Course Description

This course considers moral and institutional responses to global poverty and other international challenges that we face today. Who are the global poor and what are the causes of their poverty? Who is responsible to help them? Do we have duties toward each other as members of the international society to alleviate poverty? Are these duties limited by what people in bounded political communities owe to each other? What sorts of supranational structures are the most appropriate agents to address poverty and when are they undesirable or counterproductive? The course covers the nature, justification and limits of rights and responsibilities to reduce poverty across borders. The main focus of the course is normative, that is what should individuals, governments, or international institutions do about poverty. The course however will have an interdisciplinary approach to the study of normative questions.

Class participation. This is a demanding, reading intensive course, and you are expected to come to class having read the assigned materials and being prepared to participate actively in discussion. This baseline of participation receives the default grade B. Three absences or more will significantly lower the participation grade. Excellent participation is rewarded with an A. The standards for excellent participation are: proving a comprehensive and profound understanding of the material, moving the discussion forward with insightful comments, bringing up perceptive questions that grapple with complex ideas in the readings, and responding thoughtfully to and building on other students’ comments.

Midterm Exam. The midterm (in class) will cover roughly the first half of the course and is intended to assess you understanding of the core concepts and arguments deployed for and against global justice. Except in case of medical emergency, there will be no make up exam.

Writing. The writing assignment for the course is a final paper developed as a group project in cooperation with two other students in the class. The final paper should be 30-35 pages long in which you will develop an argument on a topic of your choice related to the course materials that will seek to integrate the empirical and normative dimension of the course. Final paper topics must be approved in advance. Your group should submit a paper proposal of 2-3 pages by November 17 at the latest. You will present a version of your paper to our class during the last week(s) the course meets. By that time you should have developed your argument in detail. At this point you should submit a 15-20 page
draft to the class before your presentation. The presentation will count for 10% of your participation grade. The more exciting and original the presentation, the better your participation grade. Seize on this presentation as an opportunity to get feedback from the class on how to best present your argument in writing before the paper is due. Late papers will be penalized by a third of a letter grade per day. All essays should be double-spaced with 12 point font and 1 inch margins. See the handout “paper writing guidelines” posted on the course website.

Course goals: By the end of the semester, the course will help you advance several general and topic-related skills. On the topical skill side, you will learn and understand the two main sides in the debate on global justice, explore the assumptions and implications of each and the way in which they inform debates about actual policy. You will also evaluate different institutional alternatives available and the solutions each institutional set-up promotes. One important goal of the course is to enable you to articulate more clearly how these two aspects, the moral and the institutional, inform each other. On the general skill side, the goal is to help you become more efficient readers by encouraging you to understand, interpret, critically evaluate and compare the arguments presented. As writers, you will work on formulating and developing an effective argument on a normative topic, and you will practice the elements of writing a successful paper.

Grading: participation 30%, midterm 30%, final paper 40%.

Paul Collier, The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It (Oxford University Press, 2007).

Schedule:

Part I. The Empirical Record

Week 1 August 25 Introduction

Week 2 September 1 No Class

Week 3 September 8 Poverty Facts, Causes and Solutions
Week 4 **September 15 Development Proposals**


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**Part II Obligations of Justice**

Week 5 **September 22 Violence and Human Rights Abuses**


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Week 6 **September 29 Personal Responsibility**


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Week 7 **October 6 Collective Responsibility and Redistribution**


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Week 8: **October 13 Competing Responsibilities of Justice**


**Homework:** Send me one article on immigration from current news and your preferred side in the debate on immigration by Nov 2.
Week 9: **October 20** No CLASS

Week 10: **October 27** Midterm
Start signing up for office hours to discuss your paper proposal.

Week 11: **November 3** Poverty and Open Borders

**Debate:** Pro immigration restrictions or open borders?

**Part III. Institutions, Institutional Change and Human Wellbeing**

Week 12 **November 10** Changing Institutions
Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, Ch. 10, Policies, Politics, in *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty* (Foreign Affairs, 2011).

Week 13 **November 17** Institutions in the West
Paul Collier, Ch. 10 Trade Policy for reversing Marginalization, in *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

**Last day for paper proposals.**

Week 14 **November 24** NO CLASS - Thanksgiving Break

Week 15 **December 1** Final project presentations.

**December 7** Final paper due at 12 noon outside my office in hard copy.