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

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Course Description

This course combines intensive classroom as well as structured experiential learning and field research to examine international development with an emphasis on relationships of participation, power and social change. The course examines fundamental debates over the nature and goals of international development, the causes of global poverty, the history of development approaches, the role of power in shaping development work and its outcomes, the theory and practice of community-based, participatory development.

To prepare you for your fieldwork, you will be introduced to the political, social, economic, cultural and geographic characteristics most relevant for development for the country and region you will be working, as well as language training.

During your fieldwork, you will apply these principles to design and implement a small-scale community development project with a team of peers and local community partners.

Your project experience together with additional field interviews and research will be used as a case study to explore this fundamental theoretical questions and controversies about international development through a series of written assignments.

After your fieldwork, we reconvene at Northwestern to systematically reflect on your experiences and research in the field and compare your experience with that of students who worked in other countries and different development sectors. We will focus on engaging key debates in development so that you can draw lessons and articulate your own arguments about international development work.
Coursing Learning Goals

By the end of this course student will be able to:

• Create and evaluate explanations of global poverty and individual development issues paying particular attention to system attributes. Articulate how social, economic, political, cultural, geographical, historical and individual factors produce and reproduce conditions of global poverty; explain the implications for international development, and apply that analysis to determine what is necessary to bring about broad development and social change in a specific community.

• Describe the key characteristics and approaches of participatory, community-based international development, analyze the possibilities and mechanisms for scaling up local participatory projects to affecting change on a larger scale, assess the strengths and limitations of participatory, community-based approaches, situate these approaches relative to alternative and complementary approaches to development, and assess the conditions under which participatory, community-based approaches are most likely to be effective in facilitating development and social change.

• Analyze the relationship between privilege and power in pursuing sustainable social change and development and in shaping and limiting the degree of change possible and the distribution of benefits from that change.

• Design, implement and evaluate a community-based, participatory development project in partnership with community members to help address a significant development issue, based on the resources and context in a specific community and that is designed to enhance the collective and individual capacities of that community to bring about social change and development.

• Critically evaluate major theoretical and conceptual frameworks for international development, based on reading, research and experience to construct your own argument to address the debates over what the most important goal(s) of international development should be, what is necessary to achieve development, how to evaluate whether it is occurring, and to what effect on local populations and more broadly.

Course Structure and Components

This quarter long course has four integrated components:

1) Intensive one week pre-departure classroom-based work at Northwestern.
2) Application of development theories and approaches through the design and implementation of a community-based development project with local partners over eight weeks. Students will work in: Bolivia, the Dominican Republic and Haiti, India, Nicaragua, South Africa 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 field work, 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 Blackboard 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 introductory 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 and having prepared responses to the reading questions.

**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 will ask you draw on your experiences on 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 report (10-12 pages) describing and analyzing their in country work. In addition, during the final learning 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**

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 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 me 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 assure equal access to all. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD), Scott Hall 21, (847) 467-5530.
Course Schedule

Tuesday, June 17

Setting the Context: A Brief History of Global Development and Your Generation
Theories, History and Legacies of Development and Your Generation
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. We will pay particularly close attention to identifying the “mental models” and assumptions (generalizations) about what will “work” and why. Different assumptions and models lead to different approaches, projects, and outcomes. Yet, these assumptions and models are often unstated and you need to be able to surface and test these assumptions and models to evaluate development approaches and outcomes. What are the experiences and legacies of previous development efforts? What are the assumptions and models animating development debates and approaches today?

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 of warned that the current enthusiasm for global engagement and DIY development may do more harm than good to people in the developing world. What are those concerns and how can they be addressed?

Readings
History of Development
• “Timeline of Dominant Ideas in Development”

Your Generation: DIY Development as the New Model?
• Dave Algoso, “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.

Wednesday, June 18

Introduction to Asset-Based Community Development
Northwestern University has been at the forefront of developing community-based development theories and practice that build on long-standing Chicago traditions that reach back to Jane Addams and Saul Alinsky. This session will introduce Asset-Based
Community Development (ABCD) and the theoretical basis and core characteristics of this approach. What is ABCD? What are its core assumptions and core commitments? What does it mean for pursuing social change and global development?

Readings

- Video Case Study: Anglican Board of Mission, Asset Based Community Development (Philippines) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCS7gg4uPD0

Thursday, June 19

Identifying and Analyzing the Causes of Global Poverty: A Systems Approach

This session will focus on using a systems approach to identify and understand poverty and the challenges of development. What is systems theory? How can we apply it to studying the causes of poverty and development?

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

- Donella H. Meadows, “System Traps . . . and Opportunities,” Thinking in Systems: A Primer, only required to read about the one system trap you will present in your discussion session. 4 pages.

Maternal Mortality Case Study (All pieces are VERY short)


**Friday, June 20**

**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 assessment 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 way they are designed, who is involved, and what criteria to use in judging success or failure?

**Readings**

**Saturday, June 21**

**Privilege, Power, Participation and Empowerment**
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? How can participatory community development challenge systems of privilege and power and be a means of “empowerment” of the poor and marginalized by enhance their involvement in the decisions that affect their lives.

**Readings**
Sunday, June 22

Global Development and Social Change: View from the Ground

In this session we employ the concepts, frameworks and theories we have explored this week to understand and then analyze community based development work on the ground. We want to use these tools to unpack the stated and unstated goals of the organizations work, the conception of development that guides its work, the type and purpose of participation in its work, the relationship between communities and outside organizations and resources, and the pathways through which broader social change can be advanced.

Readings

- **Case Study**: CitéSoleil: Youth changing the face of their neighborhoods,” in “If change should come, we should bring it: Stories of Citizen-led Development in Haiti” (Coady Institute, July 2013), pp. 16-18.
- **Case Study**: Alison Mathie, “Reviving self-help: an NGO promotes Asset Based Community Development two communities in Kenya,” in Alison Mathie and Gordon Cunningham (eds.) From Clients to citizens: Communities changing the course of their own development (Practical Action Publishing, 2008), pp. 299-321.

Parting Thoughts to Keep in Mind


Final Learning Summit

Schedule

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

Project Presentation
When presenting your projects, you will also reflect on the issues raised in the pre-departure classroom work such as: 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.

**Assessing Participatory, Community-Based Development**

To what extent did your organization follow a community-based, participatory model of development? Why? In what way did the form, level, and composition of participation affect the degree to which your organization met its goals? Who participates? Who is left out or excluded? Why? To what degree did you organization’s activities built the capacity of community actors and organizations to advance development goals? Individually? Collectively?

Based on your experiences and research, what do you see as the strengths and limitations of community-based, participatory development? To what extent are these approaches scalable? Under what conditions? What are the implications for international development work?

**Revisiting Power and Possibilities for Social Change**

What role did power play in producing and reproducing poverty in the communities in which you worked? To what extent did your organization work within the existing power structure and to what extent did it seek to change power relationships in the community? Why? To what extend did this choice affect the degree of change that was possible within the community?

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 is Development? How do You Know if Development is Occurring?**

Finally, back to the most fundamental questions: what is development? After your work in the developing world, how would you answer the question, what is development? Think back on the economic, human capabilities and rights based approaches. What should be the highest priority? Why? How does that differ from what you thought before your field experience and field research? Given your definition, how should we evaluate whether development is occurring? What are the most important indicators? How would you assess them?