ANTH 55A — Anthropology of Development
Pascal Menoret. Lemberg Hall 227. Office hours: Tue-Thu, 3:30pm-5pm
Class hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2-3:20pm. Classroom: Shiffman 216

Course Description: The notion of development is as central to our experience and relationship to the world as the concept of civilization was in the 19th century, or the notion of God in the 12th. We often think of development as the betterment of mankind and as overall progress. Personal, economic, or otherwise, we tend to view development as a positive process.

This course is meant to question widespread assumptions about development. How has development become a discourse and a practice of power since the 1940s? Why do many observers see development as a neocolonial phenomenon? Is development mitigating the domination of the “first world” on the “third world,” or is it contributing to it? How have development agencies evolved and responded to critiques over time? What is the difference between development and humanitarian aid?

This is an anthropology class, which means that we will study development from both a theoretical viewpoint and a field-based perspective. We will study the various theories of development, and the various points of view one can adopt while looking at questions of global inequality and economic emergency. Anthropologists study populations that are targeted by development projects (“studying down”). They also study the white-collar experts and aid agencies that claim to make the world a better place (“studying up”). How do targeted populations view aid and development? How do development experts and field workers understand their own work? Last but not least, how have nature and the environment become a central concern and a main player in development?

Learning goals: In this course you will learn:
- about the interplay between colonialism, development, and globalization;
- about the relationship between the “first” and the “third” worlds, and how these notions emerged;
- about the main theories that inform development work, including the modernization theory and the dependency theory;
- about fieldwork methods used to study development as a mission, a business, and an everyday practice;
- about development experts and workers and the way they look at their work.

Course texts:
During the course of the semester, you will read large extracts of the following books:

- James Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution* (Duke University Press 2015) ([Online access](#))
- Peter Medoff and Holly Sklar, *Streets of Hope: The Fall and Rise of an Urban Neighborhood* (South End Press 1994)
- David Mosse, *Cultivating Development: An Ethnography of Aid Policy and Practice* (Pluto Press 2005) ([Online access](#))

You will find most of these books on the Brandeis library website. I will make all other readings available on the Latte website.

**Course films:**

**Course plan:**

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**Week 1: Introduction**
- **January 15**  Introductions
- **January 17**  Adia Benton, “African Expatriates and Race in the Anthropology of Humanitarianism”
  - James Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*, ch. 7

**Week 2: What’s the Matter with Aid?**
- **January 22**  No class; watch *Poverty, Inc.* (documentary, 94 min., 2014, [https://tubitv.com/movies/387154/poverty_inc](https://tubitv.com/movies/387154/poverty_inc)). Then watch *Reassemblage* (documentary, 1982, 40 min., [https://brandeis.kanopy.com/video/reassemblage-0](https://brandeis.kanopy.com/video/reassemblage-0)). Choose a short segment (1-2 min.) of each film that you may show and analyze in class.
- **January 24**  Dambisa Moyo, *Dead Aid*, introduction and ch. 1, 2, and 3

**Week 3: Poverty in the First World**
Peter Medoff and Holly Sklar, *Streets of Hope*, introduction and ch. 1

January 31

Peter Medoff and Holly Sklar, *Streets of Hope*, ch. 2-3

Assignment #1 due.

Week 4: Modernization Theory

February 5


February 7

Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development*, ch. 3 and 4

Week 5: Dependency Theory

February 12


Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, ch. 1

February 14

Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development*, ch. 7 and 9

Spring Break

Week 6: Post-Development

February 26

Timothy Mitchell, “America’s Egypt: Discourse of the Development Industry”

February 28

Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development*, ch. 1 and 6

Assignment #2 due.

Week 7: Humanitarianism

March 5


Didier Fassin, “The Predicament of Humanitarianism”

March 7

Peter Redfield, “The Unbearable Lightness of Expats: Double-Binds of Humanitarian Mobility”

Miriam Ticktin: “The Violence of Humanitarianism in France”

Week 8: Fixing Poverty?

March 12

James Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish*, ch. 1

March 14

James Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish*, ch. 2 (p. 64-76), 3 (p. 89-102), and 5 (p. 156-164)

Week 9: Studying Up, 1

March 19


David Mosse, *Cultivating Development*, ch. 2 and 3

March 21

David Mosse, *Cultivating Development*, ch. 4 and 5

Week 10: Studying Up, 2

March 26

David Mosse, *Cultivating Development*, ch. 6 and 7

March 28

David Mosse, *Cultivating Development*, ch. 8 and 9

Assignment #3 due.
Week 11: Development and Ecology
Mario Blaser et alii, *In the Way of Development*, ch. 1, 2, and 3
April 4  Nick Estes, *Standing Rock vs. DAPL*, extracts

Week 12: Presentations of Student Projects
April 9  Oral presentations
April 11 Oral presentations

Week 13: Presentations of Student Projects
April 16 Oral presentations
April 18 Oral presentations

Passover Break

Week 14: Conclusion
April 30 Conclusion
May 2  No class. **Assignment #4 due.**

**Evaluation:**
In Class Participation: 10%
You are expected to read all the texts in advance, to think about them carefully, and to participate actively in classroom discussions. Take notes when doing the readings and watching the documentaries that accompany this class. Before each session, prepare a list of questions on the course readings and the films, and be prepared to ask them in class. You must complete all assigned coursework to pass the course. It is your responsibility to submit all assignments before the due date by email. No extension will be granted. Work not turned in, or turned in after the due date without a documented explanation will be downgraded (one grade level by day, from A to A- to B+, etc.). (Documentation includes a note from a physician or from the Brandeis health center.)
The following is a list of written assignments. A full description of each assignment will be handed out as we go. All page lengths are for double-spaced text, Times New Roman, size 12. Please email your assignments to me. No hard copies.

**Reading Responses/Latte Forum (10%)**
Every week, you will share your thoughts and questions about the readings with everybody in the class by posting them on Latte. Your grade will reflect your assiduity in posting responses.

**Assignment #1: Photo/Video Journal (10%)**
You will take photos or make a video of everything you buy in the course of a single week, whatever it is, however small, mundane, or immaterial. Write a paragraph about the contexts in which you made these purchases, and another paragraph in which you link them to a broader economic context. **Assignment due on January 31.**
Assignment #2: Reading or Watching Note (15%)
You will write a reading note (no longer than 2 pages) about one of the course books or one of the course films (see lists above). This is a free writing exercise: write about what you found particularly surprising or interesting, what made you change your mind. Do not summarize the author’s arguments or the film. **Assignment due on February 28.**

Assignment #3: Sketch for a Self-Analysis (20%)
In no more than four pages (eight for graduate students), you will reflect on your own positionality. Why are you interested in global development and/or humanitarian action? How do you situate your social and economic experience within a broader local and global context? Have you worked in development or humanitarian action, or do you plan to work in that field? Are there any anecdotes or scenes, drawn from your experience, that you would like to analyze? Do you want to make a difference or save the world? If so, how so? If not, why not? **Assignment due on March 28.**

Assignment #4: Personal Project (25%)
This final project can be a written essay, a podcast, a video, a poem, a piece of fiction, a theater play, or a performance. (Written essays, fiction, theater plays will be between four and eight pages long. Podcast have to be between 20 and 40 minutes long. Videos have to be between 3 and 6 minutes long. Poems have to be between one and three pages long. Performances have to be between 5 and 15 minutes long.) Your project will tackle one of the issues that you have analyzed in class and that you think is particularly important or telling. It can be a response to a general question about development or express your particular reaction to a set of development related issues. **Assignment due on May 2.**

Oral Presentation: 10%
You will present your final project and get feedback from your classmates and myself. Presentation will be 5 min. long, followed by a short Q&A. Presentations will take place on April 9, 11, 16, and 18.

**No electronic devices:** We perform better, as thinkers and writers, with pen and paper than when offered the possibility to check our email boxes and social media feeds. No use of laptops, tablets, or cellphones is allowed in class. Have doubts? Read this: [http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/the-case-for-banning-laptops-in-the-classroom](http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/the-case-for-banning-laptops-in-the-classroom).

**Academic integrity:** Academy integrity is the acknowledgment of what we owe to other writers and researchers. Plagiarism is the non-acknowledgment of our sources and ranges from improperly quoting to paraphrasing to copying an author without admitting it. Plagiarism will not be tolerated, and all cases will be submitted to the university. For more information on academic integrity at Brandeis University, see: [https://lts.brandeis.edu/courses/instruction/academic-integrity/index.html](https://lts.brandeis.edu/courses/instruction/academic-integrity/index.html).

**Statement of time required:** Success in this 4-credit course is based on the assumption that you will spend a weekly average of 9 hours of time outside of class in preparing and completing course assignments.

**Disabilities:** If you are a student with a documented disability and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.