Economic Politics of Development

Class Code: POL-UA 9994

Instructor Details: Adam D. Dubin, MA, JD

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Mon. / Wed. 2:35 – 3:55

Class Details: Economic Politics of Development

Class Description: Welcome to Economic Politics of Development. Millions of lives around the world are impacted by poverty, natural disasters and other crises every year. Frequently, the people affected tend to live in countries that lack the autonomous capacities to pursue development without the assistance of international development agencies, foreign governments and NGOs. The development of a country requires a multi-layered approach, taking into account the diversity of failures, the particularities of country related issues and, in most cases, the lack of development that already existed in the period preceding the crisis.

Economic Politics of Development explores how countries develop and looks at the role of the international community in contributing to development. This course introduces students to a cross section of academic topics relevant to development, including, but not limited to, economic development, international relations, law and rule of law, human rights and gender studies.

In exploring the role of international organizations and governments’ contribution to development, students will be introduced to the work of the different United Nations agencies, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), as well as its Spanish counterpart, Agencia Espanola de Cooperacion para el Desarrollo. A partial focus of the class will be the role of the Spanish government and Spanish NGOs in international development, and will include talks by officials from Spanish NGOs involved in development work.

The course will be a combination of lectures and discussion. Students will be assigned nightly readings, a portion of which will be theory based, but much of which will also include publications by organizations such as the United Nations, World Bank and USAID, which provide a practical perspective on development plans and strategies in specific countries. The professor will lecture on the readings and additional materials not assigned. The lecture will be
interactive and students will be encouraged to contribute to the professor’s discussions of the topic.

At the start of the first class, each student will be assigned a developing or post-crisis country (more information to follow). Students will be asked to come to assigned classes prepared to discuss the needs of their country in connection to the class topic (e.g. gender, rule of law and economic development). For example, we will discuss the relationship between gender and development. Students assigned to, for instance, Haiti, will be asked to discuss how gender and development theories could be turned into practice in Haiti, taking into account the particularities of the country.

The discussion portion of the class will vary considerably from class to class, but will include debates on development issues, discussion of theory, evaluation of program plans, design of development projects, etc. Students will sometimes be assigned to work in groups, and the final project will include a group component. The purpose of relying upon groups is to help foster and nurture the collaborative and interdisciplinary spirit that work in this field demands.

In addition, the class will include a series of guest lectures by individuals involved in the development field. The list of guest speakers is included in the syllabus.

**Desired Outcomes:**

- To provide students with a comprehensive exposure to a cross section of theoretical and practical subjects relevant to international development and countries in crisis, and have students think about, understand and discuss these issues in a broad, critical and interdisciplinary context.

- To appreciate the intellectual origins of international development and to explore contemporary debates in related areas of international development, such as gender, human rights and rule of law.

- To help students develop their ability to analyze complex topics and issues, and work from theoretical and practical perspectives to respond to these issues (both individually and in groups).

- To develop students’ ability to organize and present large amounts of information in a confident manner.

- To have students learn to evaluate the effectiveness of development programs and projects, taking away from these exercises strong analytical skills and a critical thinking ability that can be applied to other disciplines.
**Assessment Components:**

Participation (25%): This grade will take into account students’ substantive participation, which includes providing critical analysis and discussion of issues, asking substantive questions, interacting with guest speakers, and coming to class prepared to talk about the country they represent.

In class exercises (15%): Students will periodically be given an in-class writing hypothetical or other exercise, which will range from evaluating the work of an NGO in a country to proposing a strategy to deal with a specific development problem (individually and in groups), drawing on themes and issues discussed in class.

Midterm Assignment: 25%

Final Projects: 35%

**Grading Policy:**

Students’ grades will be determined in accordance with the aforementioned assessment components. Grades for written assignments will be determined not only by the substantive quality of the work, but also by their attention to grammar, research and proper drafting techniques.

The participation grade will take into account not only the frequency with which students speak, but also the quality of their participation and the extent to which I can see that students have read, rely on and comprehend the material.

**Attendance Policy:**

Students are allowed two excused absences. For each absence beyond the two excused absences (unless approved), students’ grades will be reduced by a half a letter. Whenever possible, students should endeavor to communicate to me an anticipated absence, even if only an hour before class. Because group activities will be organized in advance of the class, please email me as soon as you know you will be absent.

I understand that emergency situations come up. In such an event, please communicate with me as soon as possible and we will plan accordingly.
Late Submission of work:

Late work will not be accepted unless previous arrangements have been made with me.

Plagiarism Policy:

At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community.

**Plagiarism:** presenting others' work without adequate acknowledgement of its source, as though it were one’s own. Plagiarism is a form of fraud. We all stand on the shoulders of others, and we must give credit to the creators of the works that we incorporate into products that we call our own. Some examples of plagiarism:

- a sequence of words incorporated without quotation marks
- an unacknowledged passage paraphrased from another's work
- the use of ideas, sound recordings, computer data or images created by others as though it were one’s own
- submitting evaluations of group members’ work for an assigned group project which misrepresent the work that was performed by another group member
- altering or forging academic documents, including but not limited to admissions materials, academic records, grade reports, add/drop forms, course registration forms, etc.

For further information, students are encouraged to check [www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html](http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html)
Class Outline

Please Note: Not all readings listed below will be assigned. As we begin the topic, I will assign specific readings. The other readings are texts that I will discuss in class but which you are not required to read.

Topic 1: Introduction to International Development

This first class will provide students with an introduction to the topic of international development and discuss the important themes, trends and issues that the class will explore in greater detail throughout the semester.

United Nations Millennium Development Goals, available at:
http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/


Topic 2: Economic Development and Poverty Dynamics

How do poor countries improve? What is the difference between someone who is poor and chronically poor? How should policies and projects address the complexities of poverty, economic development and well-being? How do researchers collect information about the poor? This section of the course will address these questions and look at how international development experts respond to the complexity of economic development issues found in developing countries.

**Guest Speaker: David Lawson, PhD., Development Economist and Professor at the University of Manchester, England.**


Adam Dubin, Assigned Chapters in *Exploring Poverty Dynamics through Oral Histories and the Sustainable Livelihoods Method*, Dissertation 2005

**Activity: Isolating Correlates of Poverty and Developing Effective Measures.** In this class we will go over the story of Ellen, a New York City based sex-worker who I interviewed. Ellen is in her 60’s and has been trapped in poverty and the brutal world of sex-work since she was 18. She has been unable to escape. We will compare her story to Kat’s story. Kat was also a sex-worker for many years but escaped both sex work and poverty. We will go through the interviews and apply a theoretical framework to understand the different correlates and dynamics of poverty, specifically, why some people are stuck in poverty while others are able to escape.

**Topic 3: Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation Programs**

| The lack of resources and wealth of a country dictate, to a large extent, the level of assistance governments can provide to a population. This section will look at the social policies and programs in place in developing countries to help the poor, including the much talked about system of microcredits. Students will analyze the effectiveness of different social programs. |


## Topic 4: Rule of Law

Rule of law refers to the system of laws and legal institutions available in a country. When a country lacks rule of law, criminals go unpunished, corruption is rampant and victims, usually the poor, are left without any recourse. The lack of rule of law in a country is a major impediment to development. This section will explore issues surrounding rule of law development and look at how the international community is improving rule of law in certain countries.

**Guest Speaker, Anees Ahmed, Former United Nations Senior Prosecutor in Cambodia and current United Nations Head of Chambers for the International Court for Rwanda.**


### a. The Use of International Tribunals in Post-Conflict Countries


### b. Country and Program Specific Discussion


## Topic 5: The Impact of Disasters and Crisis on a Country

This section of the course will look at the intersection between development and crisis. As countries such as Haiti and Rwanda seek to recover from large-scale crises and disasters, whether man made or natural, they are required to develop policies and implement projects that meet the specific and distinguishable needs of crisis countries. We will take a look at what distinguishes crisis countries from non-crisis countries and pay special attention to their distinct development needs.
**Guest Speaker:** A representative of a Spanish NGO which deals with crisis and disasters in developing countries will speak to the class about the NGOs involvement in post-crisis development projects.


Activity: Discussion with guest speaker

**Topic 6: Economic Growth in Conflict Countries**

We will answer the very simple (not really) question: How can policies be developed to help conflict countries grow?

**Guest Speaker:** A representative from CITPAX, a Spanish NGO which works on stabilization projects in crisis countries.


Activity: *Crisis and Development Planning*. We will look at a specific country and based on the reading begin to develop a “plan of action” for galvanizing economic growth in this post-conflict country, whose GDP and overall growth trajectory has suffered since the end of the crisis.

**Topic 7: Human Rights and Development**

Human rights are not only important from a legal perspective; respect for human rights is also positively correlated to improved development. We will discuss a “Rights Based Approach” to development and look at its relationship to economic growth.
Guest Speaker: Esteban Beltran, Director, Amnesty International, Spain


For activity, please familiarize yourself with the following legislative instruments listed here: http://www.righttofood.org/new/html/WhatRighttofood.html

**Topic 8: Private Sector Business and Development**

This class will explore the link between business and development. We will focus on three questions: Is private business detrimental to development? Can business interests and development interests co-exist? How can business contribute to development?


**Topic 9: Sporting Events (and large development projects) and Development**

While major sporting events such as the Olympics and Commonwealth Games often bring billions of dollars into a country’s economy, they can also be disastrous for the poor and vulnerable. This unit will explore the impact sporting events have on disadvantaged communities and look at ways in which the negative effects can be mitigated.


**Debate** Question: Should developing countries forgo opportunities to host large sporting events?

Writing: One page position paper. More detail to be given.

**Topic 10: Governance and Institution Building**

This section of the class will cover the issue of governance and institution building. A functioning government is essential to development and long-term prosperity. Without a central government, how can individuals receive basic services? Will companies invest in countries where contract disputes will not be fairly litigated?


Activity: We will discuss the steps necessary to begin developing good governance and institution building. We will use Timor L’Este, an island in the Pacific, as an example to build off of in our discussion.
**Topic 11: Access to Justice**

One of the biggest obstacles for the poor and disadvantaged in developing countries is accessing the justice system. Without having fair and affordable access to lawyers and the court system, the poor and marginalized are left without any rights. In countries such as Haiti, women are frequently raped and left without legal assistance; in Cambodia, the poor often lose their land to wealthy developers. People in such situations often have no form of recourse. This part of the class will explore obstacles to improving access to justice and the effect it has on development.


**Activity.** We will watch the movie Gacaca. Gacaca refers to a community-based court system in Rwanda which is used to try low level perpetrators of the Rwanda Genocide. We will discuss its effectiveness.

**Video/Activity: Gacaca.** This video is about local systems of justice set up in Rwanda to deal with the thousands of individuals who took part in the Genocide in the 1990’s. Following the movie, we will have a debate about the effectiveness of this system of justice and discuss whether it brings true justice to those who were affected by the genocide.

**Writing: Is Gacaca an effective form of justice for victims of the genocide? Please write no more than three typed pages**
Topic 12: Gender and Development

One of the most critical factors that will determine which path a developing country takes is the extent to which gender concerns are brought to the forefront of the development process. For development to be successful, addressing issues of gender must be a priority from the very beginning.

Guest Speaker: Paloma Soria, Spanish Attorney at Women’s Link Worldwide (WLW). WLW is a Madrid based NGO which focuses on the protection of human rights of women around the world. Ms. Soria has worked on human rights projects in Africa, South America and the Caribbean.

a. Protection of Women and Girls in International Law


Other international legislation (will be handed out)


b. The Relationship Between Gender and Development


c. Gender and Violence in Post-Earthquake Haiti


d. Incorporating Gender into Program Development

**Topic 13: Working in the Development Field**

I will spend part of this class discussing ways that students can become involved in development work, both in their home countries as well as in developing countries.

**Last Two Classes**
We will dedicate two full class periods to final presentations.