What is “Development”?  
*An Introduction to International Development and Poverty in the Era of Globalization*

Gallatin School of Individualized Study  
New York University

COURSE DESCRIPTION

From Bono to indigenous community activists in the Amazon, everyone is talking about “development.” The term, however, means different things to different people and has a long and contentious history. This class provides an introduction to the study of international development and poverty from an interdisciplinary perspective. To begin, Part 1 examines the different definitions, measures, and representations of the state of development and poverty, from conventional economic metrics like Gross Domestic Product to notions of “development as freedom.” Building on this, Part 2 then explores the histories and actors involved in the process of development. Of central importance here will be a consideration of the legacies of colonialism as well as the central development institutions implicated in the Development project over the last 60 years. Finally, Part 3 will explore some of the key problems, debates, and strategies, in contemporary development including: population debates; urbanization; free trade; and the politics of food and famine. The goal is to provide a clear sense of the chief objects, processes, actors, and policies of international development in order to grapple with the important stakes held by these different approaches to combating global poverty. Readings will include: Amartya Sen, Joseph Stiglitz, and Jeff Sachs.
REQUIREMENTS

- **Class attendance and participation.** Students are expected to read all assigned materials, attend all classes, and participate actively in discussions. If you are unable to attend class, you must let me know and come to my office hours that week. If you miss a film screened in class, you must view the film in your own time. You will only be allowed one unexcused absence during the semester without penalty. Consistent lateness will be penalized as well.

- **Short writing assignments.** The course will be centered on five short writing assignments engaging the readings with further analysis and research. Each essay should be no more than 2 pages long (double-spaced, 12 point font).

  1. **Measuring Development:** Compare and contrast two to three different measures of development (e.g. GDP, HDI, “development as freedom”), exploring the different bases of the models and their implications for policy. **Due Thursday, September 29th.**

  2. **Representing Poverty and Development:** Find an image in the mainstream media that purports to represent international development or poverty. Critique the representation using Stuart Hall’s *The Rest and the West.* **Due Thursday, October 13th.**

  3. **Agencies of Development:** Drawing on Thomas’ “Agencies of Development” chapter, choose one agency of development (World Bank, IMF, UN agency, an NGO, or State). Briefly overview and critique the institution’s history and contemporary role. **Due Thursday, November 3rd.**

  4. **Country Profile:** Choose a country in the “global South.” Drawing on outside research and statistics, provide a brief history of the country’s development trajectory and paint a picture of the contemporary state of development and poverty. **Due Tuesday, November 22nd.**

  5. **Contemporary Development Problems and Strategies:** Using the assigned readings, critically analyze one of the themes in Part 3. **Due Tuesday, December 6th.**

- **Final Group Project and Presentations:** Each student will be assigned to a group with two other classmates. After choosing a development debate/problem not covered in Part 3, during the course of the semester, you will conduct outside research on the subject matter and prepare a class presentation and written project report due at the end of the semester. **Presentations: December 13th and 15th. Write-up due December 16th.**

**Course Grades:**

- Attendance/Participation: 20%
- Short papers: 50%
- Final group project: 30%
OFFICE HOURS and CONTACT

I will hold office hours on Wednesday afternoons from 1-3pm in my office. These will be either on a first come, first serve, or there will be a sign-up sheet on my door.

Email: I am best reached by email at rcf2@nyu.edu. Although I do encourage you to stay in touch with issues of concern, I also urge you to be considerate with your emails. I will do my best to reply within 24 hours.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website [www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html] for a full description of the academic integrity policy.

READINGS and FILMS

Required readings for the course are listed in the weekly syllabus. Background readings are also listed, if you desire to do further research. All readings are either available through Blackboard, in the library’s reserves, or at the NYU Bookstore.

Course Books


Related Films

The following is a list of some films relevant to the course. They will either be screened in class, or you are encouraged to watch them in your own time. Whenever possible, they have been placed on reserve at the library.

- *Bamako* (2007)
- *Between Midnight and the Rooster’s Crow* (2005)
- *Big Spuds, Little Spuds* (1999)
- *Life and Debt*
- *Maquilapolis*
- *Our Friends at the Bank* (1997)
- *Small Fortunes*
What is “Development”? Syllabus

Blue Gold (2009)
Cash Flow Fever (2005)
China Blue (2005)
Commanding Heights (2006)
Crude: The Real Price of Oil (2009)
Dam/Age (2002)
Darwin’s Nightmare (2004)
Drowned Out
Food, Inc.
FLOW: For Love of Water (2008)
Garbage Dreams (2009)
Health for Sale (2007)
Leaving Home for Sugar
Q2P (2006)

Still Life (2006)
Tambogrande (2006)
The End of Poverty? (2009)
T-Shirt Travels (2001)
The Price of Aid
The Price of Sugar (2007)
The perfect famine (2002)
The Other Side of Outsourcing (2004)
The Quiet Revolution
Wasteland (2009)
White King, Red Rubber, Black Death
The Women’s Bank of Bangladesh
What is “Development”?
An Introduction to International Development and Poverty in the Era of Globalization

COURSE SYLLABUS

PART 1: DEFINING, MEASURING, AND REPRESENTING DEVELOPMENT

Week 1: Introduction: The State of Global Development and Poverty
[September 6, 8]


Week 2: Measuring and Modeling Development
[September 13, 15]


PART 2: HISTORIES AND ACTORS OF DEVELOPMENT

Week 3: Colonialism and its Legacies: The Origins of the Third World
[September 20, 22]

- Henry Bernstein “Colonialism, Capitalism and Development” in Poverty and Development Into the 21st Century (241-270) [Bboard]

Film: *The End of Poverty* (part)

**Week 4: Decolonization and the Development Project**
[September 27, 29]

• McMichael. Chapter 2 (41-84). [Text]

• Thomas and Allen. 2000. “Agencies of Development.” Chapter 9 in *Poverty and Development*. (pp. 189-216) [Bboard]

Film: *The End of Poverty* (part)

**Week 5: Neoliberal Development and Globalization**
[October 4, 6]

• McMichael (Chapter 5 and part of Chapter 6: 117-145) [Text]


*Additional reading:*

Film: *Life and Debt*

**Week 6: Revisionist Neoliberalism, the Rise of NGOs, and Social Movements**
[October 11, 13]

• McMichael, Chapter 8 “Global Development and its Countermovements.” Pp. 231-272. [Text]

• Mohan, G. and K. Stokke, ‘Participatory Development and Empowerment: The Dangers of Localism,’ Third World Quarterly. [Bboard]


Films: Drowned Out; Tambogrande

PART 3: CURRENT PROBLEMS, DEBATES, AND STRATEGIES

Week 7: The Millennium Development Goals
[Oct. 18, 20]


Week 8: Population Debates
[October 25, 27]


• Sen, Amartya. 1990. More than 100 million women are missing, NYRB 1990. [Bboard]

Week 9: Sustainable Development and Climate Change
[November 1, 3]


Additional Reading:


Week 10: Debating (Free) Trade
[November 8, 10]

- McMichael, Philip. 2008. Chapter 6 (pp. 166-190).


Additional Reading:

**Week 11: Urbanization**
[November 15, 17]


**Film:** *Welcome to Lagos*

**Week 12: The Politics of Food and Famine**
[November 22 (Thanksgiving holiday)]


**Additional Reading:**

**Films:** *The Perfect Famine; The Price of Aid; Food, Inc.*

**Week 13: The Feminization of Labor and Poverty**
[November 29, December 1]


**Film:** *Small Fortunes*
Additional Reading:


Week 14: The Art of Global Citizenship: The way forward…

[December 6, 8]


Additional reading:


Week 15: Final (Group) Presentations

[December 13, 15]