

## **POLS 261 – World Poverty: An Introduction**

**Trinity College Fall 2008**  
**MW 2:40-3:55**  
**Room: McCook 225**

**Instructor: Kelly P. Wurtz**  
**Office: Trinity Commons 217**  
**Office Hours: MW 1-2, by appt.**  
**Email: [Kelly.Wurtz@trincoll.edu](mailto:Kelly.Wurtz@trincoll.edu)**  
**Phone: (860) 297-2545 ex. 5346**

### **Course Overview**

This class provides an introduction to world poverty by addressing three questions:

1. What do we know about the causes of extreme poverty, particularly the approximately 1 billion people living on less than one dollar a day?
2. What can and do governments do to address poverty?
3. What role do international actors have in mitigating poverty?

We will begin with some conceptual issues. What do we mean by poverty, inequality and vulnerability? How do we measure them? Who are the world's poor: where do they live, and what do they do? Is world poverty falling, staying the same or increasing?

The next section of the course deals with several core public policy issues in poverty alleviation, including problems of rural vs. urban poverty and the delivery of basic social services. What do we expect of governments, and are those expectations politically realistic? The next two sections discuss the role of the international community. We consider the debates over aid and trade, but also the management of complex crises such as famines and civil wars.

We conclude with a discussion of poverty in the United States and some of the ethical issues surrounding world poverty. What, if anything, do we owe the poor of other countries, or in the US for that matter?

### **Required Readings and Course Information**

All course readings will be available online. The closest we'll come to a text is the World Bank's, *The World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty* (Oxford University Press for the World Bank: 2000). The relevant chapters from the report may also be downloaded at:

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/0,,contentMDK:20195989~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:336992,00.html>

The course will maintain a website through Blackboard that will provide all the other readings not available on the internet, information of relevance to the course, including a bulletin board. Lectures (as Powerpoint slides) and study questions will be posted on the class Blackboard page in advance of lectures to guide your reading and assignments. Background briefs and other recommended material and updates will also be posted there as well.

*Required readings are to be read for the day assigned.*

## **Evaluation**

Your grade for the course will be determined by the following components:

1. A brief data assignment (10%) - You will pick a developing country and write up a short assessment of the poverty situation in that country. This will form the foundation for the longer paper/project due at the end of the semester.
2. Short Essays: Two short (1000 word) essays on the readings for a class session of your choosing; you will commit to particular topics at the end of week two. The essays will outline some of the key issues and findings from the readings, with guidance from posted study questions. You will use the essays as the basis for a short presentation (5-10 mins) to start off the class discussion  
No outside research is required. Essays will be due on the day of the assigned readings. (30%, 15% each)
3. Take-home midterm covering all lectures, readings and discussions up until that point (20%)
4. Policy Briefing. 30% - In lieu of a final exam, you will write a paper (specific details to follow) outlining a proposal for a poverty alleviation program in the country of your choosing. This will build upon your work on the data assignment and ask you to identify the poverty needs of a developing country, discuss a proposal to address those needs, as well as the challenges (political, social, economic, etc.) These will be due the last day of class and will include a brief presentation to the class on your proposal, although your grade will be based only on the paper portion.
5. Quizzes (if needed), participation and attendance (10%)

## **Late Assignment Policy**

Late assignments not excused by a doctor's note or pre-arranged agreement will be docked 1/3 letter grade per 24 hour period. It is extremely important that you meet the various deadlines for the research paper, as this will ensure that I can return comments to you quickly enough for you to integrate them into the next step.

Quizzes may not be made up, absent a doctor's note or pre-arranged absence (but please do not email me the night before class asking if we're having a quiz the next day). I drop your lowest quiz score, so you can miss one without penalty.

## **Academic Integrity**

This class operates under the established regulations on academic integrity established by Trinity College and agreed to by each student. As such, academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. All submitted work, including take-home exams, must be your own work (I.e., no collaboration on exams), and properly cited.

## Miscellaneous

Please turn off or silence all cell phones prior to the beginning of class. I reserve the right to answer any calls (your's, not mine) received during class time. I'm sure your friends will love to hear what you're learning in Intro IR that day.

Feel free to use laptops during class, but please respect your fellow classmates by refraining from unnecessary use of Youtube, Facebook, or other unrelated content. I am an advocate of technology in the classroom, but it is a privilege, not a right. I reserve the right to reverse this policy if the presence of laptops becomes a distraction.

Lecture slides will be placed on the class Blackboard page. In general, I will attempt to post these the evening before class, but offer no guarantees. The slides should not be seen as a replacement for lecture, as they are there to provide guide posts for lecture, present relevant data, and aid in exam preparation.

I am most easily accessible to you on email (Kelly.Wurtz@trincoll.edu). However, I expect you to respect the fact that I am not online and at your disposal 24-7. As such, I will try to answer any email received in 24 hours, though from time to time this may not be possible.

Finally, this syllabus does not establish a contract of any form. Any changes made will be announced in class and noted on the class Blackboard page.

## Required Readings

### I. Introduction: Concepts, Tools, and Measurement

#### September 3<sup>rd</sup> - Introduction

**Sept. 8<sup>th</sup> Introduction to the course and basic concepts.** We begin with poverty, and with the simplest definition of it in terms of income deprivation. Where are the poor by this definition? What are the limitations on this approach, and what alternative measures might we consider?

Lister, Ruth. 2004. Chapter 1: Defining Poverty, in *Poverty (Key Concepts)*, (Malden, MA: Polity Press): 12-36.

World Bank, *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty*, ch. 1.

Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Knopf, 1999), Chapter 4 Poverty as Capability Deprivation

Supplemental: Background Brief #1, Measuring Poverty

**September 10<sup>th</sup> Inequality.** In addition to poverty, we are also interested in the distribution of income and assets, or inequality. What are some of the causes and consequences of inequality?

Background Brief #2, Measuring Inequality

World Bank, *World Development Report 2006*, Focusing on Palanpur, (pp. 26-27) and Chapter Two, Inequity within Countries: Individuals and Groups.

World Bank, *World Development Report 2000/1*, Chapter 3, Growth, Inequality and Poverty

Robert Wade, Is Globalization Reducing Poverty and Inequality? *World Development* 32, 4 (567-589).

**September 15<sup>th</sup> Vulnerability and Risk.** Finally, both poverty and inequality are dynamic, and the poor suffer not only from a current deprivation of income and assets but from a high degree of risk and vulnerability to falling into poverty. What risks do the poor face, and how do they cope with them?

World Bank, *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty*, ch. 8.

Mercedes Gonzalez de la Rocha and Alejandro Grinspun, Private Adjustments: Households, crisis and work, in Grinspun, ed., *Choices for the Poor: Lessons from National Poverty Strategies*

## **II. Poverty and Inequality Viewed Globally**

**September 17<sup>th</sup> Data and Measurement: the Multidimensionality of Poverty.** We will spend this class looking at some more data on poverty: where the poor live, what they do, measures of their quality of life and income and how all of these factors have changed over the last several decades. Similarly, we will consider in more detail some measures of inequality within countries, and across different groups: not only across individuals and households, but across ethnic groups and gender. We will also pay particular attention to the spatial or geographic dimensions of poverty. These issues will be demonstrated in your sections through a description of the incidence and distribution of chronic poverty in India.

Aasha Kapur Mehta, Chronic Poverty in India: Incidence, Causes and Policies, *World Development* 31, 3 (2003): 491-511.

## World Bank Updates Poverty Estimates for the Developing World

<http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTRESEARCH/0,,contentMDK:21882162~pagePK:64165401~piPK:64165026~theSitePK:469382,00.html>

\*\*\*DATA ASSIGNMENT HANDED OUT\*\*\*

**September 22<sup>nd</sup> Convergence and Divergence.** We begin by considering the distribution of income across the whole world. Are the gaps between rich and poor countries being narrowed (convergence) or are they widening (divergence)? What does the global distribution of income look like?

Go to Gapminder at <http://www.gapminder.org/> and watch the lecture by Hans Rosling and the Interactive Presentation on Human Development Trends. For a fascinating overview of the evolution of the developing world using a variety of different indicators, go to Gapminder 2006 and play with the program. Note that the chart allows you to track developments over time with respect to a number of development indicators; it also allows you to follow the progress—or lack thereof—of a particular country as well.

Jeffrey D. Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*. New York: Penguin, 2005. Ch. 1 and 2.

Charles Kenny, “Why Are We Worried About Income? Nearly Everything that Matters is Converging,” *World Development* Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 1–19, 2005

**September 24<sup>th</sup> Sources and Consequences of Economic Growth.** Growth is crucial for poverty alleviation. What helps explain growth? We will take a closer look at one economy in which growth has had spectacular effects in reducing poverty—China.

World Bank, *World Development Report 2000/2001*, Chapter 3, Growth, Inequality and Poverty

Barry Naughton, *The Chinese Economy: Transitions and Growth*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006, ch. 9.

Weber, Max. 1905. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, [http://www.ne.jp/asahi/moriyuki/abukuma/weber/world/ethic/pro\\_eth\\_frame.html](http://www.ne.jp/asahi/moriyuki/abukuma/weber/world/ethic/pro_eth_frame.html)

\*\*\*DATA ASSIGNMENT DUE\*\*\*

**Sept 29<sup>th</sup> Poverty Traps.** Obviously, the gaps between rich and poor countries are not of recent origin; they involve long-run factors, and in some cases very long-run factors such as geography that are difficult to overcome. What are these barriers to growth? What gives rise to poverty traps in the very poorest countries?

Jeffrey D. Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*, Chapter 3.

Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion*, Chapters 3 and 4.

### III. Public Policy and Politics

**October 1<sup>st</sup> What Can the Government Do?** It is clear that the government plays a critical role in poverty reduction, whether through policy reform, through the budget and spending, and through more targeted interventions. We begin with a consideration of some of the tools the government might use to alleviate poverty.

World Bank, *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty*, Chapter 5.

Deborah Brautigam, Politics, Participation and Pro-poor Policy, *Development Policy Review* 2004 22 (6): 653-668.

**October 6<sup>th</sup> No class**

**October 8<sup>th</sup> - What Does the Government Do?** Once we start to talk about governments, we have to consider politics as well: not what the government *should* do, but whether it has political incentives and capabilities to do it. These concerns have grown in recent years, and crystallized around the concept of “governance” and renewed interest in participation, civil society and even democracy itself as a determinant of growth. We have also seen a renewed interest in combating corruption.

World Bank, *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty*, Chapter 6.

Vito Tanzi, Corruption Around the World: Causes, Consequences and Scope, *IMF Staff Papers* 45, 4 (December 1998).

**October 13<sup>th</sup> Health and Poverty: Basic Social Services and Pandemics.** Health is not only good in its own right, but has profound effects on economic growth as well. Poor health conditions in the developing world can be traced to a small number of conditions: HIV/AIDS, malaria, TB, childhood infectious diseases (many of which are preventable by vaccination), and maternal and perinatal conditions. Addressing these conditions would save millions of lives a year. Why hasn't it happened? What is the role of the public and private sectors in delivering health services?

UC Atlas of Global Inequality, “Infectious Diseases Kill 1/3 Worldwide,” available at <http://ucatlas.ucsc.edu/cause.php> and “Health Care Spending” at <http://ucatlas.ucsc.edu/spend.php>

Jeffrey D. Sachs, *Macroeconomics and Health: Investing in Health for Economic Development* (2001). World Health Organization, pp. 1-17, 21-30, skim 40-73.

“Building a Net Culture in Kenya” and “Controlling Malaria at Home” *PSI Profiles*, November 2004 and December 2006.

### **October 15<sup>th</sup> Education.**

Education has been touted as a major input to growth, and substantial differences clearly exist across our regions. Is the problem that there is not enough education, particularly for girls? Or is that education can only have positive effects if coupled with incentives that increase the rate of return to educational investment?

William Easterly, *The Elusive Quest for Growth: Economists' Adventures and Misadventures in the Tropics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), Chapter 4: "Educated for What?"

Lawrence Summers, *Investing in All the People: Educating Women in Developing Countries*. World Bank: EDI Seminar Paper No. 45, 1994.

### **October 20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> - Gender and Development**

Issues of gender are important to development across a number of issues beyond education. Addressing issues of gender inequality are central to dealing with broader issues of income and wealth inequality. This section will consider some of the challenges facing women as well as attempts by the development community to meet the needs of women in the development process.

Razavi, Shakra. 1998. "Gendered Poverty and Social Change: An Issues Paper," *UNRISD Discussion Paper* No. 94, (September):1-34.

Amartya Sen, 2001. Many Faces of Gender Inequality, *Frontline*, 18(22), Oct. 27 - Nov. 09, <http://www.flonnet.com/fl1822/18220040.htm>

Buvinic, Mayra and Andrew Morrison. 2008. Chapter 1: Overview, in Buvinic et al (eds.) *Equality for Women: Where do We Stand?* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank):1-32  
<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/EqualityforWomen.pdf>

World Bank, 2008. *Doing Business: Women in Africa*, (Washington, DC: World Bank)  
[http://www.doingbusiness.org/documents/Women\\_in\\_Africa.pdf](http://www.doingbusiness.org/documents/Women_in_Africa.pdf)

Choose at least three (of seven) case studies

100 Million Women are Missing UC Atlas  
[http://ucatlas.ucsc.edu/gender/gender\\_mortality.php](http://ucatlas.ucsc.edu/gender/gender_mortality.php)

World Bank database of Gender Statistics  
<http://devdata.worldbank.org/genderstats/home.asp>  
(print out the information on the country from your data report to use in class discussion)

**Take home mid-term handed out today.**

**October 27<sup>th</sup> Reaching the Rural Poor and the Problem of Land Reform**

The problems of rural poverty are infinitely complex and involve ecological, economic, political and social constraints. The distribution of assets is one dimension of this issue. What are the economics and politics of land reform?

International Fund for Agricultural Development, *Rural Poverty Report 2001* (New York: Oxford University Press), available at <http://www.ifad.org/poverty/index.htm>., Chapter 3: “Assets and the Rural Poor”.

Penelope Fidas and Jim McNichols, “Need Land Administration? Start a Revolution.”

### October 29<sup>th</sup>

**The Urbanization of Poverty.** Although most of the world’s extreme poverty remains in rural areas, the extent and rapidity of urbanization has made urban poverty an important and growing phenomenon. This session and the next look at two faces of urban life: the various social problems that arise out of rapid urban growth, including slums and violence; and the promise of the informal sector and private sector solutions to poverty, such as microfinance.

Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (New York: Verso), pp. 26-49, 55-69.

Nancy Cardia, “Urban Violence in Sao Paulo,” Woodrow Wilson International Center Working Paper, 2000. For a journalistic account of life in Rio’s favelas, see the Washington Post series at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/world/specials/favelas/handholding.html?hpid=multimedia2&hp>

**\*\*\*TAKEHOME MIDTERM DUE TODAY\*\*\***

### November 3<sup>rd</sup>

#### **Private Sector Solutions to Poverty.**

What is the informal sector precisely? How can we encourage private sector activity that reduces poverty, whether through creating small business (for example, through microfinance) or encouraging more established companies to serve the poor.

William Maloney, “Informality Revisited,” *World Development* 32, 7 (2004): 1159-1178.

K.C. Prahalad and Stuart Hart, “The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid.”

Jonathan Murdoch, “The Microfinance Promise,” *Journal of Economic Literature*, 37 (4): 1569-1614.

Download the country tables at

<http://rru.worldbank.org/Documents/DoingBusiness/2004/db2004-country-tables.pdf>

Look at the ease of doing business in the country from your data project; look back at

Doing Business: Women in Africa: country profiles, p. 43)

#### **IV. The External Dimension I: Trade, Aid and NGOs**

##### **November 5<sup>th</sup> Trade and Development: the Debate About the WTO.**

There is good theory to suggest that trade should be good for the poor in developing countries. Yet anti-globalization groups have a point that it doesn't always work out that way in practice. Why?

Alan V. Deardorff and Robert M. Stern, "What You Should Know About Globalization and the World Trade Organization," *Review of International Economics* 10, 3 (2002): 404-423.

Kimberly Ann Elliott, *Delivering on Doha: Farm Trade and the Poor*. (Washington: Institute for International Economics), pp. 1-30.

Gayle Smith and Susan Rice, "WTO Hands a Critical Victory to African Farmers," Yale Global Online, <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=3953&page=1> (two pages).

##### **November 7<sup>th</sup> Mapping the Development Policy Community I: Multilateral Assistance.**

Countries give aid for a multiplicity of motives that include, but are no means limited to, fostering economic growth and poverty reduction. Similarly, governments seek aid for a variety of purposes, starting with the benefits for retaining political power. These incentives give rise to complex aid dynamics, including efforts to impose conditionality on aid—and for countries to avoid it. This session we map some of the central issues in the aid process, including the debate over debt relief.

*World Development Report*, Chapter 11.

William Easterly, "The Cartel of Good Intentions," *Foreign Policy* July-August 2002, pp. 40-49. For a more extended version of Easterly's critique of the aid machinery, see *The White Man's Burden*.

##### **November 10<sup>th</sup> - Mapping the Development Policy Community II: The NGOs.**

Transnational NGOs are playing an increasing role in the aid community, both as providers of financing and services and as critics of the multilateral institutions. Yet no less than the multilaterals, they face their own internal and external organizational pressures.

Alexander Cooley and James Ron. "The NGO Scramble: Organizational Insecurity and the Political Economy of Transnational Action." *International Security* 27, 1 (2002): 5-39.

## **V. The External Dimension II: Managing Extreme Events**

### **November 12<sup>th</sup> -- The dynamics of famine: North Korea.**

Famines are complex events, often attributed to “natural” causes such as bad weather or Malthusian ones such as overpopulation. Amartya Sen has shown that these explanations are flawed and that famines are almost always the result of political failures. These very failures, however, can create daunting problems for external actors seeking to alleviate hunger. The problems are illustrated with reference to the recent North Korean famine.

Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, Chapter 7.

Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, *Hunger and Human Rights: The Politics of Famine in North Korea*. Available at <http://www.hrnk.org/>

### **November 17<sup>th</sup>-- Poverty and War: Civil Conflict, Displacement and Poverty.**

A major cause of displacement, refugees, poverty and even the spread of disease and famine is the incidence of civil war. Many of the poorest regions in the world are precisely those that have been affected by such conflict, particularly where it is protracted. These events also involve the external policy community in complex humanitarian interventions. We will consider the general issues, and the current conflict in the Darfur region of the Sudan.

Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion*, Chapters 2 and 8.

### **November 19<sup>th</sup> -- Financial and “Transitional” Crises: The role of the IMF.**

Another form of shock that has affected middle-income developing countries as well as poor ones are financial crises. We focus our attention on the social consequences of these crises, the controversial involvement of the IMF in them, and the efforts to create social safety nets in their wake.

William Cline, “Financial Crises and Poverty in Emerging Markets,” Center for Global Development Working Paper #8 (June 2002), pp. 1-10.

Stephan Haggard, *The Political Economy of the Asian Financial Crisis* (Washington: Institute for International Economics, 2000), ch. 5.

## **VII. Conclusion**

**November 24<sup>th</sup> -- Poverty in the United States.** What are trends in poverty in the United States? Are the basic causes of poverty in the US similar or different than those we have seen in developing countries, and in what ways precisely?

University of Michigan National Poverty Center, Poverty in the United States at <http://npc.umich.edu/poverty/>

George Borjas, The New Face of the Low-Wage Workforce, Policy Brief #8 at [http://npc.umich.edu/publications/policy\\_briefs/brief8/](http://npc.umich.edu/publications/policy_briefs/brief8/)

**November 26<sup>th</sup> NO CLASS (Thanksgiving break)**

**December 1st -- Ethical Dimensions of Global Poverty.**

What moral obligations, if any, do we have toward the poor? What moral obligations, if any, do we have toward poor citizens of other countries?

Pogge, Thomas. 2005. World Poverty and Human Rights, *Ethics & International Affairs* 19(1):1-7.

Garrett Hardin, Lifeboat Ethics, *Psychology Today* September 1974, available at [http://www.garretthardinsociety.org/articles/art\\_lifeboat\\_ethics\\_case\\_against\\_helping\\_poor.html](http://www.garretthardinsociety.org/articles/art_lifeboat_ethics_case_against_helping_poor.html)

Peter Singer, Famine, Affluence and Morality, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1 (1972): 229-243. Available at <http://www.utilitarian.net/singer/by/1972----.htm>

**December 3<sup>rd</sup>: Debate**

**December 8<sup>th</sup>: Presentation of paper/projects (Brief, 5-10 mins)**

**\*\*\*PAPERS DUE IN CLASS\*\*\***