

Syllabus

FALL 2018

Humanitarianism, Development, Peace, and Conflict.



Understanding the nature, roots, and implications of conflict in the context of development and aid work.

Course overview

The purpose of this course is to expose students to the theory and practice of humanitarian aid, peace-building, and development as it takes place during or after violent conflict. It focuses on the work of international organizations (including international NGOs, multi-lateral organizations such as the United Nations, human rights groups and others) working in conflict-affected areas or on issues of conflict. The course consists of approximately 50% taught material, and 50% case approach, with classes alternating between taught classes and case study classes. The cases build on material in the taught classes and

illustrate the practical application of theoretical approaches.

Objectives

When we're done, you should be able to:

- Understand how the international relief, development, and human rights system is structured, and the kinds of skills and professions that are required.
- Understand the landscape of theories of conflict and development, their critiques, and be able to articulate, justify, and criticize their opinions about approaches to poverty reduction, human rights protection and peace-building.

- Be familiar with several real world examples of organizations working 'in' and 'on' conflict, and the kinds of practical obstacles and dilemmas they present.

Instructor contact:

Nick Macdonald
npm@uoregon.edu
971 231 7839

Office hours and contact:

I am based in Portland, and come to Eugene once a week. I don't keep regular office hours in Eugene, but I am always delighted to meet with students. The best times for me are before or after class, or by phone or Skype during the week. Please don't be shy about scheduling time to chat! For anyone who wants to, I'm happy to connect on LinkedIn - this is a work based social network that is used extensively to network in the aid world - think of it like Facebook for grownups. If you want to connect and can't find me then drop me an email.

Week-by-week

Week 1- Introduction: Humanitarianism, development, peace, and conflict.

Why has the development and relief community found itself working in conflict environments so much in the past 20 years? What does this look like in practice?



Week 2 - Case study 1 - Humanitarian intervention and peacekeeping operations - Bosnia and Herzegovina case study.

As war rages on the borders of Europe in the early 1990s the international community struggles with how to frame the conflict, whether to respond with humanitarianism or military force, and how to stop the violence in the Former Yugoslavia.

Week 3 - Coercive humanitarianism.

We'll examine the use of military power for humanitarian reasons, both unilaterally and as part of multilateral forces. The advantages



and pitfalls of this practice.

Week 4 - Case study 2 - Genocide in Rwanda.



As the UN peacekeeping operation struggles in the face of overwhelming violence, the humanitarian agencies wrestle with the moral issues of providing assistance in the midst of a genocide.

Week 5 - Transitional administrations.

How and why the UN and other organizations step in to administer territories and countries that have fallen under international jurisdiction.

Week 6 - Case study 3 - Kosovo - humanitarianism and human rights.

At the height of the popularity of the idea of 'humanitarian war', with human rights organizations calling for lessons from the failed UN military intervention in Bosnia, NATO embarks on a military campaign in Serbia designed to assist Kosovo Albanians.



Humanitarian agencies deal with the resulting refugee crisis and humanitarian issues, but some suggest that the dream of using military might to address humanitarian and human rights issues effectively dies in Kosovo.

Week 7 - Humanitarianism and development assistance in war.

Why has the development and relief community found itself working in conflict environments so much in the past 20 years?

What practical and philosophical problems



does this pose? What tools and approaches to humanitarian agencies adopt to cope?

Week 8 - Case study 4 - International intervention and war in Afghanistan.

For those who have been working in Afghanistan for decades the US coalition is a defining moment in many ways. For some they are just one more invading army, for others they are the last best hope for peace and development, some view them as crusading imperialists, and others try to tread a painful path of maintaining 'independence and neutrality' when their main donors are also belligerent powers.

Week 9 - 'Natural' disasters and war - Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Pakistan.

Sri Lanka, Aceh, and Pakistan were all embroiled in decades long civil wars when the 2005 Indian Ocean Tsunami hit - why did the



peace processes turn out so differently for each?

Week 10 - Conclusions, overflow, extra issues.

We'll wrap up, deal with any outstanding issues, questions, and special requests.

Grading

How do I do well in this class?

In a perfect world we wouldn't bother with this, but unfortunately I have to assign a grade to each student.

I do that based on three data points (which are scored slightly differently for graduate and undergraduate students).

1. Participation

To get a basic pass, you should show up, having done the reading, and contribute something to the class discussion that shows you've done the reading. You'll also need to complete the weekly reading journal. This is a one to two paragraph email everyone should send me every week in which you tell me what you found most interesting or challenging about the reading that week.

To do well I want you to contribute something to class that advances the group's understanding of the material and shows your deeper mastery of it.

2. Policy essay

This is an individual essay in which you write. It should be about a policy issue that an organization operating in the intersection of the issues of aid, development, conflict and peace experiences. It can be pretty much anything you like (talk to me first about it!), but it's going to be easier for you to focus on something we deal with in class. Past topics included: 'Save the Children's child protection policies in complex emergencies', and 'ICRC's use of armed protection in conflict environments'.

The purpose of the essay is to give you a chance to demonstrate your ability to describe the issues that led the organization in question to adopt the stance it did, and the pros and cons of it.

3. Group proposal project

This is a project done in a group, and it is written in the form of a funding or action proposal to carry out some kind of intervention that will address a conflict / development related need. Your group might write a proposal to a donor for assistance work in a refugee camp, a proposal for military action to end a war, or pretty much anything else that gives you a chance to demonstrate that you can identify a problem, craft an appropriate solution, and make the case for the right actors to take action. Past projects included a proposal for compressive state-building in Somalia, military intervention

in the DRC, and a proposal for water solutions in conflict affected camps.

The difference between passing and getting high grades.

People take this course for a variety of reasons, and with a wide range of backgrounds, and they take a variety of approaches. These are three levels that I think many people engage with the course at:

'Wading' - focussing on the history, the facts, and the main characters and ideas of the topics, 'waders' might assume that textbooks, articles, and the professor are mutually reinforcing, telling fundamentally the same story. This approach is concerned fundamentally with understanding **what** happens in the kinds of situations that concern us.

'Snorkeling' - if you have a grasp of the basic events and actors, you might want to take a closer look beneath the surface. You might notice that this field is a conversation between differing and sometimes contradictory perspectives. You'll notice these inconsistencies and ideological positions, and you'll respectfully challenge the assumptions and biases through lively debate. Snorkelers are interested in **how** and **why** things happen the way they do.

'Scuba divers' - if you're already aware of the controversies and debates you might want to go deeper into critical analysis, actively seeking alternative sources, interpretations, and voices. You won't take any of the course's structure or content as natural or inevitable, and you'll spot (and fill!) the gaps, as well as identifying and challenging the assumptions and biases baked into the course format. At this level you'll be understanding the important principles at play, and the contested understandings of events.

At undergraduate level 'wading' will get you a solid pass, you'll need to be 'snorkeling' at least a little to do well. At graduate level I expect you to be snorkeling comfortably, and to excel you'll need to scuba dive!