Topics in Sustainable Development:
Comparative Approaches to Global Injustice and Social Inequality
Fall Module 2 2019
Fridays, 9:00-11:50AM
HS210f Room TBD

The Heller School for Social Policy and Management
Brandeis University
Sustainable International Development Graduate Program

Module II: Comparative Approaches to Global Injustice and Social Inequality
Fall 2019
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Office Hours: by appointment

University Notices:
1. If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

2. You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. The University policy on academic honesty is distributed annually as section 5 of the Rights and Responsibilities handbook. Instances of alleged dishonesty are subject to possible judicial action. Potential sanctions include failure in the course and suspension from the University. If you have any questions about this policy, please ask.

Academic integrity is central to the mission of educational excellence at Brandeis University. Each student is expected to turn in work completed independently, except when assignments specifically authorize collaborative effort. It is not acceptable to use the words or ideas of another person without proper acknowledgement of that source. This means that you must use footnotes and quotation marks to indicate the source of any phrases, sentences, paragraphs or ideas found in published volumes, on the internet, or created by another student. If you are in doubt about the instructions for any assignment in this course, you must ask for clarification.

Course Description
SDG Goal #1 seeks “an end to poverty in all its forms everywhere” (https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg1). Between 2002 and 2012 the proportion of the global population living under the poverty line dropped by half from 26% to 13%. It could fall even further, to 4% up to 6%, assuming a steady economic growth rate comparable to the past 10 or 20 years, and “assuming that growth benefits all income groups of the population” (https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg1). Reducing poverty thus depends on reducing inequality, both within and among countries. This is
the purpose of SDG #10, which seeks to reduce address disparities based on income but also on “age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status within a country” [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg10](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg10)

Beyond the current generation of SDGs, writers and social theorists have long debated the interrelated dynamics of poverty, inequality and social injustice. Beginning with seminal critiques of colonialism and Western domination, the course will trace how these ideas inform the current choices of policymakers and development practitioners who seek to address deeply entrenched social divisions and injustices in their societies. We will use a case study approach – focusing on South Africa, India and Brazil but with reference to other countries in their respective regions – to compare and contrast different understandings and interpretations of the origins of poverty, inequality and injustice, and to assess the relevance of these views to current global models of development policy and practice.

The first three class sessions will explore themes of marginalization, Western domination and post-colonial critiques of development models as seen by classic and contemporary writers. Sessions four through six will delve into the current situation of countries marked by persistent poverty and deep structural inequalities. We will consider policies and programs designed to address these intertwined realities, looking for successful examples from different world regions. Session seven will return to the basic theme of the course: how best to overcome entrenched social exclusion to reduce poverty and inequality and create more inclusive and just societies. As development scholars and practitioners, we will pay special attention to the relationship between academic research, policy formation and program implementation and evaluation as it informs and leads to measurable social change.

**Specific Goals:**

- To gain knowledge of selected historical and philosophical views of poverty, inequality and social exclusion
- To ‘deconstruct’ the underlying politics and philosophies of different development models, especially contrasting postcolonial and postdevelopment critiques with Western development paradigms
- To apply a ‘gendered approach’ to questions of poverty, inequality and social exclusion
- To understand the relationship between poverty, inequality and social exclusion as reflected in diverse country and regional contexts
- To analyze the role and impact of selected institutions, policies and programs working on these issues
- To enable students to conduct research and analysis on the course topics as well as apply the information to a development problem of interest to them.
Core Competency Statement:
This course teaches concepts and skills that have been identified as core competencies for the SID masters degree. Sessions 1 – 7 of the course fulfill the core competencies through readings emphasizing the historical background of development issues (#1) and the interdependence of social, political, cultural and economic systems that shape development outcomes (#2). The reading material and discussions will familiarize students with systems, structures and institutions that shape contemporary development problems (#3). They emphasize the importance of understanding empirical contexts to ground ideas and theories of development (#4) and the relativity of timeframes in which development processes unfold (#8). The course also satisfies the core competency on improving communications (#10), since students will analyze, discuss and write about a range of relevant texts, including policy reports and complex philosophical arguments by writers and social scientists concerned with the development field.

Sustainable Development Statement:
Starting with excerpts from the work of classic anti-colonial writers, the course reviews critiques of Western development models. It examines the intersections between poverty, inequality and social exclusion from the perspective of ‘marginalized’ social groups, especially women, Afro-descendents, indigenous and lower caste peoples. The course examines a range of policies and programs that attempt to build more prosperous, equitable, social stable and environmentally sustainable societies. This goal lies at the heart of sustainable development.

Race and Ethnicity Statement:
This course examines historical, philosophical and political concepts of poverty, inequality and injustice from a comparative perspective, as seen by thinkers and activists from different intellectual and cultural traditions. It is based on understanding perceptions of race, ethnicity, social class and other markers of ‘difference’ in contemporary societies, how those perceptions lead to bias and social exclusion, and how to assess policies designed to overcome those divisions.

Gender Perspective Statement:
By definition, the concerns of both women and men (as people who do not define themselves in binary gender terms) in development need to be considered both independently and together, recognizing that different societies employ diverse approaches to gender relations. Students will learn how to incorporate a gender lens into broader discussions of poverty, inequality and injustice. They will also investigate whether specific national policies lead to discriminatory practices that impede women’s full participation in society, or condone stigmatization and violence against individuals or groups with diverse sexual preferences and gender identities.
Course Requirements

1. Attendance at all sessions
2. Prompt arrival
3. Preparation of all readings
4. Participation in class discussions and small group work, and leading class discussions as requested
5. Timely submission/presentation of assignments
6. Class exercises and presentations
7. Helpfulness to other students.

Your Grade will be calculated as follows

1. Class attendance and participation (10%)
2. Reading responses (5 responses = 20%)
3. Group project (1 = 20%)
4. Final paper or take-home exam (50%)

Class Schedule and Readings:

PART I: THE COLONIAL ROOTS OF DEVELOPMENT

Week 1: Classic Writers on Colonialism

This class will introduce powerful, original voices that describe exploitation and injustice in pre- and post-independence periods in Africa and Latin America.

Required:

   Read: Foreward: Isabel Allende, pp. ix-xvii
   Chapter 1, “Lust for Gold, Lust for Silver,” pp. 2-59


   Read: Introductory Material, pp. 1-15
   2 Sections of your choice

   Read: Introduction, pp. ix-xvii
   Chapter 1 – “The African Background,” pp. 1-8
Chapter 18 – “Neocolonialism in Africa,” pp. 173-193

Additional Resources:


Week 2: Post-Development Theories and Critiques
This class will introduce the school of post-colonial and post-development critiques of Western development models. Students will learn how these critical approaches have emphasized a primary link between historical systems of injustice and inequality and the challenges of development today.

Required:
Read:
Chapter 1, “Introduction: Development and the Anthropology of Modernity,” pp. 3-20

Escobar, A. and Esteva, G. Post-Development @ 25: on ‘being stuck’ and moving forward, sideways, backward and otherwise, Third World Quarterly, 38:12, 2559-2572, DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2017.1334545

Additional Resources:


Read:

**Week 3: Gender, Feminisms and Women in Development**

This session introduces women and gender in development, a major intellectual discussion that has cut across discourse and practice for the past 50 years. We pay particular attention to women’s leadership and decision-making roles in political participation, social activism and economic empowerment. We also learn about prominent women activists who risked everything to lead movements for social justice. We ask how these ideas and inspiring leaders should affect our thinking about development and social justice.

**Required:**

Adidchie, C. (2013). We Should All Be Feminists April 12, 2013. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_qWc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_qWc)

Cárceres, B. (2016). In Her Own Words [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KjM81tYBew4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KjM81tYBew4)


**Additional Resources:**


Read:


Read: Introduction: Feminism and International Development, Sections I-VI, pp. 1-33

PART II: FROM HISTORY AND THEORY TO POLICY AND PRACTICE

Week 4: Case Studies: South Africa/Africa
This class explores South Africa, the first case study in the course. We begin with selections by Steve Biko, a murdered journalist and one of South Africa’s great freedom fighters. We keep Biko’s themes in mind as we review contemporary data on economic and social inequality and analyze the country’s challenges in overcoming the legacy of apartheid. We also compare South Africa’s truth and reconciliation process to the current debates about reparations to African Americans in the U.S.

Required:

Read: Introductory material and sections 1 (Biographical Summary), 5 (Black Souls in White Skins), 6 (We Blacks), 11 (White Racism and Black Consciousness), 18 (Our Struggle for Liberation) and 19 (On Death).
https://books.google.com/books?id=l6HOxfMR6UUC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/

Current Events in South Africa:

Poverty and Inequality in South Africa


Additional Resources:

Writers and Ideas:


Trevor Chats with His Grandma About Apartheid and Tours Her Home, “MTV Cribs” Style – the Daily Show. Dec. 3, 2018. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1s5iz6ml-qA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1s5iz6ml-qA)


Current Events in South Africa:


Poverty and Inequality in South Africa


On Race Issues in the U.S.:

Week 5: INDIA/ASIA
This class focuses on India/South Asia, the second case study. As in the previous session, we will ground our inquiry in writings by a voice rising from an oppressed group. We read a famous text by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a Dalit known for his fight against untouchability, accompanied by an analysis by Arundhati Roy, a well-known Indian novelist and writer. We will then examine the current state of poverty and inequality in contemporary India.

Required:
Writers and Ideas:
Read: Sections 1, 2 & 3; Appendix 1 (“A Vindication of Caste by Mahatma Gandhi” and “Appendix 2: A Reply to the Mahatma”)


Current events:

Poverty and Inequality:


Additional Resources:
Writers and Ideas:


Current events:

Poverty and Inequality:

Week 6: Brazil/Latin America
This class explores the third case study for the class, focusing on Brazil/Latin America. First we will look at selections from the writings of Abdias do Nascimento, a founder of the black movement in Brazil. Abdias was a leading voice in debunking the ‘myth of racial democracy’ in Brazil. We will also read Child of the Dark: the Diary of Carolina Maria de Jesus. The book provides a graphic, first-person account of a poor black woman in Brazil. Context is provided by data assessing the state of inequality and poverty in the country, as well as information on affirmative action and social protection policies aimed at reducing Brazil’s social and economic disparities.

Required:
Writers and Ideas:


Current Events in Brazil

https://www.as-coa.org/articles/tracking-first-100-days-brazilian-president-jair-bolsonaro

Poverty and Inequality in Brazil
https://www.oxfam.org.br/sites/default/files/arquivos/relatorio_a_distancia_que_nos_une_en.pdf

Additional Resources:

Writers and Ideas:

Current events:


Poverty and Inequality:

**PART III: Reconciling Perspectives: Development and Social Justice**

**Week 7: Reducing Poverty and Inequality**
This last session considers whether it is possible to overcome poverty and inequality and build inclusive societies through development policy and practice. We consider these issues in the context of technology, globalization and climate change – the ‘big trends’ that shape our world today.

Required:


Read: Chapter 1: Thank You for Being Late, pp. 3-18.

**Additional Resources:**

https://doi.org/10.1080/13600818.2019.1585793

Sustainable Development Goals: #10: Reduce inequality within and among countries
http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/inequality/