

The International and Comparative Politics of Foreign Aid

sample seminar syllabus at advanced undergraduate level

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I. Seminar Description

Half of the world's population live on less than \$2.50 per day, and 80 percent of the world's population live in countries with increasing inequality. This class investigates the international and domestic politics surrounding attempts by wealthy countries and institutions to improve development. By the end of the course, students will be able to draw on core theories from international relations and comparative politics to address the following questions: Why and under what conditions do wealthy countries give foreign assistance and support development institutions? How do these motivations influence the success or failure of their efforts? How do politics in recipient countries moderate the effects of international development efforts?

There are no prerequisites for the course. However, familiarity with comparative or international politics and with quantitative methods will improve your appreciation of this course. The course will be writing-intensive.

II. Requirements and Expectations

1. Attendance and participation (20%).

Participation in class discussions is one of the most important elements of this class. As such, attendance at every class is required. Unexcused absences will affect participation grades.

Please note that your contributions will be assessed for their quality, not their quantity. In calculating your participation grade each section, I will consider the following questions: What observations, questions, or arguments did this student bring to the table? Did the student listen carefully to the views of others and respond fairly and thoughtfully? Did the student's comments reflect active engagement with the week's readings?

To this end, carefully consider whether using electronic devices in class will improve or detract from your participation. If you choose to use an electronic device, please note that I have a no-tolerance policy for any work on computers that is not related to our present discussion. Multitasking not only harms your educational experience but also that of your neighbors. Evidence of being off-task will affect your participation grade.

2. Book Review in Week 3 (15%).

In Week 3, we will be discussing three monographs that have stirred much debate about foreign aid. You will be asked to read one of the three books and to review it in 5-6 (double-spaced) pages. You will be provided with examples of book reviews featured in political science journals. Please try to emulate the style of these book reviews and discuss the book's merits and deficits.

3. Two Response Papers in Weeks 4-9, 12-14 (10% each).

We will circulate a sign-up sheet early in the semester, and response papers will be posted the night before class so that everyone has a chance to review them. The object of the response paper is to stimulate class discussions. Pick a few of the readings and discuss how they connect, what you find persuasive, troubling, puzzling, etc. Please limit your response paper to 2-3 (double-spaced) pages.

4. Presentation in Weeks 10-11 (10%).

You will prepare a 5-minute presentation of your final paper research in progress. Your presentation should include your puzzle, your research question, your candidate explanations, and what kind of evidence you are collecting. You will receive 5 minutes of feedback from the class. Given the brevity of this presentation, I advise you to outline and practice your presentation in advance so that it covers the essential parts of your argument.

5. Final Paper (35%).

The final research paper should be 25-30 (double-spaced) pages in length. You will be expected to identify a puzzling research question on any topic in global development, offer multiple theoretical explanations or theories, and test your explanations on empirical evidence. Research questions should ask *why* political outcomes or behaviors occur rather than *should* political outcomes or behaviors occur. You may use qualitative or quantitative evidence to answer your question.

All paper topics must be approved by me. You will submit a short 1-2 (double-spaced) page research proposal by week 5.

III. Course Materials

Readings are available from e-reserves, regular reserves, and the Courseworks website. All readings are required unless otherwise indicated. The following book is required:

van de Walle, *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis*

Students will also be asked to obtain 1 of the following books (to be assigned in Week 1):

Sachs, *The End of Poverty*

Easterly, *The White Man's Burden*

Moyo, *Dead Aid*

IV. How to Read for this Course

The primary goal of this course is to practice applying theories of international relations and comparative politics to issues in global development. As such, the topics covered in Parts II and III of the course will typically feature 1-2 theory readings alongside empirical readings specific to global development. In your reading, focus on the following:

- What are the various theories and what are the main differences in how they understand the world?
- How are these theories being applied in the empirical papers for this week?
- Can you imagine other ways to apply or test the theories?

Please note that some of the empirical papers involve sophisticated quantitative methods to make their claims. You will not be expected to learn or understand these methods. When reading the empirical papers, focus on understanding the intuition behind the relationship the author is establishing. This will involve recognizing the dependent and the independent variables (which we will practice early in the semester) and whether the author's results confirmed or rejected the hypotheses.

* starred readings are optional

PART I: CONTEXT

Week 1: Introduction

- What to expect from this course
- What is foreign aid?

Radelet (2006), “A Primer on Foreign Aid”

Week 2: History of development

- What is development? How have ideas about and measurements of development changed over time?
- What is the Washington Consensus and why did it fail?
- How have major IFIs like the World Bank and the IMF changed their approach to development in the last two decades?

van de Walle, *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis*, Intro, Chs 1, 2, 5.

*Winters and Kulkarni, “The World Bank in the Post-Structural Adjustment Era” in Manuela Moschella and Catherine Weaver, eds. *Handbook of Global Economic Governance: Players, Power and Paradigms*. New York: Routledge, pp. 249-64.

Woods. 2006. *The Globalizers: The IMF, the World Bank, and Their Borrowers*, (“The Mission in Mexico”) pp. 84-103, and (“Mission Unaccomplished in Africa”) pp. 141-178

Week 3: The debate over aid

- Book reviews should be posted online 24 hours before class.
- You will be assigned to a group of three and asked to read your group members’ book reviews prior to class.
- In class, you will be asked to work as a team to compare and contrast the approaches of the different books. Consider: Where do their conclusions overlap and diverge? What kinds of evidence does each draw on? Which of the works do you agree with most, and why?

One of:

Sachs, *The End of Poverty* (selections TBD)

Easterly, *The White Man’s Burden* (selections TBD)

Moyo, *Dead Aid* (entire)

PART II: THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND AID

Week 4: Foreign aid allocation

- Why do donors give foreign aid?

- How do their motivations influence aid volumes and channels?

Wohlforth (2008), “Realism” in *Oxford Handbook of International Relations*.

Alesina and Dollar (2000), “Who Gives Foreign Aid to Whom, and Why?” *Journal of Economic Growth*.

*Bermeo and Leblang (2015), “Migration and Foreign Aid,” *International Organization*.

Dietrich (2013), “Bypass or Engage? Explaining Donor Delivery Tactics in Foreign Aid Allocation,” *International Studies Quarterly*.

Week 5: Two-level games in donor countries

- Case Study: How have domestic economic interests and public opinion shaped US foreign aid policy?

Putnam (1988), “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games,” *International Organization*.

Milner and Tingley (2013), “Public Opinion and Foreign Aid: A Review Essay,” *International Interactions*.

Norris (2017), “USAID: A History of Public Opinion on Foreign Aid,” (3 parts) *Devex*.
<https://pages.devex.com/USAID-history.html>

Norris (2016), “President Bush and His Development Legacy,” *Devex*
<https://www.devex.com/news/president-bush-and-his-development-legacy-87725>

Norris (2016), “President Obama and His Development Legacy,” *Devex*
<https://www.devex.com/news/president-obama-and-his-development-legacy-87853>

Week 6: International development institutions

- In what ways do international organizations influence global development?
- Do international organizations “matter,” or do they just reflect state interests?

Mearsheimer (1994), “The False Promise of International Institutions,” *International Security*.

*Dreher, Sturm, and Vreeland (2009), “Development Aid and International Politics: Does Membership on the UN Security Council Influence World Bank Lending Decisions?” *Journal of Development Economics*.

Barnett and Finnemore (1999), “The Power, Politics, and Pathologies of International Organizations,” *International Organization*.

Dolan, “Labeling Leaders and Laggards: International Organizations and the Politics of Defining Development,” working paper.

Week 7: Emerging donors

- Who are the “new” or “emerging” donors, and what do we know about the type and volume of foreign aid they provide?

- How might traditional donors and recipient countries view foreign aid from emerging donors?
- To what extent can foreign aid facilitate China's emergence as a global power, if at all?

Organski and Kugler (1980), "The Power Transition," *The War Ledger*, ch. 1.

Brautigam (2010), *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa* (selection TBD).

Walz and Ramachandran (2010), "Brave New World: A Literature Review of Emerging Donors and the Changing Nature of Foreign Assistance," *Center for Global Development Working Paper* 273.

*Flores-Macias and Kreps (2013), "The Foreign Policy Consequences of Trade: China's Commercial Relations with Africa and Latin America," *Journal of Politics*.

PART III: THEORIES OF COMPARATIVE POLITICS AND AID

Week 8: Theorizing institutions and development

- What are institutions, and why are they so important to development?
- What are principal-agent problems? How do they help us understand institutions?

Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson (2005). "Institutions as a Fundamental Cause of Long-Run Growth," in Philippe Aghion and Steven N. Durlauf, eds., *Handbook of Economic Growth*, Volume 1A: 385-471. Sections 1 – 4 (pp. 385 – 421).

Besley, *Principled Agents*, ch. 3.

Week 9: Evidence on foreign aid effectiveness

- Do institutions in recipient countries condition the effectiveness of foreign aid?
- Through what mechanisms can foreign aid affect institutions themselves?

Winters and Wright (2010), "The Politics of Effective Foreign Aid," *Annual Review of Political Science*.

Brautigam and Knack (2004), "Foreign Aid, Institutions, and Governance in SSA," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*.

Morrison (2012), "What can we learn about the resource curse from foreign aid?" *World Bank Research Observer*.

*Carnegie and Marinov (2017), "Foreign Aid, Human Rights, and Democracy Promotion: Evidence from a Natural Experiment." *American Journal of Political Science*.

Week 10: Presentations

Week 11: Presentations

Week 12: Distributing foreign aid in recipient countries

- Under what conditions does foreign aid impact election outcomes in recipient governments?
- Should this be alarming to development practitioners? Why or why not?

Stokes et al. (2013), *Brokers, Voters, and Clientelism*, pp. 3-23.

*Jablonski (2014), "How Aid Targets Votes," *World Politics*.

Briggs (2015), "The Influence of Aid Volatility on African Election Outcomes," *International Interactions*.

Cruz and Schneider (2017), "Foreign Aid and Undeserved Credit Claiming," *American Journal of Political Science*.

"Fading Faith in Good Works," *The Economist*, June 29, 2017.
<https://www.economist.com/news/international/21724383-it-also-weakened-countrys-fledgling-government-aid-brought-liberia-back>

Week 13: Foreign aid and conflict

- Through what mechanisms can foreign aid increase or decrease violence?
- What are the implications of these findings for policy?

Blattman and Miguel (2010), "Civil War," *Journal of Economic Literature*.

*Christia, Beath, and Enikolopov (2016), "Winning Hearts and Minds through Development: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Afghanistan," working paper.

Nunn and Qian (2014), "US Food Aid and Civil Conflict," *American Economic Review*.

Crost, Felter, and Johnston (2014), "Aid Under Fire: Development Projects and Civil Conflict," *American Economic Review*.

PART IV: ETHICS OF AID

Week 14: Ethics of individual aid and service

- This week's readings are short but provocative.
- To what extent do you think we should feel personally responsible for addressing world poverty? Can our efforts ever produce more harm than good?
- Do you think these ethical arguments apply to governments?
- How has your study of global development influenced your views on whether and how you can contribute to reducing poverty, if at all?

Ivan Illich (1968), "To Hell with Good Intentions," http://www.swaraj.org/illich_hell.htm

Peter Singer (1999), "The Singer Solution to World Poverty,"
<http://www.nytimes.com/1999/09/05/magazine/the-singer-solution-to-world-poverty.html?pagewanted=all>