- 1) Intensive, one-week pre-departure classroom work at Northwestern.
- 2) Collaboratively develop a community-based project with local partners over eight weeks. Students will work in: Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, India, Nicaragua, Ghana or Uganda.
- 3) Field research and written assignments critically analyzing the central issues and debates in international development based on experience and field research during their eight-weeks abroad.
- 4) Structured analysis and reflection for three days at Northwestern after fieldwork, drawing on comparisons with students who worked and conducted research in other countries to advance student analysis of core development issues.

### Course Readings

All readings are available on the Canvas site for this course. The readings include a varied combination of theoretical works, policy arguments, applied case studies, and evaluative articles.

The classroom portion of the pre-departure seminar is concentrated and intense. To get the most from the lectures and discussions you will need to have read the materials in advance of the relevant class session. **Students are strongly encouraged to have completed the reading and write responses to the reading questions for each reading before they arrive for the pre-departure seminar.** Then you will be in a position to prepare for class sessions by reviewing the readings and reminding yourself of the arguments and perspectives.

### Assignments & Evaluation

The assignments for this course are designed to develop the skills and measure your progress in achieving the learning goals above.

#### **Small Group Discussion and Small Group Assignments (40%)**

All class sessions, language training, and small group discussions and activities are mandatory. This class will be taught primarily in seminar style in which the majority of each class session will be devoted to guided, small group discussions and group work. These discussions and assignments are designed to critically interrogate arguments and analytical techniques presented in readings, cases, and class lecture. Much of the learning during the seminar will come from your active participation in these small group discussions and activities are a major component of your course grade.

To get the greatest benefit from these discussions and activities, it is essential you come to class having completed the readings.

**Note:** Each class session has a required homework assignment you are to bring to class, which will be used in small group discussions and activities. These assignments are mandatory.

#### **Field Essays - Written Assignments (45%)**

We will use your experience in the community and with your project to explore key theoretical and practical questions about international development raised in the pre-departure seminar. You will write four field essays in response to prompts that will ask you to draw on your experiences from your development project and additional field research to apply and analyze the frameworks, concepts and theories covered in the pre-departure classroom work. These assignments will also be important source materials for our discussions during the Final Reflection Summit back at Northwestern.

### ***Final Group Reports and Presentations (15%)***

Upon returning to Northwestern, each group will write a Final Summit Summary (2-3 pages) describing and analyzing their in-country work. In addition, during the Final Reflection Summit students will make presentations and conduct group work employing conceptual and theoretical tools from the course to analyze and critically assess what they observed.

All components of your grade will be evaluated on the standard Northwestern grading scale of A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D, F. Grade reports are available on [CAESAR](#) soon after the end of the quarter. Grades are not given by phone, e-mail, or in person in the SCS office.

### Academic Credit

**Summer:** For successful completion of this course, you will earn one course unit credit from Northwestern University, which is equal to 4 quarter hours. This is equal to approximately 3 semester hours of credit. If you need more detailed information, please contact [conversion@northwestern.edu](mailto:conversion@northwestern.edu) or call 312-503-0306.

**Fall:** For successful completion of this course, you will earn three course units of credit from Northwestern University, which is equal to 12 quarter hours. This is equal to approximately 9 semester hours of credit. If you need more detailed information, please contact [conversion@northwestern.edu](mailto:conversion@northwestern.edu) or call 312-503-0306.

### Course Policies

#### ***Completing Course Requirements***

Please note that failure to complete any of the assignments for this course will result in a non-passing grade for the course.

#### ***Academic Integrity***

University policies on academic integrity apply to this course. Cheating (using unauthorized materials or giving unauthorized assistance during an examination or other academic exercise) and plagiarism (using another's ideas or words without acknowledgment) are serious offenses in a university. All quotations and ideas taken from others should be appropriately cited in all written work. For more information on University policy on academic integrity, see [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

#### ***Students with Disabilities***

If you have specific disabilities that require accommodation, please let the instructor know at the beginning of the course so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. Northwestern is committed to providing appropriate academic accommodations to ensure equal access to fully participate in academic programming. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact AccessibleNU <http://www.northwestern.edu/accessiblenu>, 2122 Sheridan Road, Room 130, (847) 467-5530, [accessibleNU@northwestern.edu](mailto:accessibleNU@northwestern.edu).

#### ***A Note About Computers/Technology***

This class/program is run on a democratic model of education in which openness, shared experience and community building are vitally important. Computers and other technology (cell/smartphones) tend to break down active participation in class. Students are encouraged not to bring laptops to class, unless there are extenuating circumstances that require you use a laptop for taking notes, etc. This is also good practice in preparing for your time abroad where your level of connectivity and access to technology/Wi-Fi, etc. will be limited. Furthermore, while it is understood that laptops may be useful in your everyday fieldwork, assignments, and for communicating with people back home, students are encouraged to examine how technology informs our ability to be present or approachable and may become a barrier to relationship building in new and familiar contexts.

#### ***Inclusive Practices and Guidelines for Dialogue***

1. **Confidentiality.** We want to create an atmosphere for open, honest exchange. What is said in the space stays in the space. What is learned in the space can leave the space.
2. **Our primary commitment is to learn from each other.** We will listen to each other and not talk at each other. We acknowledge differences amongst us in backgrounds, skills, interests, and values. We realize that it is these very differences that will increase our awareness and understanding through this process.

3. **Speak from personal experiences.** Use “I” statements to share thoughts and feelings. You cannot speak for your group; just because you are does not mean you understand.
4. **Do not demean, devalue, or “put down” people** for their experiences, lack of experiences, or difference in interpretation of those experiences.
5. **Take responsibility for your impact.** Our intentions do not negate the negative impact we may have on someone. We will hold ourselves accountable by challenging ourselves to be quick to sincerely apologize and then open to learning when we do not understand.
6. **Assume best intentions.** Trust that people are doing the best they can and that everyone is attempting to balance being honest, vulnerable, and imperfect with standards of perfection, mastery, and survival.
7. **Challenge the idea and not the person.** If we wish to challenge something that has been said, we will challenge the idea or the practice referred to, not the individual sharing this idea or practice.
8. **Speak your discomfort.** If something is bothering you, please share this with the group. Often our emotional reactions to this process offer the most valuable learning opportunities.
9. **Monitor your airtime.** Be mindful of taking up much more space than others. On the same note, empower yourself to speak up when others are dominating the conversation.
10. **Be fully present.** Our time together is precious and limited. Everyone at the table has significant contributions to make and we need you to fully participate with both your head and your heart.
11. **Redefine the term “Safe Space.”** Conflict and discomfort are often a part of growth. Make sure to differentiate between feelings of discomfort and experiences with conflict and being unsafe.
12. **Trust the process.** The journey to our destinations offer us the chance to gain insights about ourselves and others. These insights help us grow and change and contribute to our cohesion, offering us opportunities for gratitude and appreciation on the way to goal achievement.

## Course Schedule

### Session 1

#### **Setting the Context: A Brief History of Global Development**

This session will situate current issues and approaches to development by providing an overview of major development efforts since WWII. We will trace the evolution of theories of development interventions and legacies over the last 70 years. What are the experiences and legacies of previous development efforts? What are the trends, assumptions and models animating development debates and approaches today?

#### Readings

- David Bartecchi, [“A Brief History of International Development Theories and Practices,”](#) *Village Earth*, July 5, 2015
- Steve Radelet, [The Great Surge: The Ascent of the Developing World](#), Chapters 1-2, (Simon & Schuster, 2015), pp. 3-42.
- Jeffrey Sachs, [“From MDGs to SDGs”](#) (Lancet Journal, June 2012), pp. 2206-11.
- Jason Hickel, Joe Brewer and Martin Kirk, [“4 Things You Probably Know About Poverty That Bill and Melinda Gates Don’t,”](#) *Fast Company: Co-exist*, February 3, 2015.
- Watch and discuss **Poverty, Inc.** in class
- Resource: [sdg.guide](#), *Getting Started with the Sustainable Development Goals: A Guide for Stakeholders*. United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (UN SDSN): December 14, 2015.

### Session 2

#### **What is Development? Why Does it Matter?**

The most fundamental question in development work is: what do we mean by “development”? Simply put what are the goals or outcomes being sought through development? The reason that this is so important is that different goals require different types of approaches and projects and different measures and assessments of whether development is being achieved. We will examine three alternative schools of thought prevalent in international development work: 1) development as the increase in individual and societal economic income and consumption; 2) development as the attainment of a broader set of human capabilities; and 3) development as realizing human rights. For each of these schools of thought we will analyze how each approach conceptualizes the problem to be solved and the challenges that must be addressed to achieve development. How

do different understandings of development shape the kinds of projects taken on; the ways they are designed; who is involved; and what criteria to use in judging success or failure?

#### Readings

- Case Study: Martha C. Nussbaum, "A Woman Seeking Justice," *Creating Capabilities: The Human Capabilities Approach* (Belknap Press, 2011), pp. 1-16.
- Amartya Sen, "Introduction" *Development as Freedom* (Anchor Books, 1999), pp. 3-11.
- Peter Uvin, "Final Synthesis and Questions," in *Human Rights and Development* (Kumarian Press, 2004) excerpts, pp. 175-184 and 195-201.

#### Session 3

##### **Privilege, Power, Marginalization and Social Exclusion**

What are the sources of privilege? How is privilege related to power? How do systems of privilege and power produce and reproduce communities of poor and marginalized people? How do systems of privilege and power affect international development efforts? To what extent can participatory community development challenge systems of privilege and power and be a means of "empowerment" of the poor and marginalized by enhancing their involvement in the decisions that affect their lives? How does your own positionality fit into this context? What are the ways that social identity, power and privilege may affect your work in community development spaces and shape your overall experiences at home and abroad?

#### Readings

- Allan Johnson, "Privilege, Oppression, and Difference," in Allan G. Johnson, *Privilege, Power and Difference*, 2nd edition (McGraw Hill, 2006), pp.12-40.
- Wendy Hulko, "The Time- and Context-Contingent Nature of Intersectionality and Interlocking Oppressions," *Affilia*, February 2009, pp. 44-55.
- Erika Lopez Franco and Thea Shakrokh, "The Changing Tides of Volunteering and Development: Discourse, Knowledge and Practice," *Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Bulletin*, September 2015, pp.17-28.
- Courtney Martin, "[The 'Third World' Is Not Your Classroom](#)," *The Development Set*, March 7, 2016.

#### Session 4

##### **Your Generation: Interrogating Our Role in Development**

At a personal level, many people in your generation are deeply concerned about and highly motivated to address the plight of people living in poverty and deprivation around the world. At the same time, some have warned that the current enthusiasm for global engagement and DIY development may do more harm than good to people in the global south. What are those concerns and how can they be addressed? What is your role in the midst of this "doing development" trend?

#### Readings

- Nicolas Kristof, "[D.I.Y. Foreign-Aid Revolution](#)," *New York Times Magazine*, Oct. 20, 2010.
- Dave Algozo, "[Don't Try This Abroad](#)," *Foreign Policy*, Oct. 26, 2010.
- Ivan Illich, "To Hell with Good Intentions" address to the Conference on InterAmerican Student Projects (CIASP) in Cuernavaca, Mexico, on Apr. 20, 1968.
- Teju Cole, "[The White-Savior Industrial Complex](#)," *The Atlantic*, March 2012.
- Sarika Bansal, "[17 Development Clichés I'll be Avoiding in 2017](#)," *The Development Set*, January 5, 2017.

#### Session 5

##### **Participation and Empowerment: Alternative Strategies to Community Development**

Over the last two decades "participation" has become one of the most dominant concepts in international development. Embraced by those on the left and the right, from those seeking to change fundamental power relations to the World Bank. Participation has been identified as essential to achieve a wide range of development outcomes, including empowerment of the poor and marginalized; building capacity of developing communities; increasing project effectiveness; improving project efficiency; and project cost sharing. What does participation mean? Why is it seen as so essential for

development? What are the assumptions and theoretical basis for these claims? What are the major debates over its meaning and role? How do they affect development work in practice? How will they impact your work?

Northwestern University has been at the forefront of developing community-based development theories and practice under the moniker of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), which builds on long-standing Chicago traditions that reach back to Jane Addams and Saul Alinsky. What is ABCD and how does it relate to the family of other participatory, strength-based, capacity building approaches to development? What is your host organization's approach to community development?

#### Readings

- John Kretzmann and John McKnight, "[Building Communities from the Inside Out](#)," Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern (1993), pp. 1-11.
- Pablo Alejandro Leal, "Participation: The Ascendancy of a Buzzword," *The Participation Reader*, (Zed Books, 2011), Ed. by Andrea Cornwall, pp. 70-81.
- "[Module 1: The Role of NGOs in a Civil Society](#)," An NGO Training Guide for Peace Corps Volunteers: Peace Corps, 2003.
- Paul Farmer, "Accompaniment as Policy," Harvard Kennedy School of Government, Commencement, May 25, 2011, pp. 233-247 in *To Repair the World* (University of California Press, 2013).
- Václav Havel, "An Orientation of the Heart," *The Impossible Will Take a Little While*, Ed. by Paul Loeb (Basic Books 2004), pp.

#### Session 6

##### **Identifying and Analyzing the Causes of Global Poverty**

What are causes that produce conditions of poverty? How can we think about the proximate and root causes? What are the differences between individual and structural causes? How do different causes interact and reinforce one another? How can understanding the causes of poverty help guide choices and priorities for how to intervene to create positive social change?

#### Readings

- Stan Burkey, "Understanding Poverty," *People First: A Guide to Self-Reliant Participatory Rural Development* (Zed Books, 1993), Chapter 1, pp. 1-11.
- Paul Farmer, Bruce Nizeye, Sara Stulac, and Salmaan Keshavjee, "[Structural Violence and Clinical Medicine](#)," PLoS Med Journal, October 24, 2006..
- Jason Hickel, Joe Brewer and Martin Kirk, "[3 Ways Humans Create Poverty](#)," *Fast Company: Co-Exist*, March 12, 2015.

#### Final Reflection Summit Schedule

As part of the Final Reflection Summit when you return from the field, we will draw on the readings from the beginning of the term, your field experience, your field essays and other journal entries to critically engage the issues and arguments from the pre departure seminar.

#### Session 1

##### **Causes of Poverty and Development Challenges**

What did you learn about the reasons that the problem our organization works on exists? What are the scope and causes of the problem, the role of political power in reproducing the problem and making change difficult, the theory of change and core development assumptions made by your organization and made in your work, the people within the community your organization works with and the capacities your organization was seeking to build in individuals and in groups, the patterns and degree of success or failure in the work of your organization and of your project, and explanations of those outcomes.

#### Readings

- Adam Burtle, "[What is Structural Violence?](#)" structuralviolence.org
- Iris Marion Young, "Structure as the Subject of Justice," in *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*, Ed. by Marianne Adams, et al. (Routledge, 2013), pp. 52-56.

## Session 2

### **Participation and Power in Community-Based Development**

After your GESI experience, what is your assessment of participatory, community-based development as an approach to development and social change? What do you think community-based, participatory development approaches can do well and what do they not do well? To what extent are these approaches scalable? Under what conditions? What are the implications for community development work at home and abroad?

#### Readings

- Dinyar Godrej, "[NGOs – do they help.](#)" *New Internationalist*, December 2014.
- William Moseley, "[Graduation advice for aspiring humanitarians.](#)" *Al Jazeera*, English (print), 2014.
- Review: Your response for the first day of predeparture class questions on "What is Development?"

## Session 3

### **Revisiting Possibilities for Development and Social Change**

To what extent should "Big Ideas" and scalability drive our thinking and approach toward global development? To what extent does international development work need to address and change power relationships in society to be successful? What degree and type of transformation is possible without challenging existing power relationships? Under what conditions is it more or less likely that power relationships can be effectively challenged? How does this inform your view of the relationship between power and development outcomes? What are your reflections about what it takes to live out a commitment to sustainable development and social change?

#### Readings

- Michael Hobbes, "[Stop Trying to Save the World: Big Ideas are Destroying International Development.](#)" *The New Republic*, November 17, 2014.
- Bobbie Harro, "The Cycle of Socialization," in *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*, Ed. by Marianne Adams, et al. (Routledge, 2013), pp. 45-52.
- Tania Mitchell, "[Identity and Social Action: The Role of Self-Examination in Systemic Change.](#)" AAC&U Diversity and Democracy, Fall 2015.

## Session 4

### **Advocacy and Organizing for Social Change**

Now what? Has your GESI experience raised your awareness of or interest in a particular issue? Does this new awareness motivate you to take action in some way? Are there communities, organizations or opportunities you want to get connected with? A panel of guest speakers will introduce you to some organizations involved in issue-based and social justice advocacy in the Chicago area, including a discussion of various approaches to doing advocacy work related to issues at home or abroad.

#### Readings

- Amanda Moore McBride and Eric Mlyn, "[Innovation Alone Won't Fix Social Problems.](#)" *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 2, 2015
- Howard Zinn, "The Optimism of Uncertainty." *The Impossible Will Take a Little While*, Ed. by Paul Loeb (Basic Books 2004), pp. 63-72.
- Interview with Parker Palmer by Sarah van Gelder, "[Know Yourself, Change Your World.](#)" *Yes! Magazine*, September 9, 2009.
- Sarika Bansal, "[17 Development Clichés I'll be Avoiding in 2017.](#)" *The Development Set*, January 5, 2017.