Course Description

According to the United Nations about a quarter of all children living in the developing world are at risk of having long-term effects as a result of undernourishment; almost two thirds of employed women in developing countries are in vulnerable jobs; 2.5 billion people, almost half the world’s population, live without healthy and reliable waste disposal; and about one third of the growing urban population are living in slums. These numbers only begin to describe the magnitude of poverty in the global south. Poverty is a heterogeneous and multi-dimensional phenomenon, much broader than economic deprivation alone. Poverty encompasses access to educational attainment and health services, land tenure, financial security, personal safety, a clean environment, human rights and social and political power. Poverty is also geographically specific, influenced by history and culture, thus it is difficult to generalize and aggregate welfare indicators do little to help us understand the dynamics of poverty within specific locales.

To address these issues, the course focuses on local and community-level approaches to poverty alleviation in developing countries. A series of paradigmatic shifts in the field of international development planning make this approach particularly timely. The first shift concerns the preference for local and community-based over centralized, top-down approaches to international development planning. The second shift is the adoption of a more holistic understanding of poverty that strives to encompass the interrelationship among economic, social and political factors. Finally, the large multilateral development agencies, like the World Bank and United Nations Development Programme are placing an increased emphasis on “pro-poor,” “poor-centric” and “demand-driven” development policies. This shift is exemplified in studies like *Voices of the Poor* and the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals as well as the popularity globally of decentralization and community-driven development policies.

The course is divided into four sections. The first section examines competing conceptualizations and understandings of poverty. The next three sections critically examine three schools of thought that have dominated how we understand, measure and alleviate poverty. Each of these sections addresses the following questions: How is poverty defined and understood? What methods are available for measurement and evaluation? What are appropriate alleviation strategies? The first school conceptualizes poverty as economic deprivation, measured with poverty lines, and responds with strategies that generate employment and microfinance. The second school defines poverty more broadly in terms of well-being, measurements include health status measures and access to shelter and services, and it is concerned with strategies that help
households and communities meet basic human needs. The third strategy conceptualizes poverty in terms of vulnerability and social exclusion, its measures are generally more qualitative and participatory and alleviation strategies focus on community empowerment.

Course Format
The course is a lecture-seminar. The format works best if students prepare weekly for class discussions. To prepare you are expected to (1) read all assignments for that week prior to the class session, and (2) come prepared to actively participate in class discussions and make formal presentations. All the required readings can be downloaded from the course drop box (EEE).

Evaluation
Your grade is based on three areas of evaluation (1) preparation and participation in class discussions, (2) completion of an abstract and outline, and (3) performance on your final project and presentation. No late assignments will be accepted.

Grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of evaluation</th>
<th>Percentage of course grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly preparation, presentations and participation</td>
<td>--30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abstract and outline</td>
<td>--20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final group project</td>
<td>--50%</td>
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Final Project and Presentation
The class will be divided into groups. Each group will contain no fewer than 4 students and no more than 5 students. The final project will consist of a policy document no longer than 30 pages (not including appendixes and references). The document will describe poverty in a developing country. Students will select a definition of poverty, outline a strategy for analyzing poverty, and provide policy recommendations regarding how an international development agency, non-governmental organization or government body should approach analyzing and alleviating poverty. Each policy document will include an appendix with two research instruments, one quantitative and one qualitative, that seek to gather data related to poverty. The team should take into consideration their client’s needs as well as existing knowledge, data collection efforts and poverty alleviation programs that currently exist in the country and how their report addresses gaps in these areas. Some class time will be allocated for working with your group. More detailed guidance regarding the final project will be provided in class throughout the quarter.

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1 For the purposes of this course a “developing country” is defined as a country with a Human Development Index (HDI) of less than .8 in the United Nations Development Programme’s Human Development Report 2009. There are currently 99 countries that meet this criterion. For a complete list of these countries please refer to page 213 of the report.
# Course Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Subject</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>I. Understanding Poverty</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>4 January</td>
<td>Competing conceptualizations</td>
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<td></td>
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<td><strong>II. Poverty as Economic Deprivation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>11 January</td>
<td>Economic deprivation, poverty lines and employment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>18 January</td>
<td>Measuring consumption, income and employment</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>25 January</td>
<td>The informal sector and microfinance</td>
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<td><strong>III. Poverty as Well-Being</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>1 February</td>
<td>Well-being and basic human needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>3 February</td>
<td>Abstract and outlines due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>8 February</td>
<td>Measuring health, housing and environmental conditions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>15 February</td>
<td>Upgrading informal settlements</td>
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<td></td>
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<td><strong>IV. Poverty as Social Exclusion and Vulnerability</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>22 February</td>
<td>Social exclusion, vulnerability and disempowerment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>1 March</td>
<td>Measuring empowerment and participatory approaches</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>8 March</td>
<td>Community-driven development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>19 March</td>
<td>Group projects due</td>
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Reading Assignments

I. Understanding Poverty

Week 1, Competing Conceptualizations

Seminar 2


II. Poverty as Economic Deprivation

Week 2, Economic Deprivation, Poverty Lines and Employment

Seminar 1


Seminar 2


Week 3, Measuring Consumption, Income and Employment

Seminar 1


Seminar 2


Week 4, The Informal Sector and Microfinance

Seminar 1


Seminar 2


**III. Poverty as Well-being**

**Week 5, Well-Being and Basic Human Needs**

**Seminar 1**


**Seminar 2**


**Week 6, Measuring Health, Housing and Environmental Conditions**

**Seminar 1**


Seminar 2


Week 7, Upgrading Informal Settlements

Seminar 1


Seminar 2


IV. Poverty as Social Exclusion and Vulnerability

Week 8, Social Exclusion, Vulnerability and Disempowerment

Seminar 1


Seminar 2


Week 9, Measuring Empowerment and Participatory Approaches

Seminar 1


Seminar 2


Week 10, Community Driven Development

Seminar 1


Seminar 2
