In this writing seminar we will examine how we see poverty in the non-West and how we act on what we see. Our goals will be twofold: first, we will examine images of “the poor” and poverty across literature, film, and activism. We will ask, are those designated as “poor” passive spectators of the processes they encounter, or are they active participants in the struggle to transform their lives? Second, we will examine how popular conceptualizations of poverty influence forms of “poverty action,” such as development, aid, and welfare. While our focus will be on narratives in India, the themes of the course will be relevant to the broader global South. Throughout the course, we will also reflect on how poverty and poverty action in the “non-west” is connected to our lives in the West. We will read from Katherine Boo’s *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*, Aravind Adiga’s novel *The White Tiger*, as well as the writings of activists and development practitioners. We will watch films such as Danny Boyle’s “Slumdog Millionaire” and the Oscar award-winning documentary “Born into Brothels.” Students will work through these texts, films, and issues in class discussion and a series of formal and informal writing assignments.

**Learning Goals**

1. To critically analyze representations and discourses of poverty and the poor in the non-West.

2. To closely read and analyze texts across genres, including fiction, non-fiction narrative, journalism, and ethnography.

3. To construct a clear argument in writing supported by textual evidence.

4. To critically reflect on personal practice and aspirations for poverty action and social change at home and in the “non-West.”

**Readings**

The following books have been ordered at NYU Bookstore (726 Broadway). All other readings will be posted in the Resources Folder of our NYU Classes site. Please print out readings and bring them to class. You are required to come to class having read all the assigned texts and prepared for discussion.

**Films**

1. “Slumdog Millionaire” Fox Searchlight Movies, 2008

**Formal Writing Assignments**

1. Write a 3 page *book review* for the book *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*. Details will be given closer to the assignment.

2. Write a 3-5 page *analytical essay* on the “slum.” Compare and contrast how the “slum” features across class readings and films discussed thus far.

3. Write a 3-5 page *position paper*. You will be given a proposition relevant to controversies in international aid and development. For this paper you will be asked to defend or refute the assigned proposition.

4. Write a 6-8 page *critical essay* assessing a poverty action program (a campaign, an NGO, a non-profit) of your choice. You will be asked to discuss the organization’s methodology, challenges, and efficacy.

**Informal Writing Assignments**

Throughout the course we will partake in a range of informal writings assignments including response papers and in class freewrites. These will be assigned as we proceed through the course.

**Participation**

This course is a discussion-driven course. Most classes will include small group work, pair based tasks, and all class discussion. You are expected to participate all forms of discussion. Each of us will be responsible in creating a productive and engaged learning environment. Please turn off all cell phone devices in class.

**Grading**

I will base your grade on your class participation, the quality of your essays, your completion of informal writing assignments, and your responses to the work of others, both written and oral. Each draft of your essay matters, though it will not get a separate grade. Presentation of essays (i.e. grammar, proof-reading, citation format) as well as style, form, and substance counts.

Formal Writing Assignments: 60%
Informal Writing Assignments: 20%
Participation: 20%
Attendance

If, due to illness, emergency, or religious holiday, you cannot attend class, please be in touch with me directly as soon as possible so that you can be prepared for the next class. Please be aware that more than two unexcused absences will jeopardize your course grade.

Academic Integrity and a Note on Plagiarism

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 for a full description of the academic integrity policy. www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html
WEEKLY READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS
This may be subject to change as we move through the semester. You will be notified of any changes.

I. THEORIZING THE POOR

WEEK 1

September 2, Tuesday
Introduction to course

September 4, Thursday
Informal Writing Assignment Due: Write a 1-2-page reflection narrative explaining your relationship to the non-west.


WEEK 2

September 9, Tuesday
Bring to class: A short newspaper article, image, photograph, advertisement or other form of representation that depicts poverty or the poor in the global South.

Reading:
- Baudelaire, Charles (1869) “The Eyes of the Poor.”

September 11, Thursday
Reading:

II. EVERYDAY LIFE AND REPRESENTATIONS OF POVERTY

WEEK 3

September 16, Tuesday
Reading: Behind the Beautiful Forevers, Prologue, Part I and II

September 18, Thursday
Reading: Behind the Beautiful Forevers, Part III
WEEK 4
September 23, Tuesday
Reading: Behind the Beautiful Forevers, Part IV, Author’s Note

September 25, Thursday
Due: Bring a hard copy of your book review outline.

Reading: Select book reviews
In-Class Essay Preparation

WEEK 5
September 30, Tuesday
Draft of Essay 1: Bring a hard copy to class.
Workshop Drafts in Class.

October 2, Thursday
Reading:

WEEK 6
October 7, Tuesday
Final Essay 1 Due. Submit in my mailbox by 12 pm.

Reading: White Tiger, Chapters 1-4

October 9, Thursday
Reading: White Tiger, Chapter 4-8

POVERTY ACTION: AID, DEVELOPMENT, AND ITS CONTROVERSIES

WEEK 7
Draft of Essay 2 Due Wed October 15. Post on NYU Classes by 12pm.

October 14, Tuesday – NO CLASS

October 16, Thursday
Workshop drafts in Class.

WEEK 8
October 21, Tuesday
Reading: Nicolas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn’s Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity (Select chapters)

October 23, Thursday
Reading: Tori Hogan’s Beyond Good Intentions: A Journey into the Realities of International Aid (Select chapters)

WEEK 9
October 28, Tuesday
Final Essay 2 Due. Submit in my mailbox by 12 pm.
In-class film: Born into Brothels

October 30, Thursday
Reading:

WEEK 10
November 4, Tuesday

November 6, Thursday
Reading: To be Announced

WEEK 11

November 11, Tuesday
In-Class Essay Workshop


November 13, Thursday
Readings:
WEEK 12
November 18, Tuesday
Reading: Playing with Fire: Feminist Thought and Activism through Seven Lives in India. Introduction and Chapter 1-3.

November 20, Thursday
Reading: Playing with Fire: Feminist Thought and Activism through Seven Lives in India, Chapters 3-5.

WEEK 13
November 25, Tuesday
Reading: Playing with Fire: Feminist Thought and Activism through Seven Lives in India, Chapters 6 and Postscript.

DUE: In preparation for the final essay, bring the name and some information of a poverty action program and be ready to share with class.

November 27, Thursday – NO CLASS

COMING BACK WEST/NORTH: SEEING POVERTY AT HOME

WEEK 14

December 2, Tuesday

December 4, Thursday

WEEK 15

December 9, Tuesday
To Be Announced [Possible Guest Speaker]

December 11 Thursday
*Essay 4 Final Draft Due*
Course Reflection