GLOBAL JUSTICE

PO526/IR523, Fall 2013
Tu, Th 3:30-5:00, CAS 203

John Gerring
jgerring@bu.edu; 353-2756
232 Bay State Road, rm 300
Office hrs: Tue, Thurs 5:00-6:30

This course examines the question of global justice. It is open to advanced undergraduate and graduate students. There are no pre-requisites.

The course begins with a discussion of how one might define the key term, global justice. Next, we survey various empirical indicators of the concept at a global level, accompanied by a more in-depth examination of the lived experience of poverty in one particular context (northeastern Brazil). Most of the rest of the course is consumed with the challenge of explanation. Why do some parts of the world enjoy high levels of wellbeing while others suffer under conditions of extreme deprivation?

In answering this question, a single-semester course is constrained to provide a broad overview of many subjects, with comparatively little time devoted to each. I have tried to highlight those causal factors that (in my view) have had the greatest impact on human welfare at a global level. I have also given preference to arguments that challenge conventional wisdom.

GRADES. Grades will be based on three components, weighted equally: (a) class participation (including attendance, participation, and occasional pop quizzes); (b) a paper due at the end of the semester; and (c) a final exam. You should be aware that this class will require a good deal of time and effort on your part. If you are unable to make this time-commitment you may be happier in a different course.

PROTOCOL. Please arrive on time. Do not read, sleep, or chat with your neighbors. Put your cell phones away. Unless there is some material that you need to access, please put your laptops, notepads, and other PDAs away as well. (You can take notes on paper.) Be respectful of others in your comments. Do not leave until class is dismissed.

ACADEMIC CONDUCT. Plagiarism or cheating of any kind (e.g., consulting notes during a closed-book exam) is strictly forbidden. Please be aware of the following Boston University policy: “All students are responsible for having read the Boston University statement on plagiarism, which is available in the Academic Conduct Code. Students are advised that the penalty for cheating on examinations or for plagiarism may be ‘…expulsion from the program or the University or such other penalty as may be recommended by the Committee on Student Academic Conduct, subject to approval by the dean.’”

ABSENCES, EXTENSIONS. Students are expected to take exams and complete written work at their scheduled times. No excused absences or extensions will be given without documentation of medical, religious or personal reasons, or official Boston University business. If you will be missing additional classes for religious reasons you must inform me of these dates during the first week of class; otherwise, I cannot excuse your absence.

PARTICIPATION. I expect active participation from all students in every session. I do not wish to lecture extensively, though I will do a bit of lecturing every week (more or less depending upon the topic). Nor do I intend to act as quiz-master (in the fashion of John Houseman in Paper Chase), though I will play this role if necessary. You must participate regularly and intelligently in order to get a top grade in this class. Shyness, or unfamiliarity
with the English language, is no excuse. This is a talking profession. Yadayadayada.

However, do not think of participation simply as a matter of “saying something.” There are insightful comments and questions, and then there is irrelevant drivel. You know what I’m getting at. Be especially judicious in the use of anecdotes drawn from your personal life. We all have stories, but these are not always relevant to the subject matter. By the same token, some students may have lived in the developing world or worked for an organization involved in the developing world. Stories drawn from these contexts may be very relevant.

Let me say a word about my own responses to your comments. You should realize that any professor who incorporates discussion into classroom activity is in a somewhat awkward position. I want to encourage open and frank discussion but I must also be sure to correct any misperceptions that arise from such discussion. If a comment is factually or logically wrong I will call attention to it. The purpose is not to embarrass the speaker but simply to clarify the point – for that person and for everyone else, many of whom may share the confusion. Making mistakes is part of the learning experience. If you do not allow yourself to make mistakes you are preventing yourself from learning. I make mistakes all the time. There is nothing wrong with a wrong answer. Oftentimes, the most productive sort of answer or question is one that reveals what is not clear in people’s minds. It is problematic, however, if your answer reveals that you have not done the assigned reading or that you have not been paying attention to previous class discussions.

Please be attentive to standard rules of decorum: avoid dogmatism, respect others’ views, and try to move class discussion forward (pay attention to what others say and respond to the previous point). We will observe the 1-finger/2-finger rule. When you raise two fingers it means that your comment follows directly upon the preceding point. Use the locution “like” only when comparing things – not, like, when pausing in the middle of a sentence.

**ASSIGNMENT.** Several theories of global justice will be introduced in the first meeting of the course. These will be reproduced on a PPT presentation, to be posted on the course web site. Which of these theories is most persuasive and most useful? You may consider other theories as well and you may formulate your version of any of these theories. Write a 10-page paper defending your view and demonstrating how the theory connects up to the issues discussed in this course. You may also wish to acknowledge weaknesses in your chosen theory. A first draft will be required, though only the final draft will be graded. (If you do not turn in the first draft – on the assigned date – the grade on the final draft will be lowered.)

**READING.** Assigned readings are marked by an asterisk on this syllabus. They consist of books to be purchased, material that can be found on the web (you may need to access journals through the BU library system), or material posted on our Blackboard site.

Readings, web sites, and films without an asterisk are optional. Additional suggestions are listed in a companion document which will be posted on the Blackboard site.

There is a lot of reading for this class. Some days it is heavier than others. But overall, it is considerable, and much of it is quite complex. Of course, it is a very small amount of reading relative to the vast subject matter of this course (which extends to virtually any factor that has an appreciable impact on human welfare).

Make sure you allot sufficient time to do the reading prior to class. This is essential in order to make the class work, for you and for me. If you haven’t done the reading ahead of time you will not be able to participate in class discussion and it will be difficult for you to follow my mini-lectures. Most important, you won’t be integrating the material in a sequential fashion.

In order to encourage everyone to do the reading (and reward those who do), there will be regular pop quizzes. Typically, I flip a coin at the beginning of class; if it turns up heads we have a quiz on the reading assigned for that day and/or on points touched upon in the previous class. Grading rules: a missed quiz constitutes an F for that quiz. The worst quiz grade over the course of the semester is automatically dropped, so you have one free pass.

Note that you need not read every sentence and footnote in a reading assignment. Read strategically. If you don’t know how to do this already I hope that you will learn over the course of the semester. Here are some hints: Think about the role of the reading in the context of the course: what’s most important? What is the author’s main argument(s)? How strong is the evidence? Good reading is not just a matter of memorizing...
arguments but also a matter of analysis. I want you to read critically, to be active consumers of social science. How convinced are you of the argument? Have the counter-arguments been adequately addressed? How else might one approach this subject matter? It is more important to have thought about the material than to have read every sentence in an assignment.

TO PURCHASE


RESOURCES. Other courses at BU related to international development are posted at http://www.bu.edu/gdp/

For daily news of the world, try the international editions of the New York Times, the Financial Times, or the BBC World News, all of which are available on-line. When navigating these sites you can click through to some particular region of the world to get all available stories on that region.

For weekly news of the world, I suggest subscribing to The Economist if you can afford it (there may be student discounts). It has a distinct point of view but is perhaps the only weekly with extensive coverage of the world. The prose is engaging and the articles are short and to the point. You may also want to sign up for e-newsletters from the World Bank: http://newsletters.worldbank.org.


Useful URLs/blogs:
• Boston Network for International Development (BNID) (for organizations, jobs and events in the area): www.BNID.org
• How to get a job in international development: http://www.oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/?p=12644
• Chris Blattman: http://chrisblattman.com/
• Center for Global Development: http://www.cgdev.org/section/opinions/blogs/

SCHEDULE. It is possible that the dates and assignments shown below will be altered. If so, an announcement will be made in class and an email will be sent to all registered students. It is your responsibility to keep track of these changes. If there are fundamental changes to the syllabus during the course of the semester a new version of the syllabus will be sent to your email and posted on my homepage. (Note that the syllabus is posted only on my web site, not on the course web site, so as to avoid the confusion of multiple versions.)
Global Justice 1 (9/3)
What does global justice mean? What should it mean? (We return to this question throughout the course, especially at the very end.)

The Rise of Global Inequality (9/5)
How unequal is the world distribution of things that can be measured (e.g., income, health, education)? How have these patterns changed over time?
*Gapminder. [www.gapminder.org/]
*If it were my home: [http://www.ifitweremyhome.com/]

Geography (9/10)
To what extent do geographic factors (climate, soil, access to rivers and seas, land mass configurations, natural flora and fauna) condition the prospects for long-term economic development? Why did Asia triumph over the rest of the world? Why did the industrial revolution occur in Western Europe and not East Asia? What immediate and ongoing impact might geography have on development?
Diamond, Jared. Guns, Germs, and Steel. [prologue, chs 3-4 and 9-13, pp. 405-17. NB p. 87.]

Colonialism, Slavery (9/12)
How is the distribution of welfare across the world affected by geo-politics (past and present)? What role did/does imperial/colonial arrangements play in the development of the “first” world and the much slower development of the “third” world?
*Acemoglu, Robinson. Why Nations Fail. [ch 9]

Macroeconomic Policy and International Political Economy (9/17)
What role does international trade, and international financial institutions (IFIs), play in development? How did the current economic order come to be? Does it work to the advantage of the developing world? How might it be improved? Who governs the global order?
*Perkins, et al. 2013. *Economics of Development, 7th ed.* [chs 5, 18-19] [More detail on these subjects is provided in Part III, which you may browse if you wish. Only chs 5, 18-19 is assigned.]

KOF index of globalization: www.globalization.kof.ethz.ch/
Film: *The World Bank: The Great Experiment* (1997; 2 parts, 50 min. each). [available at Krasker Film Archive.]
Film: “The New Rulers of the World.” Youtube clip: www.youtube.com/watch?v=_xgxCf05Kmw

World Bank and IMF. See BBC Profile: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/3670465.stm
World Trade Organization (WTO). See BBC Profile: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/2429503.stm
For further info on the IMF and the World Trade Organization (WTO) see their homepages.

**Inequality (within-country) and Poverty** (9/19)
What are the causes of intra-country inequality and poverty? What its consequences?

**Lived Experience of Poverty** (9/24)
What does poverty mean to those who are extremely poor? What is the lived experience of global poverty?
*Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. *Death Without Weeping. [pp 1-21, chs 1-5, 7-10]
Scheper-Hughes interviewed by Harry Kreisler. [Posted on Youtube]

**Capitalism for those without capital** (9/26)
Are businesses run by poor people, largely in the informal sector, possible? Are their obstacles and opportunities different from businesses run in the formal sector? Does microenterprise work? Why don’t the poor save (more)? Why don’t economic institutions serve the poor better? What role might non-profit organizations perform? Does micro-lending work?
*Banerjee, Duflo. Poor Economics, ch 6-9.

**Food, Agriculture** (10/1)
Are famines rarer today than in the past? What are/were their causes? What can be done to avoid them in the future? Is there a food crisis today, and if so why? In what respects is agricultural policy detrimental to agricultural production?
*Banerjee, Duflo. Poor Economics, ch 2.


For a detailed look at US agricultural subsidies: http://farm.cwg.org/farm/dp_analysis.php

**Population (10/3**

Are we still living in a Malthusian world? What is the trajectory of current population growth? How is population growth both a contributing factor in development, and a brake on development? What are the causes of demographic transition? What role does migration play in international development?


*Banerjee, Dufo. Poor Economics, ch 5.*


**Health, Mortality (10/8**

What are the causes of mortality around the world? Why is mortality declining in most parts of the world? What are the ongoing challenges to global health? Are these solvable challenges? What impact does health have on growth?


*Banerjee, Dufo. Poor Economics, ch 3.*


Film: “Rx for Survival” (Film, PBS, 2005). [Three 2-hour segments.]

**Education (10/10**

Can education for all be achieved? More precisely, at what level, and at what cost, can it be achieved? What causal effects do investments in education have on economic growth, aggregate human capital, and human welfare?


*Banerjee, Dufo. Poor Economics, ch 4.*


**BU Monday (10/15**
Political Institutions (10/17)
What are “good institutions”? What is governance?
*Acemoglu, Robinson. Why Nations Fail. [chs 3, 12-14]
*Bananee, Duflo. Poor Economics, ch 10.

Rwanda: An Example of Civil Conflict (10/22)
What were the causes of the Rwandan genocide? Why did the international community prevaricate? What are the causes of ethnic conflict? Do ethnic differences cause conflict, or are they merely circumstantial?
*Film: Frontline: The Triumph of Evil (60 min). [In-class screening. Also available at Krasker Film Archive.]
*Wikipedia articles on Rwanda and the Rwandan genocide

Writing (10/24)
Guest lecturer: Joshua Yesnowitz

Statebuilding and State Failure (10/29)
Having a functional state is a prerequisite of sustained development. How do states develop? Why are some more functional than others?

Public Administration (10/31)
What is the best way to provide services to those to need them most? Do centralized, “top-down” approaches work better/worse than decentralized, participatory, “bottom-up” approaches? What are the causes of corruption?

Democracy (11/5)
Does regime-type affect development?

Culture (11/7)
What role does culture – including religion, ethnicity, race, caste, and political culture – play in long-run development?

Cultures and Global Justice (11/12)
What are indigenous peoples? What impact does development have on indigenous peoples? Does the quest for global justice demand the preservation of these cultures?

Happiness (11/14)
*Helliwell, John; Richard Layard; Jeffrey Sachs. World Happiness Report. [Part I]
2012 Gallup poll: http://www.gallup.com/poll/150254/latin-americans-positive-world.aspx#1

Foreign Assistance (11/19)
Does development assistance work? What are the various institutions and instruments of assistance? What role do NGOs and first-world activists play in development?
What is to be Done? (11/21)

*Assignment: You have just obtained a policymaking position at a large charitable organization, an NGO, or USAID.

Where do you think the resources of your organization are best allocated in order to address problems of global justice? Think of three initiatives that you can present to members of your organization. Be as specific as possible – knowing that members of your organization will have many questions about cost, scale, and feasibility, and will want to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs after they are implemented. (This is a one-page assignment and will be graded as a quiz.) In addition to ideas vetted in the readings below, and in previous sections of this course, you may wish to consider charter cities (associated with Paul Romer), Millennium villages (associated with Jeff Sachs), deliberative/participatory democracy (e.g., participatory budgeting), corporate social responsibility, citizen activism, and other nostrums.

*Barnet, Duflo. Poor Economics, “In Place of a Sweeping Conclusion.”

*UN Millennium Project, Jeffrey D. Sachs, Investing In Development: A Practical Plan To Achieve The Millennium Development Goals, January 2005 (Chapters 1 And 2)


Duties to the Poor? (11/26)

Are we personally responsible for the suffering of others around the world? Are we obligated to do something? Is it defensible (or even possible) to do nothing?


www.nytimes.com/2010/10/24/magazine/24volunteerism-t.html?_r=1


*GiveDirectly:

http://www.forbes.com/sites/kerryadolan/2013/05/28/why-google-and-facebook-cofounder-chris-hughes-are-
Global Justice II (12/3)
Do we need a theory of global justice? What place (if any) does philosophy have in a consideration of international development?
*First draft of writing assignment is due. Please send as an email attachment to me.

Conclusions (12/5)
Wrap-up discussion of major themes of the course.

Discussion (12/10)
What elements of global justice (that you feel are important) have been downplayed, ignored, or misrepresented in this class?
*Assignment: Bring at least one example to class with you. (Environmental issues do not count because I have not attempted to include them in this course.) (This is a one-page assignment and will be graded as a quiz.)

Final Exam (TBA)

Final draft of writing assignment due by email (TBA)

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