

What Works in Global Health and Development

Duke University, Fall 2014

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| Course Code: | GLHLTH 175FS-01 |
| Instructor: | Eric Green, Ph.D. |
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| Web: | Facebook (gated) / Google Drive (gated) |
| Classroom: | Trent 39 |
| Time: | TTh 4:40-5:55 |

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Incomes are stagnant in many parts of the world, and the gap between the rich and poor has never been greater. Every year, more than 6 million children die before their fifth birthday, mostly from preventable causes. More than 35 million people are living with HIV/AIDS, and one million die every year. In 2014, there will likely be more than 200 million cases of malaria and more than 8 million new cases of TB. One billion people live in extreme poverty.

Over the past few decades, the rich world has transferred approximately 2 trillion in aid to developing countries. Has it all been a waste? Money thrown down “Third world rat-holes”? Or has this money been woefully inadequate? Are there any reasons for optimism?

We will examine these and other questions by sampling a selection of popular titles in global health and development. Critically, we will consider the role of the international community—and each of us as world citizens—in contributing to progress.

We will begin the semester by reading two accounts of life in urban slums. In the first, George Orwell writes a memoir of his marginalized experience living in two of the world’s greatest cities in the first half of the 20th century. In the second, Katherine Boo describes life in a modern-day Mumbai slum.

Next, we will turn to two books that will give us an opportunity to consider guiding frameworks for thinking about the world’s problems and society’s role in alleviating suffering. In “To Repair the World”, we’ll read a series of short speeches by Paul Farmer, the well-known doctor and Duke alum. In “Development as Freedom”, we’ll consider economist Amartya Sen’s argument that poverty is the result of one or more “unfreedoms”.

Just before Fall Break, we will enter a lively debate about the role of foreign aid in bringing about “The End of Poverty”. Economist Jeff Sachs gives us an inspiring look at how we could end extreme poverty by 2025 with enough resources. Could it work? In 2006, Sachs launched the Millennium Villages Project to convince the world. Did it work? Journalist Nina Munk takes us on a critical journey to MVP sites in her book “The Idealist”. Between these two bookends we will screen “Good Fortune”, a documentary about the recipients of foreign aid in Kenya and the flipside of good intentions.

After the break, we will dive into two books that will examine “what works” on a much smaller, and more easily testable scale. Economists Bill Easterly and Jessica Cohen curate a collection of essays in “What works in Development” from some of the world’s most respected scholars. In “Poor Economics”, Esther Duflo and Abhijit Banerjee, two of the founders of the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab, review evidence from recent randomized controlled trials and reveal keen insights into the lives of the poor and suggest steps for turning evidence into action.

In the run up to Thanksgiving, we will turn to public health and humanitarian response. In “Mountains Beyond Mountains”, Tracy Kidder brings us back to Dr. Paul Farmer and the inspiring story of Partners

in Health. We'll remain in Haiti for Jonathan Katz's award-winning look at what happened (and did not happen) in the aftermath of the January 2010 earthquake when the world pledged more than 16 billion in aid. We'll also screen our second film, "Living in Emergency", a documentary about the challenging work of Doctors Without Borders.

We will wrap up the semester with Charles Kenny's "Getting Better". We'll ask ourselves whether all of the news is really doom and gloom and consider again the role of the international community in fostering progress.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students will:

- Have considered the nature of poverty and what we mean by "development" and foreign aid.
- Know broad trends over time in important global health and development statistics.
- Understand contemporary debates about the role of the international community in poverty alleviation, global health, and humanitarian action.
- Be familiar with evidence on "what works" and understand the basic toolkit for generating this evidence.
- Have reflected on what all of this means for their lives as citizens and professionals.

CLASS FORMAT

We will read several books and screen two films this semester, just about one per week:

- *Down and Out in Paris and London*, George Orwell ([Amazon](#)/on reserve)
- *Beyond the Beautiful Forevers*, Katherine Boo ([Amazon](#)/[Duke eBook](#))
- *To Repair the World*, Paul Farmer ([Amazon](#)/on reserve)
- *Development as Freedom*, Amartya Sen ([Amazon](#)/on reserve)
- *The End of Poverty*, Jeff Sachs ([Amazon](#)/on reserve)
- *The Idealist*, Nina Munk ([Amazon](#)/on reserve)
- *Good Fortune*, Landon Van Soest and Jeremy Levine ([website](#))
- *What Works in Development*, Jessica Cohen and Bill Easterly ([Amazon](#)/on reserve)
- *Poor Economics*, Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo ([Amazon](#)/on reserve)
- *Mountains Beyond Mountains*, Tracy Kidder ([Amazon](#)/on reserve)
- *The Big Truck That Went By*, Jonathan Katz ([Amazon](#)/on reserve)
- *Living in Emergency*, Mark Hopkins ([website](#))
- *Getting Better*, Charles Kenny ([Amazon](#)/[Duke eBook](#))

You will have the first week of the semester to read the first book on our list, "Down and Out in Paris and London". We'll discuss the book in class on Tuesday September 2 and work on an in-class assignment related to the book on Thursday September 4. We'll discuss our second book, "Beyond the Beautiful Forevers", and complete an in-class activity the following Tuesday and Thursday, respectively. This will be our format all semester. Book discussion on Tuesday, in-class activity on Thursday.

Each book is on reserve at Perkins Library for overnight checkout. Two of the books are available through Duke as eBooks. The cost of the other nine on Amazon Kindle is currently just under \$100. You do not need to own a Kindle, smartphone, or tablet to read Kindle books; you can read Kindle books in your computer's browser (Cloud Reader) or in the desktop app.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class Participation (50%)

Your participation grade will be determined by your attendance and contributions to class activities. You should be prepared to comment on every reading in case I decide to call on you in class. I will incorporate pop quizzes and other assignments if I feel there is a need to further incentivize students to keep up with the readings.

You are permitted 2 unexcused absences throughout the semester. Beyond that, each unexcused absence will result in your grade being lowered by 1-step (e.g., A+ to A). Coming late to class counts as 0.5 unexcused absences. You are responsible for [tracking missed classes](#); all inputs on the honor system.

Officially, Duke permits students to miss work due to absence from class in four circumstances: illness; personal emergencies; religious observance; and varsity athletic participation. Please take a moment to [read](#) how Duke defines each circumstance. Missed work associated with any other absence is not covered by this policy and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Oral Exam (25%)

Your midterm will be a 9-minute oral exam during class time on October 7 or 9 (private meetings every 10 minutes). I will ask you three questions. You will have 3-minutes to answer each question, and you may skip one question. I will evaluate each answer on a 0-5 scale. I will drop your lowest score, so total scores can range from 0 to 10. Skipping a question will not count as your lowest score.

Final Exam (25%)

Your final exam is scheduled for Sunday December 14 from 7-10pm ET. Since this is the last possible exam slot, this will be take-home exam. It will be due at 10pm sharp on the 14th as per Duke policy on take-home finals. I will give you a copy of the exam with instructions for submission on our last day of class. The exam will be graded out of 100 points. You will lose 5 points for a late submission and 2 additional points for every hour after the deadline. For instance, if you submit your exam at 10:01pm ET, you will lose 5 points. If you submit at 11:00pm, you will lose 7 points. And so on.

I encourage you to consult the Writing Studio when you are preparing your final. In addition to offering 1-on-1 consultations, the Writing Studio also publishes [helpful resources](#) that will help you to improve your drafts, such as [this collection](#) on working with sources. Avoid plagiarism and [know when to quote \(rarely\) and when to paraphrase \(often\)](#). If you do not use a citation manager, you should, and the library can help you get started.

EVALUATION

Students should abide by the [Duke Community Standard](#) at all times. If a questionable circumstance arises, do not hesitate to seek my guidance (before is always better than after).

Grading Scale

The grading scale for this course is as follows:

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|-----------------|----------|-----------|
| A+: 100-98 | A: 97-93 | A-: 92-90 |
| B+: 89-87 | B: 86-83 | B-: 82-80 |
| C+: 79-77 | C: 76-73 | C-: 72-70 |
| D+: 69-67 | D: 66-63 | D-: 62-60 |
| F: 59 and below | | |

Final Grade

Your final grade will be a weighted average of your participation (50%), midterm (25%), and final (25%). If you are in between grades, and if the difference is less than or equal to 0.5, your score will round up (e.g., 97.5 rounds up to 98). See this [grading template](#) for more details. Penalties for late submissions will be described with each assignment.

CLASS SCHEDULE

| Date | Class | Date | Class |
|------------|----------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|
| T Aug 26 | Introductions | Th Oct 16 | Good Fortune (Film) |
| Th Aug 28 | Pro Tips | T Oct 21 | The Idealist |
| T Sept 02 | Down and Out in Paris and London | Th Oct 23 | The Idealist |
| Th Sept 04 | Down and Out in Paris and London | T Oct 28 | What Works in Development |
| T Sept 09 | Beyond the Beautiful Forevers | Th Oct 30 | What Works in Development |
| Th Sept 11 | Beyond the Beautiful Forevers | T Nov 04 | Poor Economics |
| T Sept 16 | To Repair the World | Th Nov 06 | Poor Economics |
| Th Sept 18 | To Repair the World | T Nov 11 | Mountains Beyond Mountains |
| T Sept 23 | Development as Freedom | Th Nov 13 | Mountains Beyond Mountains |
| Th Sept 25 | Development as Freedom | T Nov 18 | The Big Truck That Went By |
| T Sept 30 | The End of Poverty | Th Nov 20 | The Big Truck That Went By |
| Th Oct 02 | The End of Poverty | T Nov 25 | Living in Emergency (Film) |
| T Oct 07 | Oral Exam | Th Nov 27 | Thanksgiving Break |
| Th Oct 09 | Oral Exam | T Dec 02 | Getting Better |
| T Oct 14 | Fall Break | Th Dec 04 | Getting Better |

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How can we contact you?

Posting to Facebook is almost always the best option for asking a class-related question. I'm likely to reply quickly because everyone benefits from the post. If you need a quick answer to something that does not impact others, call or text. Otherwise, send an email.

What are your office hours?

Office hours vary by week. It's best just to let me know you want to meet and we will find a time that works. Skype is always an option if we can't meet in person.

May I use electronic devices during class?

You may use devices during in-class activities (when needed), but not during book discussions. Of course, if you purchase ebooks for the course, then you may use a device to access the book during class. No other use during book discussions will be permitted.

Is it OK to record class sessions?

You are free to create recordings in class that aid your learning, but only on non-book discussion days (see above). This does not give you permission to share or distribute these recordings. Know that for all of your classes, the speaker holds the copyright to the lecture, and you must get the speaker's written permission to distribute this content. And you have to consider individual privacy rights of your classmates. [This video](#) produced by Duke's Scholarly Communications Office gives a short overview of the issues.