

**Princeton University**  
**Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs**

**WWS 593h: Measurement Under Constraint:  
Evaluating the Impact of NGO-delivered assistance.**  
**Fall Term 2006**  
**Half-term course (Session II)**

**Wednesday: 1:00-4:00**

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### **Course Objectives**

The need to demonstrate the impact and effectiveness of international assistance has become more urgent over the last 5 years. Demands for evidence of results grow louder as humanitarian crises continue, civil conflicts appear interminable and western policy makers look to aid as a tool in the war against terrorism. The call is particularly loud for international nongovernmental organizations, among the key implementers of aid directed to save lives, alleviate poverty, promote development, sustainable peace and democracy.

Among journalists and policy makers, the expectation is that NGOs can and should improve the measurement of aid, as if the only thing missing is their intent to do so. In 2003, USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios admonished NGOs that they had to “demonstrate measurable results or be replaced by competitors.” A 2004 editorial in the New York Times echoed the idea that change is somehow a matter of will: “Wanting to know how a charity spends the millions it collects, or, more important, whether the programs it runs do any good, would seem reasonable, even necessary, to most people.”

This course challenges the assumption that NGOs have it within their power to fundamentally improve the measurement of aid. In fact, their ability to change practice is related directly to the history of aid, its expanding goals, the relationships and power of different players and the system in which they all operate. The objective of the course is to analyze this system, ask critical questions about its organization and about whether or not the tools available for performance measurement are adequate given its complexity.

This course does not provide answers to what are key questions for aid organizations operating in the world today. Rather, it seeks to encourage students to engage in a rigorous examination of international assistance and to be creative in thinking about the solutions that are essential to its accountability.

### **Requirements**

All students are expected to be active participants in the seminar. Specific requirements follow.

1. Students will be asked to represent one of several aid actors throughout the six week course. Students will research the aid institution they represent and contribute to a group mapping of the funding, power and interests that characterize the aid system and shape the ability of any actor to measure its own performance.
2. Each week, students should decide among themselves who will lead the discussion of the week's readings. The second half of each class will include a question driven discussion of the issues represented in the readings, led by the students responsible for the readings that week.
3. Students will write a final paper to present for discussion at the sixth and final meeting of the course. The topic will be presented after the first 2 classes.

## **Part I: What is a system and how does a systems perspective help us to understand international aid?**

### **Week 1: How did the aid system start and where is it now?**

- ✚ Jervis, Robert (1997). System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life. NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1-2.
- ✚ Smillie, Ian and Larry Minear (2004). The Charity of Nations. Kumarian Press. Introduction, Chapters 1, 6-9.
- ✚ Degnbol-Martinussen, John and Engberg-Pedersen, Poul (1999). Aid: Understanding International Development Cooperation. Zed Books. Chapters 1-4, 8.
- ✚ Steven Holtzman, "Rethinking Relief and Development in Transitions from Conflict," The Brookings Institution Project on Internal Displacement (January 1999).
- ✚ Michael Barnett, "Humanitarianism Transformed," *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 3, no. 4 (December 2005).
- ✚ Joanna MacRae, Ed., "The New Humanitarianisms: A Review of Global Trends in Humanitarian Action," Overseas Development Institute, *HPG Report #11* (April 2002).
- ✚ Adele Harmer and Joanna Macrae, Eds., "Beyond the Continuum: The Changing Role of Aid Policy in Protracted Crises," *HPG Research Report #18* (July 2004).
- ✚ Hugo Slim and Andrew Bonwick, Protection: An Alnap Guide for Humanitarian Agencies. Overseas Development Institute (2005).
- ✚ Andrew S. Natsios, Five Debates on International Development: The US Perspective," *Development Policy Review*, 2006 (24 (2): 131-9.
- ✚ UN Millennium Development Goals, <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>
- ✚ USAID Fragile States Strategy, January 2005. [http://www.usaid.gov/policy/2005\\_fragile\\_states\\_strategy.pdf#search='usaid%20fragile%20states'](http://www.usaid.gov/policy/2005_fragile_states_strategy.pdf#search='usaid%20fragile%20states')

### **Week 2: Power, interests and decision making**

- ✚ Jessica Mathews, "Power Shift," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, no. 1, 1997.
- ✚ Marc Lindenberg and Coralie Bryant, Going Global: Transforming Relief and Development NGOs Kumarian Press, 2001. Chapter 1.

- ✚ Alexander Cooley and James Ron, “The NGO Scramble: Organizational Insecurity and the Political Economy of Transnational Action” *International Security*, Vol. 27, no. 1 (Summer 2002), pp. 5-39.
- ✚ Joanna Macrae, Ed., “Uncertain Power: the changing role of Official Donors in Humanitarian Action,” *HPG Report #12* (December 2002). Chapters 1, 2 & 5.
- ✚ Joanna MacRae, Nicholas Leader, “Shifting Sands: The Search for Coherence between Political and Humanitarian Responses to Complex Emergencies,” *HPG Report #8* (August 2000).
- ✚ Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, Eds., Participation: The New Tyranny? (2001) Zed Books. Chapters 1,3,5,9.
- ✚ Ruben Berrios, Contracting for Development: The Role of For-Profit Contractors in US Foreign Development Assistance. Praeger Publishers, 2000, Chapters 1-3.
- ✚ The Center for Public Integrity, “Windfalls of War: Winning Contractors, U.S. Contractors Reap the Windfalls of Post-war Reconstruction,” <http://www.publicintegrity.org/wow/report.aspx?aid=65>
- ✚ Ian Smillie and Larry Minear, “The Quality of Money: Donor Behavior in Humanitarian Financing,” Independent Study, Tufts University, Humanitarianism and War Project (April 2003).

## Part II: How does a system analysis influence our view of measurement?

### Week 3: Evolution of conventional evaluation practice

- ✚ Basil Edward Cracknell, Evaluating Development Aid: Issues Problems and Solutions (2000) Sage Publications. Chapters 1, 2, 5, 19-20.
- ✚ Phillip Dearden, “Programme and Project Cycle Managemet (PPCM): Lessons from DFID and other organizations,” *Center for International Development and Training, University of Wolverhampton*, (February 2001). Available online.
- ✚ NGO guides to Design, Monitoring and Evaluation. International Rescue Committee and CARE Uganda examples will be provided by professor.
- ✚ Charles-Antoine Hofmann, Les Roberts, Jeremy Shoham and Paul Harvey, “Measuring the Impact of Humanitarian Aid: A Review of Current Practice,” *HPG Report #17* (2004), Chapters 1-3.
- ✚ Chris Roche, Impact Assessment for Development Agencies: Learning to Value Change (1999). Oxfam Great Britain. Chapters 1-5.
- ✚ Evaluation samples provided by professor.

### Week 4: Evolution of conventional evaluation practice

- ✚ Marisol Estrella and John Gaventa “Who Counts Reality? Participatory monitoring and Evaluation : A Literature Review” (1998). IDS Working paper No. 70
- ✚ Michael Edwards and David Hume, Beyond the Magic Bullet: NGO Performance and Accountability in the Post-Cold War World (1996) Kumarian Press.
- ✚ “Who are the Question Makers: A participatory Evaluation Handbook,” *OESP 1997, United Nations Development Programme*, Parts 1, 2 & 4. <http://www.undp.org/eo/documents/who.htm>
- ✚ Robert Chambers. Whose Reality Counts. (1997). ITDG Publishing. Chapters 1, 9, 10.

- ✚ Case studies provided by professor.

## **Week 5: The measurement challenge today**

*Professor will provide articles:.*

- ✚ John Christensen, “Asking the Do-Gooders to Prove They Do Good,” *The New York Times* (2004).
- ✚ Amir Attaran, “Necessary Measures,” *The New York Times* (2005).
- ✚ Nicholas Kristof, “Foreign Aid has Flaws. So What?” *The New York Times* (2006).
- ✚ Ian Vasquez, “So How Much Help is Foreign Aid?” *The New York Times* (2006).
- ✚ Huw To.O. Davies, Sandra M. Nutley and Peter C. Smith, Eds., What Works? Evidence-based Policy and Practice in Public Services (2000). The Policy Press. Chapter 1 and Part Two: Thematic Analysis.
- ✚ “When will we ever learn? Improving Lives through Impact Evaluation.” Report of the Evaluation Gap Working Group, Center for Global Development (May 2006).
- ✚ Esther Duflo and Michael Kremer, “Use of Randomization in the Evaluation of Development Effectiveness” (2003). Paper prepared for the World Bank Operations Evaluation Department (OED) Conference on Evaluation and Development Effectiveness in Washington.

## **Part III: Putting the pieces together: understanding the measurement challenge in the aid system**

**Final Papers will be on a related topic.**

**Week 6: class presentations and discussion on final papers.**