

SYLLABUS

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION: A DIVE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Instructor

Hiba Zerrougui, PhD candidate in Political Science (McGill University)

Email: hiba.zerrougui@mail.mcgill.ca

Course Meetings

Class: MTWRF 9:30am – 11:00am

Conference: MTWRF 11:15am – 12:00pm

Description

What are humanitarian crises? Why do they occur? How has the “international community” responded to armed conflict and natural disasters? Do these initiatives effectively alleviate human suffering? Is humanitarianism an appropriate response to problems in 21st century world politics? Humanitarian Crisis and International Cooperation is a noncredit course that aims to provide you with a critical outlook on the concept of humanitarian crisis, on the ideology of humanitarianism and, more concretely, on the multifaceted effects of humanitarian assistance. It also put to test your critical thinking abilities with the use of interactive teaching methods such as the simulation of a humanitarian crisis. More fundamentally, we will address enduring debates that have shaped the field of political science and world politics, such as: how does international cooperation occur? What is the impact of international law? How does one prevent the occurrence of war, genocides and massive population displacements? What are the state’s obligations towards its citizens? How do non-state actors affect international peace and security? Why does gender matter?

Student participation

- Conferences:* Students will take part in daily conference meetings to discuss topics addressed during the lecture and reading assignments. It is an opportunity to exchange with each other in a respectful and convivial environment.
- Workshops:* Students will also have the opportunity to learn about the fundamentals of scientific inquiry and put this knowledge to good use in a team research project.
- Simulation:* Students will also take part in a simulation of a humanitarian crisis and international intervention ([AFTERSHOCK](#)). More information will be provided in class.
- Class project:* Students will participate in a research project during the program. Students will work in teams of four or five. Teams will be built in class during the second day of the program. Topics will be selected from a list provided by the course instructor. Preparation time will be provided in class. However, team project will also require extra work outside the classroom. Please plan accordingly.

Classroom etiquette

During this program, I want to create a stimulating and inclusive environment for learning. To do this, I ask that you respect few basic ground rules:

1. I start class on time and I expect you to arrive on time.
2. I expect that you arrive in class ready to work. Assignments must be done before class. For example, assignments listed for the first class must be done before that class. Please make sure, throughout the program, that you have read all the readings, listen to or watched all the programs that I have assigned before arriving in class.
3. I will not allow computers and tablets during class lectures. Indeed, several scientific studies have demonstrated that computers and tablets are distracting during lectures and that typing class notes inhibits learning. They are allowed during workshops and conferences, however.
4. Please remember to silence your mobile phone when in class.

Special needs

If you face any particular barrier to learning, please feel free to let me know at any time before and/or during the program. In my efforts to foster an inclusive and agreeable learning environment, I will do my best to accommodate students who have special needs.

SCHEDULE

Class 1| Introduction (July 8th)

Description:

- Defining humanitarian crisis;
- Exploring the different types of humanitarian disasters;
- Analyzing the causes of humanitarian crises.

Workshop: Breaking the ice.

Conference: What is the link between famine and regime type?

Assignments:

- Massing, Michael. "[Does Democracy Avert Famine?](#)" The New York Times, March 1st 2003;
- York, Geoffrey. "[South Sudan Leaders Blamed for Orchestrating Deliberate Famine](#)" The Globe and Mail, March 26th 2017;
- Gardels, Nathan. "[Amartya Sen: What India Can Learn From China](#)", Huffington Post, February 2, 2014.

Class 2| Humanitarianism: origin of an idea(I) and its legal foundations (July 9th)

Description:

- Defining humanitarianism;
- Overview of its history and of the legal foundations of humanitarian action.

Workshop: Presentation of class project and team building activity.

Conference: Case study of Iraq: Can we separate humanitarianism from politics?

Assignments:

- Listen to "[DIY Mossul](#)" Fresh Air, NPR, December 19, 2018 (39 minutes);
- Read the "[Universal Declaration of Human rights](#)," United Nations, December 10, 1948;
- Watch:
 - ICRC. "[Rules of War in a Nutshell](#)", 2014 (5 minutes);
 - "[The Story of Human Rights](#)", 2009. (10 minutes).

Class 3| Confronting theory to the reality on the ground (July 10th)

Description:

- Who are the main humanitarian actors?
- What are the four main principles of humanitarian action?
- What are the challenges to principled humanitarian action?

Workshop: Simulation "[Inside the Haiti Earthquake.](#)"

Conference: Exploring the dilemmas of humanitarian action with the case of Nepal and Liberia.

Assignments:

- Listen to "[Don't Panic!](#)" story about Liberia and Ebola, Hidden Brain, NPR, December 22, 2017 (25 minutes) and take notes on what were the dilemmas faced by humanitarian actors;
- Watch:
 - The video from the EU Civil Protection & Humanitarian Aid Operations: "[The Humanitarian Principles](#)" (2 minutes);
 - The Al Jazeera 101 East Documentary (26 minutes) "[Nepal: After the Earthquake](#)" and take notes on what were the limits of and obstacles to humanitarian assistance.

Class 4| Humanitarian interventions: Might is right? (July 11th)

Description:

- What are humanitarian interventions?
- How do they differ from humanitarian assistance?
- What are the lessons learned from interventions in Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia?

Conference: Roundtable on class project.

Assignments: Work on your research project to prepare for the roundtable. Make sure to do the appropriate readings pertaining to your project.

Class 5| Why do “we” fail to help? Why aren’t all crises created equal? (July 12th)

Description:

- Why are we failing at preventing and/or addressing humanitarian crises?
- Case study of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (documentary “The Peacekeepers”)

Workshop: What are the impediments for humanitarian action?

Conference: What could have been done to prevent the crisis in Venezuela?

Assignments:

- Listen to:
 - [“Episode 731: How Venezuela Imploded”](#) Planet Money, NPR, October 21, 2016 (19 minutes);
 - [“The Indicator: The Measure of a Tragedy”](#). NPR, June 19, 2018 (10 minutes).

Class 6| AFTERSHOCK: a humanitarian crisis simulation (July 15th)

Description:

- AFTERSHOCK is a team-based cooperative simulation of a humanitarian intervention. It explores the cooperation needed to address distinct phases of a complex humanitarian crisis.

No workshop / no conference

Assignments:

- Familiarize yourself with AFTERSHOCK’s rules. Please note that it is perfectly normal that you do not fully understand the rules. They will be explained to you in detail before you play the game on Monday.

Class 7| Refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) (July 16th)

Description:

- Who are forcibly displaced people?
- What are the legal and institutional frameworks for refugee protection?
- What are the durable solutions for refugees and what challenges do they face?

Workshop: Roundtable to update the class with an outline of your class project.

Conference: Group discussion on the story of Abdi, the Somali refugee.

Assignments:

- Listen to "[Abdi and the Golden Ticket](#)", This American Life, NPR, July 3, 2015 (61 minutes);
- "Play" the simulation "[Syrian Journey: Choose your Own Escape Route](#)," BBC, 2015;

Class 8| The ethics of humanitarianism (July 17th)

Description:

- Why are some actors very critical of humanitarianism?
- What are the unintended consequences of humanitarian assistance?
- Does humanitarian assistance / intervention effectively alleviate human suffering?

Workshop: How to assess research in political science?

Conference: Group discussion on the podcast episode "The Congo we listen to."

Assignments:

- Read
 - "[Alms Dealers: Can You Provide Humanitarian Aid without Facilitating Conflicts?](#)" by Philip Gourevitch, The New Yorker, October 11th, 2010;
 - "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema" by Horace Miner from American Anthropologist, 1956, 58(3), 503-507.
- Listen to "[The Congo we listen to](#)," Rough Translation, NPR, Aug 28, 2017 (41 min).

Class 9| Transitions from humanitarian assistance to sustainable development (July 18th)

Description: Simulation to explore the impediments to a transition towards post-conflict development

Workshop: Group work on your class project.

No conference

Assignments: Work on your class project.

Class 10| Trivia Challenge (July 19th)

Description: Team-based game to test your knowledge on humanitarian crisis and cooperation.

No workshop / No conference

Assignments: Prepare for the trivia game!