

Course title: International Politics of Humanitarian Action

Language of instruction: English

Professors: Miriam Bradley (mbradley@ibei.org)

Professor's contact and office hours: To be arranged with the instructors

Course contact hours: 45

Recommended credit: 3 US credits - 6 ECTS credits

Course prerequisites: None

Language requirements: None

Course focus and approach: In 2013, the US government spent US\$4.7 billion on overseas humanitarian assistance. This is part of a wider trend of increasing spending on humanitarian aid since the end of the Cold War. Does this massive expansion of the humanitarian sector suggest the world is becoming more compassionate and civilized? How do the political interests of donor governments drive humanitarian priorities? Does aid do more harm than good? How does humanitarian aid differ from human rights or development work? Should humanitarian action be political? How does law protect in war? This course will grapple with these, and other, important questions regarding the ethics, law, politics and practice of humanitarianism. The course is structured around student presentations and discussions on particular humanitarian emergencies, and interactive lectures on related themes and issues.

Course description: The course will serve as a challenging introduction to the main debates within the study and practice of humanitarianism, and will provide students with a range of conceptual tools for understanding the international politics of humanitarian action, as well as empirical knowledge of key events and actors. We will examine the work of UN agencies and international NGOs in response to armed conflict, famine, and natural disasters. We will discuss how politics and principles interact to shape the priorities, practice and outcomes of humanitarian response in countries like Haiti, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Syria.

Learning objectives:

At the end of this course the students should:

- Demonstrate substantive knowledge of the major historical developments in international humanitarianism
- Be able to engage in reasoned critical reflection on humanitarian principles and associated approaches to humanitarian action
- Understand the strengths and criticisms of some of the main actors in international humanitarian action, including donor states, UN agencies, the Red Cross movement and international NGOs

Course workload: The course is divided into lectures, discussions and student presentations. Students should be prepared to read between 100 and 150 pages per week.

Teaching methodology: The course combines classes which focus on one or two case studies of particular humanitarian emergencies, and classes which address a general theme or topic. The case study classes will comprise student presentations and class discussion, and the thematic classes will follow a more traditional lecture/seminar format. Each week, the humanitarian emergencies under study offer particularly pertinent or interesting examples of the issues and debates in the general topic covered in the following class. Readings are drawn from academic journals as well as from humanitarian policy think tanks, and international humanitarian agencies themselves.

Assessment criteria:

- Case study presentation: 30%
- Final exam: 30%
- Class participation: 10%
- Term paper: 30%

Absence policy: Attending class is mandatory and will be monitored daily by professors. Missing classes will impact on the student's final grade as follows:

| Absences | Penalization |
|---------------------------|--|
| Up to two (2) absences | No penalization |
| Three (3) absences | 1 point subtracted from final grade (on a 10 point scale) |
| Four (4) absences | 2 points subtracted from final grade (on a 10 point scale) |
| Five (5) absences or more | The student receives an INCOMPLETE ("NO PRESENTAT") for the course |

The PEHE/HESP attendance policy **does not distinguish between justified or unjustified absences**. The student is deemed responsible to manage his/her absences. Emergency situations (hospitalization, family emergency...) will be analyzed on a case by case basis by the Academic Director of the HESP.

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Classroom norms:

- No food or drink is permitted in class
- No mobile phones, texting, surfing, chatting etc
- There will be a ten-minute break during the class
- Students must come to class fully prepared

Weekly schedule**PART 1: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE "HUMANITARIAN"?**

Humanitarianism is a contested concept, and the first four weeks of this course will introduce students to the central debates and main areas of contestation in international humanitarian action. We will discuss, among other things, what distinguishes humanitarian work from development work, how expansive and ambitious the goals of humanitarian action should be, and to what extent humanitarianism should be political.

Session 1: Introduction

No reading

Session 2: Brief history of modern humanitarian action

Michael Barnett & Thomas G Weiss (2008) "Humanitarianism: A Brief History of the Present" in Barnett & Weiss (ed.) *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power and Ethics*, pp.1-48.

Eleanor Davey, with John Borton and Matthew Foley (2013) *A history of the humanitarian system: Western origins and foundations*, HPG Working Paper, pp.1-15.

Session 3: Case studies

Famine in the Horn of Africa 1983-85 – and celebrity humanitarianism

Müller, Tanja R. 2013. "The long shadow of Band Aid humanitarianism: revisiting the dynamics between famine and celebrity." *Third World Quarterly* 34 (3):470-484.

Müller, Tanja R. 2013. "'The Ethiopian famine' revisited: Band Aid and the antipolitics of celebrity humanitarian action." *Disasters* 37 (1):61-79.

Philo, Greg. 1993. "From Buerk to Band Aid: the media and the 1984 Ethiopian famine." In *Getting the message: news, truth and power*, edited by John Eldridge, 104-125. London: Routledge.

Session 4: Constructing humanitarian emergencies

Calhoun, Craig. 2009. "The idea of emergency: humanitarian action and global (dis)order." IILJ International Legal Theory Colloquium Spring 2009: Virtues, Vices, Human Behavior and Democracy in International Law, NYU Law School.

Kurasawa, Fuyuki. 2013. "The sentimentalist paradox: on the normative and visual foundations of humanitarianism." *Journal of Global Ethics* 9 (2):201-214.

Watson, Scott. 2011. "The 'human' as referent object? Humanitarianism as securitization." *Security Dialogue* 42 (1):3-20.

Session 5: Case studies

Rwanda 1994-1996

DANIDA 1996. *The international response to conflict and genocide: lessons from the Rwanda experience*. Synthesis Report. Various Authors. Copenhagen: DANIDA.

Storey, Andy. 1997. "Non-neutral humanitarianism: NGOs and the Rwanda crisis." *Development in Practice* 7 (4):384-394.

Pottier, Johan. 1996. "Relief and repatriation: views by Rwandan refugees; lessons for humanitarian aid workers." *African Affairs* 95 (380):403-429.

Somalia 2000 to present

Abild, Erik. 2010. "Creating humanitarian space: a case study of Somalia." *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 29 (3):67-102.

Hammond, Laura, and Hannah Vaughan-Lee. 2012. *Humanitarian space in Somalia: a scarce commodity*. London: Humanitarian Policy Group/Overseas Development Institute.

Jackson, Ashley, and Abdi Aynte. 2013. *Talking to the other side: humanitarian negotiations with Al-Shabaab in Somalia*. London: Humanitarian Policy Group/Overseas Development Institute.

Menkhaus, Ken. 2010. "Stabilisation and humanitarian access in a collapsed state: the Somali case." *Disasters* 34:S320-S341.

Session 6: Principles of humanity and impartiality

Slim, H. 1997. Relief agencies and moral standing in war: principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and solidarity. *Development in Practice* 7(4), pp. 342-352

Poole, Lydia. 2014. *Bridging the needs-based funding gap: NGO field perspectives*. Geneva: Norwegian Refugee Council.

Kevlihan, Rob, Karl DeRouen, and Glen Biglaiser. 2014. "Is US humanitarian aid based primarily on need or self-interest?" *International Studies Quarterly* 58 (4):839-854.

Mackintosh, Kate, and Patrick Duplat. 2013. *Study of the impact of donor counter-terrorism measures on principled humanitarian action*. Geneva: Norwegian Refugee Council. Introduction and Section IV (Impact)

Session 7: Case studies

Iraq 2003 to present

de Torrenté, Nicolas. 2004. "Humanitarianism sacrificed: integration's false promise." *Ethics & International Affairs* 18 (2):3-12.

Oxfam. 2007. *Rising to the humanitarian challenge in Iraq*. Oxfam Briefing Paper 105.

Humanitarian Policy Group. 2008. *Humanitarian action in Iraq: putting the pieces together*, HPG Policy Brief 30. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Afghanistan 2001 to present

Benelli, Prisca, Antonio Donini, and Norah Niland. 2012. *Afghanistan: humanitarianism in uncertain times*. Somerville, MA: Feinstein International Center.

Donini, Antonio, and Daniel Maxwell. 2013. "From face-to-face to face-to-screen: remote management, effectiveness and accountability of humanitarian action in insecure environments." *International Review of the Red Cross* 95 (890):383-413.

Haysom, Simone, and Ashley Jackson. 2013. "'You don't need to love us': Civil-Military Relations in Afghanistan, 2002-13." *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 2 (2):1-16.

Session 8: Principles of neutrality and independence

Fox, F. 2001. New humanitarianism: does it provide a moral banner for the 21st century? *Disasters* 25(4), pp. 275-289.

Donini, Antonio, Larry Minear, and Peter Walker. 2004. "Between cooptation and irrelevance: humanitarian action after Iraq." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 17 (3):260-272.

Rieffer-Flanagan, Barbara Ann. 2009. "Is neutral humanitarianism dead? Red Cross neutrality walking the tightrope of neutral humanitarianism." *Human Rights Quarterly* 31 (4):888-915.

Collinson, Sarah, Samir Elhawary, and Robert Muggah. 2010. *States of fragility: stabilisation and its implications for humanitarian action*. HPG Working Paper. London: Humanitarian Policy Group.

PART 2: DIFFERENT TYPES OF EMERGENCY

In the second part of the course, we turn to look at different types of emergency: natural disasters; famines; and armed conflict. In these three weeks, we will examine how the media portrays different kinds of emergency and how the public responds. We will look at who funds humanitarian action in response to different kinds of emergency, what the main humanitarian needs are, and which legal frameworks are relevant. We will also discuss the main critiques of humanitarian action in these different contexts.

Session 9: Case studies

2004 Asian Tsunami

Fernando, Udan, and Dorothea Hilhorst. 2006. "Everyday practices of humanitarian aid: Tsunami response in Sri Lanka." *Development in Practice* 16 (3/4):292-302. doi: 10.2307/4030059.

Stirrat, Jock. 2006. "Competitive humanitarianism: relief and the tsunami in Sri Lanka." *Anthropology Today* 22 (5):11-16.

Telford, John, and John Cosgrave. 2007. "The international humanitarian system and the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunamis." *Disasters* 31 (1):1-28.

2010 Haiti earthquake

DARA. 2011. *Focus on Haiti: build back better?* Madrid: DARA.

Patrick, Jonathan. 2011. *Haiti earthquake response: emerging evaluation lessons*. London: DFID.

Disasters special issue on Haiti, April 2014, see <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/disa.2014.38.issue-s1/issuetoc>

Session 10: Natural disaster

Stokke, Kristian. 2007. Humanitarian response to natural disasters: a synthesis of evaluation findings. Oslo: Norad.

Strömberg, David. 2007. "Natural disasters, economic development, and humanitarian aid." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 21 (3):199-222.

Vaux, T. 2006. Humanitarian trends and dilemmas, *Development in Practice* 16(3&4): 240-254

Session 11: Case studies

Somalia Famine 2011

All articles in the 2012 Special issue of *Global Food Security* – see <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/22119124/1/1>

Session 12: Famine

Macrae, Joanna, and Anthony B Zwi. 1992. "Food as an instrument of war in contemporary African famines: a review of the evidence." *Disasters* 16 (4):299-321.

de Waal, Alex. 1996. "Social contract and deterring famine: first thoughts." *Disasters* 20 (3):194-205.

Maxwell, Daniel G, John W Parker, and Heather C Stobaugh. 2013. "What drives program choice in food security crises? Examining the "response analysis" question." *World Development* 49 (0):68-79.

Session 13: Case studies

Former Yugoslavia

Barutciski, Michael. 1996. "The reinforcement of non-admission policies and the subversion of UNHCR: displacement and internal assistance in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992-94)." *International Journal of Refugee Law* 8 (1-2):49-110.

Cunliffe, S Alex, and Michael Pugh. 1997. "The politicization of UNHCR in the former Yugoslavia." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 10 (2):134-153.

Frelick, Bill. 1992. "'Preventive protection' and the right to seek asylum: a preliminary look at Bosnia and Croatia." *International Journal of Refugee Law* 4 (4):439-454.

Mooney, Erin D. 1995. "Presence, ergo protection? UNPROFOR, UNHCR and the ICRC in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina." *International Journal of Refugee Law* 7 (3):407-435.

Weiss, Thomas G, and Amir Pasic. 1997. "Reinventing UNHCR: enterprising humanitarians in the former Yugoslavia, 1991-1995." *Global Governance* 3:41.

Darfur 2003 to present

Pantuliano, S. and O'Callaghan, S. 2006. *The 'protection crisis': a review of field-based strategies for humanitarian protection in Darfur*. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Humanitarian Policy Group. 2007. Humanitarian advocacy in Darfur: the challenge of neutrality, HPG Policy Brief 28. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Newman, Samantha. 2013. "Human rights advocacy in Darfur: a practitioner's reflections." *Human Rights Defender* 22 (3):5-7.

Mills, Kurt. 2013. "Constructing humanitarian space in Darfur." *The International Journal of Human Rights* 17 (5-6):605-618.

Session 14: Armed conflict

Slim, H., & Bonwick, A. (2005). *Protection: an ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies*. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Collinson et al. 2009. Realising protection: The uncertain benefits of civilian, refugee and IDP status. *HPG Report 28*.

HPCR. (2011). *Humanitarian action under scrutiny: criminalizing humanitarian engagement*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research

ADH. (2011). *Rules of engagement: protecting civilians through dialogue with armed non-state actors*. Geneva: Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights.

PART THREE: HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES

In the final three weeks of the course, we turn to the different kinds of agencies involved in humanitarian response, specifically: UN agencies; the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement; and NGOs. For each of these different types of actor, we look at how they interpret and implement humanitarian principles, how they are funded, what their strengths and emphases are in terms of response and activities, and how accountable they are—to their funders, the people they are supposed to help, and other stakeholders. We will also discuss the main criticisms made of different organizations.

Session 15: Case studies

Sri Lanka 2009

Niland, Holmes, Bradley. 2014. Policy Debate - Humanitarian Protection in the Midst of Civil War: Lessons from Sri Lanka. *International Development Policy* 5(2). <http://poldev.revues.org/1629>

Internal Review Panel. 2012. *Report of the Secretary-General's Internal Review Panel on United Nations action in Sri Lanka*. United Nations.

Keen, David. 2009. *Compromise or capitulation?: report on WFP and the humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka. Humanitarian Assistance in Conflict and Complex Emergencies, 23-25 June 2009, Rome.*

Session 16: United Nations agencies

Why humanitarian reform? 40 min presentation by Mark Cutts of OCHA <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UN-vtFbUGs8>

Barnett, M. 2001. Humanitarianism with a sovereign face: UNHCR in the global undertow. *International Migration Review* 35(1) 244-77

Helton, Arthur C. 1994. "UNHCR and Protection in the 90's." *International Journal of Refugee Law* 6 (1).

World Food Programme. 2015. *Annual evaluation report 2014*. Rome: WFP.

Session 17: Case studies

Biafran War 1967-1970

Waters, Ken. 2004. "Influencing the message: the role of Catholic missionaries in media coverage of the Nigerian Civil War." *The Catholic Historical Review* 90 (4):697-718.

Desgrandchamps, Marie-Luce. 2014. "Dealing with 'genocide': the ICRC and the UN during the Nigeria-Biafra war, 1967-70." *Journal of Genocide Research* 16 (2-3):281-297.

O'Sullivan, Kevin. 2014. "Humanitarian encounters: Biafra, NGOs and imaginings of the Third World in Britain and Ireland, 1967-70." *Journal of Genocide Research* 16 (2-3):299-315.

Session 18: International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

Forsythe, D. P. 2007. The ICRC: a unique humanitarian protagonist. *International Review of the Red Cross* 89(865), pp. 63-96.

Terry, Fiona. 2011. "The International Committee of the Red Cross in Afghanistan: reasserting the neutrality of humanitarian action." *International Review of the Red Cross* 93 (881):173-188.

American Red Cross. 2011. *Global impact report 2011*. American Red Cross.

Session 19: Case studies

Syria 2011 to present

Humanitarian Exchange magazine, special issue on the conflict in Syria, No.59, November 2013, available at: <http://www.odihpn.org/humanitarian-exchange-magazine/issue-59>

Forced Migration Review, special issue on the Syria Crisis, displacement and protection, No.47, September 2014, available at <http://www.fmreview.org/syria/contents>

Also watch the videos of a 2015 panel discussion on "Syria crisis: how aid is changing" <http://www.odi.org/events/4132-syria-diaspora-local-humanitarian-response-aid-conflict>

Session 20: Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)

Websites and mission statements of Oxfam, World Vision International, MSF, International Rescue Committee, Norwegian Refugee Council

Cooley, A. and Ron, J. 2002. The NGO scramble: organizational insecurity and the political economy of transnational action. *International Security* 27(1), pp. 5-39. Read pages 5-18.

Brauman, Rony. 2006. Dangerous liaisons: bearing witness and political propaganda. Biafra and Cambodia – the founding myths of Médecins Sans Frontières. In CRASH papers. Paris: MSF.

Jones, Andrew. 2014. "The Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) and the humanitarian industry in Britain, 1963–85." *Twentieth Century British History*.

Stoddard, Abby. 2003. Humanitarian NGOs: challenges and trends, HPG Briefing Paper 12. London: Humanitarian Policy Group/Overseas Development Institute.

Required readings: As above

Recommended bibliography:

Barnett, M. 2011. Empire of humanity: a history of humanitarianism. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP.

Barnett, Michael N, and Thomas G Weiss, eds. 2008. Humanitarianism in question: politics, power, ethics. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

de Waal, A. 1997. Famine crimes: politics and the disaster relief industry in Africa. Oxford: Currey.

Keen, D. 2008. Complex emergencies. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kennedy, D. 2004. The dark side of virtue: humanitarianism reassessed. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Rieff, D. 2002. A bed for the night: humanitarianism in crisis. London: Vintage.

Terry, F. 2002. Condemned to repeat? The paradox of humanitarian action. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Vaux, Tony. 2001. The selfish altruist: relief work in famine and war. London: Earthscan Publications.