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**Office** | Pierce Hall 108  
**Office Hours** | Monday 1:30-2:30 and by appointment

**SMITH COLLEGE**  
**FALL 2025**

**GOV 240**  
***NGOs in World Politics***  
**MW 10:50-12:05**  
***Seelye 211***

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

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Since the end of the Second World War, there has been an enormous growth in the number of NGOs active globally, some working across borders on issues as diverse as poverty, health, women's rights, and emergency relief. Both international and national NGOs have taken on new roles in areas once considered the domain of the government. NGOs are seen as the best way of promoting human/civil/minority rights and even socio-economic development in a post-Cold War era. They have become one of the hallmarks of post-Cold War international relations. This course elaborates on how NGOs became crucial actors in world politics and examine their growing and changing roles.

The course is divided into three parts. In the first part, we will examine the definition, purpose, and history of NGOs. The second part will focus on key aspects of NGOs, including their authority, legitimacy, and funding. In the final part, we will analyze case studies of NGOs from different regions to explore the relationship between context, networks, and strategies they employ to influence world politics. This section will also address critiques of NGOs: Do they do more harm than good? Do they undermine the state's capacity to fulfill its responsibilities? What is their role as civic advocates and service providers? Do they erode local political movements for social justice?

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

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This course is designed for students from diverse backgrounds. No scientific or technical background is necessary. Familiarity with global affairs is very helpful, but not required. It is recommended that students read or listen to an international news source regularly during this course, such as the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *BBC*, *Aljazeera*. You can subscribe to them through Smith College library:

<https://libraries.smith.edu/news/online-access-new-york-times-wall-street-journal-and-washington-post>

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Become familiar with the core debates and history of NGOs in international relations.
- Develop a critical understanding of contemporary issues challenging NGOs, and their roles in the world politics
- Analyze major debates in the politics of NGOs in international politics concerning internal organizational issues, ethical dilemmas of their practices in communities and challenges with funding and resource mobilization
- Familiarize themselves with issue specific roles of NGOs from different parts of the world that are working on human rights, development, gender, and environment.

## REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

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Grading will be based on (a) class participation, (b) reflections on local NGOs (c) final paper and presentation on NGO campaigns.

**PARTICIPATION (15%)** | Two of the course's critical expectations are attendance and class discussions. You are expected to do all the readings on time, be in the class and fully participate in class discussions. Attendance is mandatory and will be recorded in each class. Throughout the semester you have **two** absence passes with no questions asked. Beyond the two allowed absences, one point will be deducted from your overall grade for each additional class missed. If you miss more than six classes, you will automatically get an F. You will be evaluated based on your attendance and on the relevance and quality of your comments and questions to the reading material throughout our discussions.

**REFLECTION ON LOCAL NGOS (45%)** | In collaboration with the Jandon Center you will engage with selected local NGOs to better understand their work challenges and community impact. This assignment consists of two phases:

***Reflection Survey with a Local NGOs (20%):*** You are expected to visit a local NGO (selected from a pool that will be provided) and conduct a partner survey to gather information about the organization's mission, operations, challenges and community involvement. After completing the survey, you are expected to write a two-page reflection paper summarizing your findings, experiences and insights gained through the visit. Detailed guidelines will be provided.

***Comparison and Policy Recommendations (25%):*** In this phase, you will compare and analyze insights from two local NGOs (based on your own and your peers surveys) and prepare a policy recommendation paper which will include two policy recommendations. One tailored for the specific NGO you visited to help improve its impact and operations and one addressed to the Jandon Center to enhance its support or engagement strategies with the local NGOs. You will work in groups for this assignment, and your paper will be maximum of four pages. More detailed instructions will be provided.

**NGO CAMPAIGNS (40%)** | In this assignment, I expect you to learn, think, and write about an international NGO. The purpose of this assignment is to encourage you to critically analyze the role of a specific NGO in addressing a global issue, evaluating its strategies, successes, challenges, and failures. This analysis should connect real-world practices to theoretical concepts discussed in class. The presentations will take place between **Week 7 and 13** and you are expected to work in a group for this project. You are expected to submit your proposal on **September 29**. Further information will be provided.

## LATENESS POLICY

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If you have a problem meeting the deadline, please come and speak to me beforehand.

## OFFICE HOURS

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My office hours are Mondays from 01:30-02:30 and by appointment, and I am always happy to meet with you if you need to talk about something. If this time does not work with your schedule, we can easily arrange another time. My office is at Pierce Hall, 108.

## ACCOMMODATING LEARNING DIFFERENCES

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If you need course adaptations or accommodations that may impact your performance or participation in this course, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible.

## ACADEMIC HONESTY

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Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. If you have any questions regarding the proper use of sources, please do not hesitate to ask. For further information about the Honor Code, please visit:

<https://www.smith.edu/sao/handbook/socialconduct/honorcode.php>

## COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

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There are no readings that need to be purchased for this course. All the readings will be available via Moodle. The course readings may be updated based on the recent developments; please always check Moodle to see new/additional reading materials. Please check your e-mail regularly and read the e-mails I may send for additional readings and more information about the assignments.

Please note that this is a tentative outline, and it might be subjected to changes depending on our progress. Be aware that we will discuss only some aspects of the required readings in detail in class. However, students are responsible for all the **required** readings listed below.

### ***1 / DEFINITIONS and HISTORY***

#### **WEEK 1**

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**Monday, 09/08**

#### **COURSE OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTIONS**

*Required Readings*

Goldberg, M. (2024) "[What part of Civil Society Will Trump's Party Target?](#)" NYT, May 10, 2024.

Blair, L. (2024) "[Alarm Over New Law Giving Paraguay Powers to Crack Down on NGOs](#)," *The Guardian*, 19 November 2024.

Harter, F. (2024), "[A Colonial Mindset: While Global Aid Agencies Need to Get Out of the Way](#)," *The Guardian*, 7 May, 2024.

WP (2024) [The Taliban Say They Will Close All NGOs Employing Afghan Women](#), WP, December 30, 2024.

Masih, N. & Brown, K. (2024) [Israel Bars Six Medical NGOs from Entry to Gaza WHO Says](#), WP, October 18, 2024.

Fahrenthold, D.E & Vogel K.H. (2024) [Non Profits View a New Resistance Will Donors Pay up?](#), NYT, November 13, 2024.

**Wednesday, 09/10**

#### **DEFINITIONS [(Global) Civil Society & NGOs]**

*Required Readings*

Kaldor, M. (2003), "The Idea of Global Civil Society", *International Affairs*, Vol:79, NO:3, 583-593.

Kersten M. (2002), "Mission Impossible? Defining Nongovernmental Organizations." *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*. 13(3): 271-285.

Bernal, V. and Grewal, I. (2014) *Theorizing NGOs: States, Feminisms and Neoliberalism*, Duke University Press, Introduction.

## WEEK 2

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**Monday, 09/15**

### **A BRIEF HISTORY / The UN**

*Required Readings*

Schroeder, M. and Wapner, P. (2018) "Non-Governmental Organizations, in *Oxford Handbook on United Nations*, edited by Weiss, T.G. and Daws, S., OUP, Ch 18.

Joachim, J. & Dalmer, N. (2016) the United Nations and Agenda Setting, in *Handbook of Public Policy Agenda Setting*, Nicholas Zahariadis (eds.) Edward Edgar Publishing, 367-388.

Ross, A. (2017), "Growing Role of NGOs and the UN", *Beyond the Horizon*.

**Wednesday, 09/17**

### **GLOBALIZATION AND NEOLIBERALISM**

*Guest Speaker*

Prof. E. Ahmet Tonak

*Required Readings*

Stilwell, F. "Corporate Globalization"

Kamat, S. & Ismail, F. (2018), "NGOs, Social Movements and the Neoliberal State: Incorporation, Reinvention, Critique, *Critical Sociology*, Vol:44, Issue 4-5.

*Suggested Readings*

Cammet, M. & MacLean, M. L. (2014), *Politics of Non-State Welfare*, edited by Melani Cammett and Lauren M. MacLean, Cornell University Press.

Leve, L. and L. Karim (2001). "Privatizing the State: Ethnography of Development, Transnational Capital, and NGOs." *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 24(1): 53-58.

## WEEK 3

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**Monday, 09/22**

### **A BRIEF HISTORY / Globalization**

*Required Readings*

Reimann, Kim. D. A (2006), "View from the Top: International politics, Norms and the Worldwide Growth of NGOs", *International Studies Quarterly* 50, No:1; 45-68

Rullman, M. (2019), "NGOs in Global Governance", in *Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations*, edited by Thomas Davies, Routledge, 33-50.

Davies, T. (2019), "Transnational Non-State Politics", in *Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations*, edited by Thomas Davies, Routledge, 51-60.

*Suggested Readings*

Davies, T. (2014), *NGOs: A New History of Transnational Civil Society*, OUP.

**Wednesday, 09/24**

**NO CLASS**

## II. HOW DO NGOs WORK?

### WEEK 4

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**Monday, 09/29**

#### **NGOs and STATES**

*Required Readings*

Stroup, S. S. (2019), "NGOs Interactions with States", in *Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations*, edited by Thomas Davies, Routledge, 19-32.

Heiss, A. (2019) "NGOs and Authoritarianism", in *Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations*, edited by Thomas Davies, Routledge, Chapter 18.

**Wednesday, 10/01**

#### **AUTHORITY and LEGITIMACY**

*Required Readings*

Stroup, S.S. & Wong, W. H. (2017), *The Authority Trap: Strategic Choices of International NGOs*, Cornell University Press, 1-40.

*Listen*

International NGOs: [What you Need to Know](#)

*Suggested Readings*

Mitchell, G.E & Schimitz, H. P. & Vijfeijken, T.B. (2024) *Pover and Irrelevance*, OUP, Ch 4-5, 62-105.

### WEEK 5

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**Monday, 10/06**

#### **FUNDING**

*Required Readings*

INCITE, (2017), "*Revolution will not be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*", edited by INCITE Women of Color Against Violence, Duke University Press.

Schuller, M. (2012), *Killing with Kindness*, Rutgers University Press, CH 5.

Ron, James; Jose' Kaire, Archana Pandya & Andrea Martinez (2018) What will it take to reduce NGO dependence on foreign aid? In: Cesar Rodriguez-Garavito & Krizna Gomez (eds.) *Rising to the Populist Challenge: A New Playbook for Human Rights Actors*. Bogota': Antropos, 153-160.

**Wednesday, 02/08**

#### **NGOS and SMITH COLLEGE**

*Guest Speaker*

Denys Candy, Director, Jandon Center, Smith College. (TBC)

*Required Readings*

The Beautiful Trouble (2023), "[Social Movements and NGOs: Can they get Along](#)", *Yes Magazine*, Jan 31.

## II. LETS TALK ABOUT NGOs

### WEEK 6

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**Monday, 10/13**

**AUTUMN BREAK**

**Wednesday, 10/15**

**STRATEGIES**

*Required Readings*

Mitchell, G.E & Schimitz, H. P. & Vijfeijken, T.B. (2024) *Pover and Irrelevance*, OUP, Ch 3.

Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, M & Sharman, J.S. (20203) *Vigilantes Beyond Borders*, Princeton University Press, Ch. 1.

*Suggested Readings*

Carpenter, C. R. (2007) "Setting the Advocacy Agenda: Theorizing Issue Emergence and Nonemergence in Transnational Advocacy Networks," *International Studies Quarterly* 51, 99-120.

Caroline Harper, "Do the Facts Matter? NGOs, Research, and International Advocacy," in *Global Citizen Action*, edited by Michael Edwards and John Gaventa (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2001): 247-25.

<https://today.uconn.edu/2015/03/new-ways-of-monitoring-human-rights/>

### WEEK 7

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**Monday, 10/20**

**ADVOCACY AND POLICY CHANGE: Amnesty International**

**FILM SCREENING: The Long Haul**

*Required Reading*

Neier, A. (2020) *International Human Rights Movement*, Princeton University Press, Ch 8.

*Suggested Reading*

Wong, W. H. (2012) *Internal Affairs: How the Structure of NGOs Transforms Human Rights*, Cornell University Press.

Huckerby, J., & Rodley, N. (2009). [Outlawing Torture: The Story of Amnesty International's Efforts to Shape the UN Convention Against Torture](#). In *Human Rights Advocacy Stories*. Foundation Press.

**Wednesday, 10/22**

**ADVOCACY AND POLICY CHANGE: Human Rights Watch**

*Required Reading*

Neier, A. (2020) *International Human Rights Movement*, Princeton University Press, Ch 9.

Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, M & Sharman, J.S. (2023) *Vigilantes Beyond Borders*, Princeton University Press, Ch. 2.

*Suggested Readings*

Hafner-Burton, Emilie, "Sticks and Stones: Naming and Shaming -- the Human Rights Enforcement Problem." *International Organization*, Vol. 62 (2008): 689-716.

Welch, E. C. (2001), *NGOs and Human Rights: Promise and Performance*, edited by Welch, E. C., University of Pennsylvania Press

## WEEK 8

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<b>Monday, 10/27</b>	<b>ENFORCERS of INTERNATIONAL LAW: Greenpeace</b>
Required Readings	Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, M & Sharman, J.S. (2023) <i>Vigilantes Beyond Borders</i> , Princeton University Press, Ch. 3.
<b>Wednesday, 10/29</b>	<b>HUMANITARIAN AID: Save the Children</b>
Required Reading	Roth, S. (2019), "Humanitarian NGOs" in <i>Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations</i> , Routledge.  Baughan, E. (2022) <i>Saving the Children: Humanitarianism, Internationalism, and Empire</i> , University of California Books., Introduction.

## WEEK 9

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<b>Monday, 11/03</b>	<b>MEDICAL HUMANITARIAN AID: MSF</b>
Required Reading	Redfield, R. (2013) <i>Life in Crisis: The Ethical Journey of Doctors Without Borders</i> , University of California Press, Ch 3.
Watch	(2008) <i>Living in Emergency: Stories of Doctors Without Borders</i> Director
Suggested Reading	Veran, J.F & Burtscher, D. & Stringer, B. (2020) <i>MSF and Humanitarian Situations</i> , Routledge.
<b>Wednesday, 11/05</b>	<b>VISIT TO SPATIAL LAB</b>

## WEEK 10

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<b>Monday, 11/10</b>	<b>NGOS and DEVELOPMENT</b>
Required Reading	Yanacapul, H. (2019), "International NGOs in Development Studies" in <i>Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations</i> , Routledge.  Kamil, A. (2025) " <a href="#">It is About Solidarity, Not Charity</a> ", Interview With OZFAM GB Chief Halima Begum, <i>The Guardian</i> , January 13, 2025.
Suggested Readings	Banks, N. & Hulme, D. (2012) "the Role of NGOs and Civil Society in Development and Poverty Reduction", <i>Brooks World Power Institute</i> Working Paper 171.  Kamat, S. (2003) "NGOs and the New Democracy: The False Saviours of International Development", <i>Harvard International Review</i> 25 (1), 65-69.
<b>Wednesday, 11/12</b>	<b>SMITH COLLEGE ART MUSEUM</b>

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**WEEK 11**

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<b>Monday, 11/17</b>	<b>CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT: BRAC And Microfinance</b>
<i>Required Reading</i>	Karim, L. (2014) "Demistifying Microcredit: The Grameen Bank, NGOs and Neoliberalism in Bangladesh, in <i>Theorizing NGOs: States, Feminisms and Neoliberalism</i> , Duke University Press, Ch7.
<i>Watch</i>	Poverty Inc. (2014), Director: Michael Matheson Miller
<b>Wednesday, 11/19</b>	<b>GENDER: Feminist Politics and NGOs</b>
<i>Required Reading</i>	Garcia Del Moral, P & Wang, D. & Ferree, M.M. (2019), "Feminist Politics and NGO Mobilization" in <i>Routledge Handbook of NGOs and International Relations</i> , edited by Thomas Davies, Routledge.  Bernal. V. & Grewal, (2014), "Feminist Struggles, States and Neoliberalism", In <i>Theorizing NGOs: States, Feminisms and Neoliberalism</i> eds Bernal, V & Grewal, I eds., Duke University Press,. Ch 4 & 9.

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**WEEK 12**

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<b>Monday, 11/24</b>	<b>RELIGIOUS NGOs</b>
<i>Required Readings</i>	Mouftah, N. (2017) "Faith Development beyond Religion: The NGO as Site of Islamic Reform" in <i>Cultures of Doing Good: Anthropologists and NGOs</i> . Amanda Lashaw, Steven Sampson, and Christian Vannier, eds. (University of Alabama Press, 2017) pgs. 122-141.
<b>Wednesday, 11/26</b>	<b>THANKSGIVING</b>

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**WEEK 13**

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<b>Monday, 12/01</b>	<b>PRESENTATIONS</b>
<b>Wednesday, 12/03</b>	<b>PRESENTATIONS</b>

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**WEEK 14**

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<b>Monday, 12/08</b>	<b>WORKING IN AN NGO: Challenges and Critiques</b>
<i>Required Readings</i>	Kim D. (2005), "Up to No Good? Recent Critics and Critiques of NGOs", <i>Political Science Faculty Publications</i> . 5.  Choudry, A. & Kapoor, D. (2013), <i>NGOization: Complicity, Contradictions and Prospects</i> , Bloomsbury, Introduction.  Teju Cole. (2012), " <a href="#"><u>The White-Savior Industrial Complex</u></a> " <i>The Atlantic</i> ..
<i>Suggested Readings</i>	Fisher, F.W. (1997), "Doing Good? The Politics and Antipolitics of NGOs", <i>Annual Review of Anthropology</i> , Vol:26, 439-464.
<b>Wednesday, 12/10</b>	<b>PRESENTATIONS and WRAP-UP</b>