

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES 393-SA
Development in the Global Context:
Participation, Power and Social Change

Instructor:

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Course Description

This course combines intensive classroom and structured experiential learning to examine international development in the “global south.” The course sets contemporary development practice in the context of fundamental debates over the nature and goals of international development, the causes of global poverty, and the history of development, with particular attention to the relationships between power, participation and social change. In addition, students will be introduced to the political, social, economic, cultural and geographic characteristics of their specific host country, with consideration to how these factors may influence their community-based work. Overall, the course seeks to give students the intellectual, emotional and practical readiness and frameworks to pursue and reflect critically on their field experience and in-country work. Through a series of written assignments, students will analyze the structural dimensions of global poverty and examine how current trends in development may relate to issues of systems change.

The principles and controversies you are introduced to in this class will help to prepare you to understand the wider contexts in which your hosting organization operates, and the wider structural drivers of the challenges faced in the communities in which you will learn and work. Written assignments will encourage you to reflect and explore fundamental theoretical questions and practical considerations in your fieldwork and immersion experience.

After your time abroad, we will reconvene at Northwestern to compare and contrast your field experiences across the program and to contextualize your community development internships within the larger dynamics of development theory and practice. Critical reflection is integral to your study abroad/immersion experience and reintegration process. Among other topics, we will analyze the dynamics of North-South partnerships and discuss alternative pathways to engaging global issues at home and abroad as we look ahead to next steps beyond the program.

Students take this course as part of the Global Engagement Studies Institute (GESI) program. Enrollment is by application only.

***Note:** This syllabus, like culture, is subject to change. If changes are made, students will be emailed the updated syllabus, and it will be updated on the Canvas homepage as well. You can tell which version you are using from the footer on page 1 of the syllabus (ex. v.1, v.2, etc.).

Course Objectives

- To think critically about development concepts and paradigms; analyze theories, policies, and strategies to address global poverty and how they limit or support the potential for social change.
- To examine the social structures, conditions of power and privilege that influence development outcomes and possibilities for social change, including opportunities to examine one's own positionality in these contexts.
- To think critically about one's place and role in global development and social change efforts, while preparing students to work collaboratively, humbly and equitably with community partners.
- To explore the development strategies of GESI's community partners and how they fit into changing development trends, specifically asset-based, participatory and movement-based approaches.

Course Structure and Components

This quarter long course has four integrated components:

- 1) Intensive, one-week pre-departure classroom work at Northwestern.
- 2) Collaboratively develop a community-based project with local partners over eight weeks. Students will work in: Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Ghana, India, Nicaragua, or Uganda.
- 3) Field research and written assignments critically analyzing the central issues and debates in international development based on experience and field research during students' eight-weeks abroad.
- 4) Structured analysis and reflection for three days at Northwestern after fieldwork, drawing on comparisons with students who worked and conducted research in other countries to advance student analysis of core development issues.

Course Materials

All readings and videos are available on the Canvas site for this course. Films can be viewed by clicking on the **Library Media** link in the left hand sidebar of the Canvas website. Please note if you're off campus or using a personal device you must log in to the Northwestern VPN to be able to screen the videos.

The classroom portion of the pre-departure seminar is concentrated and intense. Students are required to have read and viewed listed materials in advance of the relevant class session. **Students are strongly encouraged to have completed the reading and viewing, before they arrive for the pre-departure seminar.** Then you will be in a position to prepare for class sessions by reviewing the course materials and reminding yourself of the arguments and perspectives.

Assignments & Evaluation

The assignments for this course are designed to develop the skills and measure your progress in achieving the learning goals above.

Attendance (10%)

Attendance to all class sessions, language trainings, and small group activities is mandatory. Students may miss one session as an 'unexcused absence' before grades will begin to be affected. Please contact the instructor if you require an excused absence due to illness, family emergency, religious observance, or other issue *in advance* of class session to be missed. Excused absences will not carry any grade penalty.

Participation (40%)

Students are required not only to attend all class sessions, language trainings, and small group discussions and activities, but also to participate *meaningfully*. This class will be taught primarily in seminar style in which the majority of each class session will be devoted to guided, small group discussions and group work. These discussions and assignments are designed to critically interrogate arguments and analytical techniques presented in readings, videos, cases, and class lecture. Much of the learning during the seminar will come from your active participation in these small group discussions and activities are a major component of your course grade.

Each student brings her or his own knowledge, experience, and expertise to the classroom, which enables the entire class to learn about a variety of different ways for thinking about the issues at hand. Therefore, students will not only be graded on their attendance, but more importantly on the significance of their participation. Merely being present in class is not sufficient to do well, since being present does not prove that you have either read/viewed the materials for class that day, or that you have spent time thinking about them and developing your own set of discussion points or questions. Students who attend regularly but who do not participate regularly in the discussion will find that their grade drops dramatically.

To get the greatest benefit from these discussions and activities, it is essential you come to class having completed the readings. **Note:** Any homework assignments for a given class session are mandatory and are part of our participation grade. In the event there is a homework assignment, you are to bring to the homework with you to class, which will be used in small group discussions and activities.

Field Reflection Essays (30%)

We will use your experience in the community and with your project to explore key theoretical and practical questions about international development raised in the pre-departure seminar. You will write two field reflection essays in response to prompts that will ask you to draw on your experiences from your development project, additional field research, and ways you are processing your time in-country. These assignments will also be important source materials for our discussions during the Final Reflection Summit back at Northwestern.

Final Group Reports and Presentations (20%)

Upon returning to Northwestern, each group will write a Final Summit Summary (2-3 pages) describing and analyzing their in-country work. In addition, during the Final Reflection Summit students will make presentations and conduct group work employing conceptual and theoretical tools from the course to analyze and critically assess what they observed.

Grading Philosophy

This course operates on the founding principle that all students should be evaluated by the same criteria. Thus, the instructor actively works to prevent bias in the way that grades are allocated in this class. Therefore, all students, regardless of circumstances, will receive the grade she or he earns in the class.

This is in line with the academic integrity policies at Northwestern. No advantages will be given to any student unless it is extended to the entire class, in the spirit of fairness to all of the members of this class.

In practice this means:

- No bonus points will be provided to individual students who ask for extra work to improve their grade.
- No assignments can be “re-done” if a student is unhappy with the grade received.
- No exceptions will be made for students’ individual circumstances (i.e. lack of good planning on the part of the students in getting assignments completed on time, desire for an extension so that a student can “give the assignment sufficient time” or “do a good job”, etc.). Exceptions and accommodations are possible in case of family emergency, debilitating illness, religious observances, technological or travel issues at the discretion of the instructor.
- Any disputes or concerns about a student’s grade must be brought up by the student *within 1 week of receiving a graded assignment*. This allows for grade issues to be resolved in a timely manner, and to prevent any bias in the allocation of grades at the end of the term.

Students who require accommodations should provide official documentation of necessary accommodations (usually available through AccessibleNU for NU students, other students can provide a letter or email through their academic institution). Additional exceptions can be made for those with extenuating circumstances beyond their control (debilitating illness, family emergency, etc.) or religious observances, on a case-by-case basis.

Letter grades will be assigned based on the total percent of points according to the following scale:

A	=	94-100
A-	=	90-93
B+	=	87-89
B	=	84-86
B-	=	80-83

C+	=	77-79
C	=	74-76
C-	=	70-73
D	=	60-69
F	=	59 or below

Policy on Rounding Grades: Grades will be rounded up to the next highest letter grade only when they exceed .7% under the cut off for the grade. In other words, if your percentage is 93.5, you will receive an A-, but if it is 93.7 or above, it will be rounded up to an A; if your percentage is 89.5 you will receive a B+, but if it is 89.8% you will receive an A-. This policy applies equally to all students, per the grading philosophy outlined above. This policy ensures that there is a standardized cut off that applies equally to all students. Grade reports are available on [CAESAR](#) soon after the end of the quarter. Grades are not given by phone, e-mail, or in person in the SCS office.

Academic Credit

For successful completion of this course, you will earn one course unit credit from Northwestern University, which is equal to 4 quarter hours. This is equal to approximately 3 semester hours of credit. If you need more detailed information, please contact conversion@northwestern.edu or call 312-503-0306.

Course Policies

Completing Course Requirements

Please note that failure to complete any of the assignments for this course will result in a non-passing grade for the course.

Academic Integrity

University policies on academic integrity apply to this course. Cheating (using unauthorized materials or giving unauthorized assistance during an examination or other academic exercise) and plagiarism (using another's ideas or words without acknowledgment) are serious offenses in a university. All quotations and ideas taken from others should be appropriately cited in all written work. For more information on University policy on academic integrity, see [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

Students with Disabilities

If you have specific disabilities that require accommodation, please let the instructor know at the beginning of the course so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. Northwestern is committed to providing appropriate academic accommodations to ensure equal access to fully participate in academic programming. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact AccessibleNU <http://www.northwestern.edu/accessiblenu>, 2122 Sheridan Road, Room 130, (847) 467-5530, accessibleNU@northwestern.edu.

A Note About Computers/Technology

This class/program is run on a democratic model of education in which openness, shared experience and community-building are vitally important. Computers and other technology

(cell/smartphones) tend to break down active participation in class. Texting or surfing during lectures or discussions not only distracts the student involved, but also students in the vicinity, and generally demonstrates a lack of respect for the collaborative environment we aim to foster during this course.

Students are encouraged not to bring laptops to class, unless there are extenuating circumstances that require you use a laptop for taking notes, etc. In the event that you bring a laptop to class, please keep the lid closed unless the device is being used to actively look at a class reading during discussion. Students found to be texting or engaging in non-class-related activities may be publicly asked to close their devices at the instructor's discretion. Subsequent violations will have a negative effect on the student's participation grade.

This is also good practice in preparing for your time abroad where your level of connectivity and access to technology/Wi-Fi, etc. will be limited. Furthermore, while it is understood that laptops may be useful in your everyday fieldwork, assignments, and for communicating with people back home, students are encouraged to examine how technology informs our ability to be present or approachable and may become a barrier to relationship-building in new and familiar contexts.

Inclusive Practices and Guidelines for Dialogue

- 1. Confidentiality.** We want to create an atmosphere for open, honest exchange. What is said in the space stays in the space. What is learned in the space can leave the space.
- 2. Our primary commitment is to learn from each other.** We will listen to each other and not talk at each other. We acknowledge differences amongst us in backgrounds, skills, interests, and values. We realize that it is these very differences that will increase our awareness and understanding through this process.
- 3. Speak from personal experiences.** Use "I" statements to share thoughts and feelings. You cannot speak for your group; just because you are does not mean you understand.
- 4. Do not demean, devalue, or "put down" people** for their experiences, lack of experiences, or difference in interpretation of those experiences.
- 5. Take responsibility for your impact.** Our intentions do not negate the negative impact we may have on someone. We will hold ourselves accountable by challenging ourselves to be quick to sincerely apologize and then open to learning when we do not understand.
- 6. Assume best intentions.** Trust that people are doing the best they can and that everyone is attempting to balance being honest, vulnerable, and imperfect with standards of perfection, mastery, and survival.
- 7. Challenge the idea and not the person.** If we wish to challenge something that has been said, we will challenge the idea or the practice referred to, not the individual sharing this idea or practice.
- 8. Speak your discomfort.** If something is bothering you, please share this with the group. Often our emotional reactions to this process offer the most valuable learning opportunities.
- 9. Monitor your airtime.** Be mindful of taking up much more space than others. On the same note, empower yourself to speak up when others are dominating the conversation.

- 10. Be fully present.** Our time together is precious and limited. Everyone at the table has significant contributions to make and we need you to fully participate with both your head and your heart.
- 11. Redefine the term “Safe Space.”** Conflict and discomfort are often a part of growth. Make sure to differentiate between feelings of discomfort and experiences with conflict and being unsafe.
- 12. Trust the process.** The journey to our destinations offer us the chance to gain insights about ourselves and others. These insights help us grow and change and contribute to our cohesion, offering us opportunities for gratitude and appreciation on the way to goal achievement.

Course Schedule

Pre-Departure Summit

Session 1

Privilege, Power, Marginalization and Social Exclusion

What are the sources of privilege? How is privilege related to power? How do systems of privilege and power produce and reproduce communities of poor and marginalized people? How do systems of privilege and power affect international development efforts? To what extent can participatory community development challenge systems of privilege and power and be a means of “empowerment” of the poor and marginalized by enhancing their involvement in the decisions that affect their lives? How does your own positionality fit into this context? What are the ways that social identity, power and privilege may affect your work in community development spaces and shape your overall experiences at home and abroad?

Readings

- Wendy Hulko, “The Time- and Context-Contingent Nature of Intersectionality and Interlocking Oppressions,” *Affilia*, February 2009, pp. 44-55.
- Courtney Martin, “[The “Third World” Is Not Your Classroom](#),” *The Development Set*, March 7, 2016.

Session 2

Identifying and Analyzing the Causes of Global Poverty

What are causes that produce conditions of poverty? How can we think about the proximate and root causes? What are the differences between individual and structural causes? How do different causes interact and reinforce one another? How can understanding the causes of poverty help guide choices and priorities for how to intervene to create positive social change?

Readings/Films

- Lappé, Frances Moor and Joseph Collins, “Why can’t people feed themselves?” In *Food First: Beyond the Myth of Scarcity*, Lappé and Collins, 1978: 75-85
- Jason Hickel, Joe Brewer and Martin Kirk, “4 Things You Probably Know About Poverty That Bill and Melinda Gates Don’t,” *Fast Company: Co-exist*, February 3, 2015
- (FILM) *Life & Debt* (to view outside of class, prior to Session 2. If you want to view this film off campus, you must connect to the NU VPN in order to do so. Instructions for how to set up the VPN on your personal device [can be found here](#)).

Session 3

Setting the Context: A Brief History of Global Development

This session will situate current issues and approaches to development by providing an overview of major development efforts since WWII. We will trace the evolution of theories of development interventions and legacies over the last 70 years. What are the experiences and legacies of previous development efforts? What are the trends, assumptions and models animating development debates and approaches today?

Readings

- David Bartecchi, "[A Brief History of International Development Theories and Practices](#)," *Village Earth*, July 5, 2015
- Ferguson, James (1994) "The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development' and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho" *The Ecologist* 24(5): 176-181

Session 4

What does Development Mean in Practice? To Whom?

The most fundamental question usually asked in development work is: what do we mean by "development"? Simply put, what are the goals or outcomes being sought through development? What kinds of results have these goals produced on the ground?

In practice, different actors who come together in the name of "development" are at the table for different reasons. This isn't necessarily a "failure" of development, but rather an existential aspect of collaboration. Community members may participate in hopes that there is some spill-over effect that helps them out personally. Foreign development workers may hope their achievements help land them a future professional opportunity. Government agencies may hope their demonstrated "success" in meeting transnational goals will improve their prospects of securing future foreign aid or negotiating more favorable trade deals in the future. They all work together for "development" but it's never purely in the name of the goals stated on paper. In this session, we will learn who the major "players" are in development, what "development" means (particularly in practice) to differently-situated actors, and also whether what was achieved in the name of development was, in fact, "development." This session will largely be lecture-based to provide a solid foundation for students to understand the development system as it operates in practice today.

Readings

- Cornwall, Andrea and Karen Brock (2005) "What do Buzzwords do for Development Policy? A Critical Look at 'Participation,' 'Empowerment' and 'Poverty Reduction'." *Third World Quarterly* 26(7): 1043-1060.
- Green, Maia (2014) "Participating in Development: Projects and Agency in Tanzania", in *The Development State: Aid, Culture and Civil Society in Tanzania*, James Currey Press, pp. 35-55.

Session 5

Your Generation: Interrogating Our Role in Development

At a personal level, many people in your generation are deeply concerned about and highly motivated to address the plight of people living in poverty and deprivation around the world. At the same time, some have warned that the current enthusiasm for global engagement and DIY development may do more harm than good to people in the global south. What are those concerns and how can they be addressed? What is your role in the midst of this “doing development” trend?

Readings/Films

- Cole, Teju (2012), “[The White-Savior Industrial Complex](#)” *The Atlantic* March.
- Sullivan, Noelle (2018), “International Clinical Volunteering in Tanzania: A postcolonial analysis of a global health business” *Global Public Health* 13(3): 310-324
- Volunteers Unleashed (FILM to be viewed prior to session 5. Available on Canvas under “Library Media”—please link [to the NU VPN](#) if you are viewing it off campus)

Session 6

Participation and Empowerment: Alternative Strategies to Community Development

Over the last two decades “participation” has become one of the most dominant concepts in international development, embraced by those on the left and the right, from those seeking to change fundamental power relations to the World Bank. Participation has been identified as essential to achieve a wide range of development outcomes, including empowerment of the poor and marginalized; building capacity of developing communities; increasing project effectiveness; improving project efficiency; and project cost sharing. What does participation mean? Why is it seen as so essential for development? What are the assumptions and theoretical basis for these claims? What are the major debates over its meaning and role? How do they affect development work in practice? How will they impact your work?

Northwestern University has been at the forefront of developing community-based development theories and practice under the moniker of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), which builds on long-standing Chicago traditions that reach back to Jane Addams and Saul Alinsky. What is ABCD and how does it relate to the family of other participatory, strength-based, capacity building approaches to development? What is your host organization’s approach to community development?

Readings

- John Kretzmann and John McKnight, “[Building Communities from the Inside Out.](#)” Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern (1993), pp. 1-11.
- McMahon, Claire (2018) [The Problem with Empowerment.](#) *Words in the Bucket*, Feb. 8.
- Ruge, TMS (2015) [Building a Self-Reliant Africa from the Bottom-Up.](#) *Tiny Spark*, July 9. [brief podcast, listen to all]
- Piot, Charles (2016) “Introduction” In Charles Piot (Ed.), *Doing Development in West Africa: A Reader By and For Undergraduates*, Duke U. Press pp. 1-16.

Final Reflection Summit

Schedule

As part of the Final Reflection Summit when you return from the field, we will draw on a few very brief readings, your field experience, your field essays, and collective discussions amongst members of the GESI community to critically engage the issues and arguments from the pre-departure seminar.

Session 1

Causes of Poverty and Development Challenges

What did you learn about the reasons that the problem our organization works on exists? What are the scope and causes of the problem, the role of political power in reproducing the problem and making change difficult, the core development assumptions made by your organization and made in your work? How are community members thought about and encouraged to participate in the issue or initiative your organization is working on, and what do you make of this framing?

Readings

- Burtle, Adam, “[What is Structural Violence?](http://structuralviolence.org),” structuralviolence.org

Session 2

Participation and Power in Community-Based Development

After your GESI experience, what is your assessment of participatory, community-based development as an approach to development and social change? What do you think community-based, participatory development approaches can do well and what do they not do well? To what extent are these approaches scalable? Under what conditions? What are the implications for community development work at home and abroad?

Readings

- Dinyar Godrej, “[NGOs – do they help.](#)” *New Internationalist*, December 2014.
- Michael Hobbes, “[Stop Trying to Save the World: Big Ideas are Destroying International Development.](#)” *The New Republic*, November 17, 2014.

Session 3

Revisiting Possibilities for Development and Social Change

To what extent does international development work need to address and change power relationships in society to be successful? What degree and type of transformation is possible without challenging existing power relationships? Under what conditions is it more or less likely that power relationships can be effectively challenged? How does this inform your view of the relationship between power and development outcomes? What are your reflections about what it takes to live out a commitment to sustainable development and social change?

Readings

- Tania Mitchell, "[Identity and Social Action: The Role of Self-Examination in Systemic Change.](#)" AAC&U Diversity and Democracy, Fall 2015.
- Sarika Bansal, [17 Development Clichés I'll be Avoiding in 2017](#), *The Development Set*, January 5, 2017.

Session 4

Advocacy and Organizing for Social Change

Now what? Has your GESI experience raised your awareness of or interest in a particular issue? Does this new awareness motivate you to take action in some way? Are there communities, organizations or opportunities you want to get connected with? A panel of guest speakers will introduce you to some organizations involved in issue-based and social justice advocacy in the Chicago area, including a discussion of various approaches to doing advocacy work related to issues at home or abroad.

Readings

- Amanda Moore McBride and Eric Mlyn, "[Innovation Alone Won't Fix Social Problems.](#)" Chronicle of Higher Education, September 2, 2015
- Otzelberger, Agnes (2018) "[Five Questions you Need to Ask yourself if you \(want to\) work in International Development](#)," *The Good Jungle*, Jan. 24th.