The History and Politics of “Development”

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Course Description:

Why is there desperate poverty in some parts of the world, and extravagant wealth in others? How can there be starvation and undernourishment in countries like Somalia and Ethiopia when there are currently global food surpluses and millions of tons of food go uneaten each year? Why is it that billions of dollars in development aid goes to third-world countries year in and year out, yet these same countries never seem to escape their status as “developing countries”? These are complicated questions, and any answer to them would inevitably need to grapple with the history and politics of development. We would first need to understand the following: what exactly is development, and what have been the effects of development in the past and the present?

The course begins by rigorously theorizing the concept of development. What does it mean to “develop”? “Develop” into what? Is “development” an end goal or an ongoing process? How do we know when “development” has finally been achieved? Once we “develop,” then what happens? These kinds of questions will be addressed through a careful consideration of the history of capitalism, its development and global expansion over the past four to five centuries. We will also focus on the history of colonialism and imperialism, which was key to the global development of capitalism and was a central venue in which ideas of “development” gained traction. Finally, we will consider neo-colonialism today, and think about how discourses and practices of development manage to classify certain societies as either “developed,” “undeveloped,” or “under-developed,” and what the consequences of such categorizations are.

Our second focus will be on global economic institutions that take it upon themselves to foster the conditions for “development” in different parts of the world. We will examine the power relationships that underlie these institutions, including multi-lateral development agencies, global financial institutions, non-governmental organizations and aid groups, etc. We will examine the privileged actors that largely control these institutions, and the uneven effects they have had on the “developing” world.

Finally, we will look at specific sites of development across the world, so as to observe in rich empirical detail what “development” does to societies and what role politics plays in “developing countries”.

In the end, our concern will not be to determine once and for all whether development is “good” or “bad.” Rather, we will seek to understand the politics of development: the stakes involved for various actors, the power relationships that are reproduced or challenged in discourses of development and anti-development, and the larger global imagination that is at work when we take something like “development” for granted.
All readings will be available online on our WordPress site under the “Readings” tab.


To augment the classroom learning experience our class will use a blogging site called WordPress. This site is designed for you to input your own media, ideas, documents and texts into our class discussion.

The first function of the WordPress site will be to have students blog about each day’s readings, that is, to post news links, reports, videos, music or anything else they think would help us grasp the concepts represented in the readings. The second function of the site will be to use it as a place to store information, such as our class assignments, the syllabus, our course readings, and more. It is vitally important to your success in this class that you check the WordPress site prior to each class, and contribute relevant comments to our online discussions.

We will spend the first few class sessions becoming acquainted with our WordPress site.

To post commentaries or access class texts go to the dashboard for our blog at:
http://pols306.wordpress.com/wp-admin/

Everyone will need to create their own WordPress user name and password in order to make comments and post articles, videos or commentary on our blog.

Expectations, Requirements and Grading:

1. This course will be primarily discussion based, so it is very important that students attend each class having read the assignments before-hand, so as to contribute effectively to the interactive learning process. It is not enough for one to simply show up to class and not participate in classroom discussion. That is only half the battle. The other half is an active engagement with the topics at hand, including interaction in group work, participation in class discussions, and an overall demonstration that you understand (or are at the very least trying to understand) the course material. Attendance and participation: 20%

2. In addition to our classroom discussions and readings, the course will also have a blog-site on which students will post news stories, videos, or any other media that they think relates to the readings. Every class period, one student will be responsible for adding a blog post to the site that is related to the reading. That student will both post the article, video, image, or whatever it is they choose to post, and also write a short commentary (125 words) that makes the connection to the reading assignment explicit. A one paragraph commentary is all that is necessary, but more is acceptable. I encourage you to check out the blog regularly and comment on posts before each class whether or not it is your turn to post. Extra-credit will be given to students that add relevant comments to the blog-post. Blogging: 15%

3. There will be short quizzes on the readings every Thursday. Quizzes: 15%

4. Take home mid-term exam. 25%

5. Take home final exam. 25%
Guidelines for Essays: Essays should be focused and well-organized. You should seek to answer a question, a series of questions, and/or make a strong argument. Take the time to proofread your work. Also, you may have your own writing style, but it is useful to begin each paragraph with a main topic sentence to explain the paragraph. Try to use several sources: books, journals/magazines, newspapers, the internet, and cite them in a bibliography and/or footnotes. A good format to use is to outline your essay with the following components:

I. Introduction with thesis, i.e. your main argument
II. Your argument, with examples/cases and/or logical reasoning to back up your points
III. Counter-arguments: write as if critiquing your own argument to locate flaws & opposing points
IV. Synthesis: answer potential criticisms, explain the final points of your argument
V. Conclusion: what have you learned, what has your paper explained

Some stylistic points: In general, the *Chicago Manual of Style* provides a good resource for proper essay structure, grammatical rules, etc. For numbers less than 100, write out (i.e. 22 should be twenty-two). In addition to a close engagement with the four authors whose books we examine, you will need to use outside sources, so whichever reference system you use, be consistent and be clear as to where you are getting your sources.

The University of Hawaii and the Department of Political Science value academic integrity. Plagiarism/cheating will not be tolerated. If you are found to be cheating you will receive an automatic F for the course and the matter will be referred to the department chair. Do not be tempted to find a paper on the internet and copy from it. It is very easy for instructors to do a simple “google” search to find your source. Please refer to the course catalogue for detailed information on the University of Hawaii’s code of student conduct and disciplinary procedures.

Please let me know if you have special requirements due to a diagnosed learning or physical disability. We can accommodate your needs better if they are made explicit from the outset of the course. All discussions will remain confidential. You may also want to consider conferring with the KOKUA program through the University disability services office. Their phone number is: (808) 956-7511 or [www.hawaii.edu/kokua](http://www.hawaii.edu/kokua)

**UNIT ONE: HISTORICIZING “DEVELOPMENT”**

**WEEK 1 – AUGUST 23 AND 25 — WHAT IS DEVELOPMENT?**

**T:** Introduction to the class, getting acquainted with WordPress, defining “development”
Reading: none

**R:** What does development do?
WEEK 2 — AUGUST 30 AND SEPTEMBER 1 — CAPITALISM AND DEVELOPMENT

T: The history of capitalism

R: NO CLASS

WEEK 3 — SEPTEMBER 6 AND 8 — “THIRD-WORLD” DEVELOPMENT

T: Development in the twentieth century

R: “Developing” Africa

WEEK 4 — SEPTEMBER 13 AND 15 — (POST) COLONIAL DEVELOPMENT

T: Colonialism and development

R: Nationalism and development
   Reading: Frantz Fanon, “The Trials and Tribulations of National Consciousness,” The Wretched of the Earth, 1961.

WEEK 5 — SEPTEMBER 20 AND 22 — NEOLIBERAL GLOBALIZATION

T: The neoliberal transition

R: Geographies of neoliberal development

WEEK 6 — SEPTEMBER 27 AND 29 — NEOLIBERALISM IN ASIA

T: Chinese capitalism

R: Neoliberalism as exception to national development policy
UNIT TWO: “DEVELOPMENT” INSTITUTIONS

WEEK 7 — OCTOBER 4 AND 6—GLOBAL ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS

T: The International Monetary Fund

R: The IMF (cont’d)

WEEK 8 — OCTOBER 11 AND 13—GLOBAL ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS (CONT’D)

T: The Bretton Woods institutions

R: Development and nature

UNIT THREE: SITES OF “DEVELOPMENT”

WEEK 9 — OCTOBER 18 AND 20—NEOLIBERAL SHOCK THERAPY

T: MID-TERM EXAM DUE

R: Disaster capitalism

WEEK 10 — OCTOBER 25 AND 27—NEOLIBERAL SHOCK THERAPY (CONT’D)

T: Free-market experiments in the third-world

R: Neoliberal experiments in Chile

WEEK 11 — NOVEMBER 1 AND 3—DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS
T: Development Aid in Africa
Reading: Dambisa Moyo, Dead Aid, 2009.

R: Development and Freedom
Reading: Amartya Sen, “Development as Capabilities Expansion”, 1990

WEEK 12—NOVEMBER 8 AND 10—DEVELOPMENT AS DISCOURSE

T: “Development”

R: “Development” (cont’d)

WEEK 13—NOVEMBER 15 AND 17—ENCOUNTERING DEVELOPMENT

T: The making of the “Third-World”

R: The politics of “poverty”

WEEK 14—NOVEMBER 22 AND 24—MANAGING DEVELOPMENT

T: Development discourse

R: NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING DAY

WEEK 15—NOVEMBER 29 AND DECEMBER 1—SURVIVING NEOLIBERAL CAPITALISM

T: Planet of slums
Reading: Mike Davis, Planet of Slums (excerpt), 2010.

R: Neoliberalism in the USA

WEEK 16—DECEMBER 6 AND 8—THE THIRD-WORLD IN THE FIRST-WORLD

T: Third-World America
R: FINAL EXAM DUE