Humanitarianism

The idea of humanitarian action - the desire to save lives and reduce suffering - is two centuries old, but over the last two decades it has undergone rapid change. This course examines three dimensions of humanitarianism that comprise its three principal sections. It begins with a consideration of what is humanitarianism, highlighting its changing and somewhat open-ended meaning. It then proceeds to examine some of the causes of the expansion of the humanitarian system, tracing how shifts in war, economies, and ethics have shaped the forms and kinds of global interventions that are designed to reduce unnecessary suffering. The third dimension considers whether the impressive changes in the scope, scale, and significance of humanitarian action had an effect on those on the ground. Are humanitarian organizations better able to save and protect the lives of those at risk? If not, what sorts of impacts have there been? And, can humanitarian organizations change to deliver on their promise to emancipate individuals from the roots of suffering? These issues are particularly notable in the context of postconflict reconstruction. We conclude by examining the relationship between humanitarianism and world order.

Students in this course will develop a better understanding of the current themes and debates in the field of humanitarianism, will explore different hypotheses regarding the causes and consequences of humanitarian action, and use critical policy analysis to gain a better understanding of the effects of humanitarian actions.

Requirements. All students must come to class prepared to contribute through discussion - which requires you to have read and reflected on the materials assigned for that class session. You have several writing assignments in this class.

Readings. There is a fair bit of reading in this course. You must do the reading for each week before coming to seminar. There are several books, articles, and essays assigned for the course. We will be reading all or most of the following books, which are available at the university bookstore:

Michael Barnett and Tom Weiss, eds. 2008. Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. These readings will be available on WebCT.

Office Hours.

Section I: Introduction

February 18 Introduction

Why Care?
Read the following in Deen Chatterjee, The Ethics of Assistance (NY: Cambridge University Press): Peter Singer, Outsiders: Our Obligations to those Beyond Our Borders. and Richard Arenson, Moral Limits on the Demands for Beneficence.

February 25 The Roots of Humanitarianism


March 4 Humanitarianism: Its Goals and Principles


Section II: The Expansion of Humanitarianism

March 11 Forces of Destruction

Duffield: chapters 1-6.

March 18 Forces of Production


March 25 Forces of Salvation

Tony Lang, ed. 2003. Just Intervention, Georgetown University Press. Read the following: Nardin, The Moral Basis for Humanitarian Intervention; Chesterman, Hard Cases Make Bad Law; Wheeler, Humanitarian Intervention After September

April 1  Are Humanitarian Organizations All Alike? Bureaucratic Culture, Institutional Survival, and Doing Good or Doing Well?


Section III: Humanitarianism in Practice

April 8  Emergency Relief

Fiona Terry. 2002. *Condemned to Repeat?*

April 22  Darfur: What Should be Done?


Policy Paper: Should there be an intervention in Darfur?

April 29  Integrated Missions


May 6  Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Democracy

May 13

May 20 Humanitarianism and Human Rights
Englund: *Prisoners of Freedom: Human Rights and the African Poor*

**May 27 Final Exam**

**Humanitarianism and Development**

Bornstein: *The Spirit of Development*

**Humanitarianism in a Western World Order**


*Institutional Design Paper Due.*