The Ethics of Development

This course surveys recent ethical reflections on the ideas and practices of development assistance and humanitarian aid. A growing field in applied ethics, the “ethics of development” also intersects with debates in contemporary social and political philosophy about inequality, empowerment, subordination, and obligations to distant others. Most generally, the ethics of development asks about flourishing, justice, power, subordination and agency in the context of global inequality, chronic deprivation, and environmental degradation. This course will not attempt an exhaustive survey of all the leading texts or thinkers in the ethics of development, but rather, will introduce students to some of the main ideas and debates raised by this area of applied and normative ethics. We will take up writing in the emerging field of what is known as “development ethics”, including the most important of these, the “capabilities approach” to human development (and justice) as advanced by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. We will also address the human rights approach to development, premised on the idea of an internationally recognized “right to development”. Feminist and postcolonial critiques of the practices of development assistance and humanitarian aid by will also be explored.

Class Format
Seminar-style. Come prepared to discuss the readings and your thoughts on them.

Course Requirements
You are required to attend and participate in class meetings, lead seminar one class (circulating discussion questions in advance), and to write one final paper of 15-20 pages.

If you do need to miss a class, you are responsible for catching up in the reading. A 3-page reflection piece on the readings missed is required within one week of the missed class.

Course Assessment

Class participation (contributions to discussion): 10%
10 short (1 page) reflection pieces (due before class): 15%
Leading 2 classes/seminars (you choose which ones): 15%*
Final research paper (8000-10,000 words): 60% (due date TBA)
*circulate study questions in advance, kick off and moderate part of our class
Required Readings

There are 3 required books and the remainder of the readings are available on Ares, the university’s electronic course reserve system. Please bring the readings to class in an easily accessible form, as we will frequently refer back to them.

Books to purchase:

Serene Khader, Adaptive Preferences and Women’s Empowerment (Oxford 2011)
Martha Nussbaum, Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach (Harvard 2011)

For university policies on submission of work, dropping courses, accessibility, academic misconduct and other matters, see:
https://www.uoguelph.ca/philosophy/resources/standard_statements

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Jan. 8  Introduction
Reading:

Jan. 15 The Capability Approach: Nussbaum
Reading:

Jan. 22 The Capability Approach: Nussbaum continued
Reading:
2. Martha Nussbaum, Women and Human Development (Cambridge 2000), Ch. 2 “Adaptive Preferences & Women’s Options” (pp. 111-166).

Jan. 29 Women, Culture, and Development
Reading:
Serene Khader, Adaptive Preferences and Women’s Empowerment (Oxford 2011), Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 3-106)
January 30: Meeting with Prof. Serene Khader (time/place TBA)

Feb. 5  **Women, Culture, and Development continued**  
*Reading:*  

Feb. 12  **Development as the Expansion of Freedom: Sen**  
*Reading:*  

Feb. 19:  Winter break

Feb. 26  **Development as the Expansion of Freedom: Sen**  
*Reading:*  

March 5  **A Human Rights Approach to Development**  
*Reading:*  
1. Peter Uvin, *Human Rights and Development* (Kumarian 2004), Ch. 6 (pp. 122-166)  

March 12  **Development Ethics and Global Justice**  
*Readings:*  

March 19  **Critical Interventions in Development Theory**  
*Readings:*  
2. Barbara Heron, *Desire for Development: Whiteness, Gender, and the Helping Imperative* (Wilfred Laurier Press, 2007), selections TBA
March 26  **Interrogating the Category of the “Global Poor”**

*Reading:*


April 2*  **Towards Transformed Conceptions & Practices of Poverty Reduction and ‘Development’?**

*Reading:*


*This class will need to be rescheduled to Monday, April 6 or Tuesday, April 7, as I am away at a conference on April 2nd.*