The Political Economy of Development

In Theory and History

Gallatin School of Individualized Study
New York University

(Ship recycling, Bangladesh)

Professor: Rosalind Fredericks
Office: Room 618, 1 Washington Place
Office Hours: W 2:00 – 4:00pm
Contact: rcf2@nyu.edu

Course: K20.1636
Semester: Spring 2011
Time: MW 12:30– 1:45pm
Location: Room 601, 1 Wash. Place

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What are the historical origins of the unequal geographies of wealth we see today and the institutions purportedly charged with relieving them? How can the international Development project be contextualized within transformations of the global world order and transnational capitalism? Why did certain Asian countries become economic tigers while many African nations saw their economies shrink? How do histories and theories of development help us to grapple with some of the greatest challenges faced in the era of globalization?

The various meanings of the word “development” have changed over time, but it has become shorthand for a complex set of social, economic, political, cultural and institutional transformations over the last five hundred years. This course provides an introduction to the political economy of development in theoretical, historical, and comparative perspective. In so doing, it makes the fundamental distinction between (“big D”) Development as a post-war international project that emerged in the context of decolonization, and capitalist (“little d”) development as a dynamic and highly uneven historical process of global integration and transformation. The purpose of the course is to highlight the interplay of theories and histories of “big D” and “little d” development in order to draw insight towards understanding different trajectories of socio-spatial change.
The course draws primarily on scholarship from the fields of political economy, geography, anthropology, development studies, and history. The inquiry is organized into four parts. Part 1 examines some of the most important and influential theoretical ideas and intellectual traditions which seek to explain the historical origins of capitalist development. This provides a foundation for understanding the legacies of previous eras of empire in shaping today's international political economy as well as the origins of the core ideas influencing Development policy. Part 2 will trace the history of Development as an international project. We examine how Development emerged from the process of decolonization in the 1940s, and the ways in which theories and practices of Development have shifted over time. Tracing this history, we will consider Development as a set of discourses as well as concrete practices and effects. Part 3 analyzes regional trajectories of socio-spatial change in theory and history through detailed case studies of Africa and East Asia. Finally, Part 4 will consider key themes framing contemporary development discourse and practice. Topics include: environment and resources; gender, empowerment, and microfinance; NGOs; and cities.

**REQUIREMENTS**

- **Class attendance and participation.** Students are expected to read all assigned materials, attend all classes, and participate actively in discussions. If you are unable to attend class, you must let me know and come to my office hours that week. In the case that you miss a film screened in class, you must view the film in your own time. You will only be allowed one unexcused absence during the semester without penalty. Consistent lateness will be penalized as well.

- **Short paper 1: Discourses of development.** Due Feb. 22nd.

- **Short paper 2: Country profile.** Due April 1st.

- **Final research paper.** A final 20 – 25 page paper (double-spaced) due at the end of the semester. Based on primary and secondary source materials, the paper should explore one of the key themes explored in Part 4, as it pertains to a specific region or country. You may choose to concentrate on the same country you wrote about in your Country paper, but this not required. A paper proposal (10%) will be due a few weeks before the paper is due. *Late policy:* Unless you have received an extension from me (only granted for serious/ medical issues), lateness will be penalized as follows: each day that your paper is late, your grade will drop ½ of a grade point (e.g. from a B+ to a B). You are required to inform me if the paper is going to be more than two days late. I will only consider incompletes in extenuating circumstances and with prior agreement on the date the paper will be due. Due May 10th.

*Course Grades:*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendance/Participation</th>
<th>15%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short paper 1</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short paper 2</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>45%</td>
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OFFICE HOURS and CONTACT

I will hold office hours on Wednesday afternoons from 2–4pm in my office. These will be either on a first come, first serve, or there will be a sign-up sheet on my door.

Email: I am best reached by email at rcf2@nyu.edu. Although I do encourage you to stay in touch with issues of concern, I also urge you to be considerate with your emails. I will do my best to reply within 24 hours.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

In this class, we will be analyzing the thoughts, arguments, and evidence of others in an effort to develop our own ideas. Plagiarism—or the presentation of someone else’s ideas, arguments, or evidence without attribution or acknowledgement—of materials from inside and outside of class is strictly prohibited and will be punished appropriately.

READINGS and FILMS

Required readings for the course are listed in the weekly syllabus. Background readings are also listed, if you desire to do further research. All readings are either available through the library’s electronic resources (with a link on Blackboard), in the library’s reserves, or at the NYU Bookstore. At the Bookstore, you can purchase the Coursepack, which has most of the readings not available electronically, and the following two required textbooks for the course:


The following is a list of some films relevant to the course. They will either be screened in class, or you are encouraged to watch them in your own time. Whenever possible, they have been placed on reserve at the library.

- *Bamako* (2007)
- *China Blue* (2005)
- *Garbage Dreams* (2009)
- *Life and Debt* (2001)
- *Our Friends at the Bank* (1997)
- *Small Fortunes* (2005)
- *T-Shirt Travels* (2001)
- *The End of Poverty?* (2009)
- *Wasteland* (2009)
- *White King, Red Rubber, Black Death*
- *The Women’s Bank of Bangladesh*
Week 1. Introduction: The Object of Development  
(January 24, 26)


PART 1: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Week 2. Adam Smith, Classical, and Neoclassical Economics  
(January 31; February 2)


Week 3. Marx, Imperialism, and the Geography of International Capitalism  
(February 7, 9)

Marx, Karl & Frederick Engels. 1848. The Communist Manifesto. (Chapter 2 in Anthropology of Development). (Text)


Bernstein, Henry. 2000. “Colonialism, Capitalism, Development.” In Poverty and Development

**Week 4. Colonial Regimes and Their Legacies**
*(February 14, 16)*


**Additional Reading:**


**PART 2: DEVELOPMENT AS A POST-WAR INTERNATIONAL PROJECT: A HISTORY OF CHANGING THEORIES AND PRACTICES**

**Week 5. The 1950s and 1960s: Modernization, Structuralism, and Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI)** *(February 23)*


**Additional Reading:**


(Febuary 28, March 2)


**Additional Reading:**


Week 7. The Neoliberal Counter-Revolution and Beyond  
(March 7, 9)


**Additional Reading:**


**PART 3: REGIONS AND TRAJECTORIES**

**Week 8. The Late Industrializers and Asian Economic Miracles**  
(March 21, 23)


**Additional Reading:**


**Week 9. “Underdevelopment” in Africa**  
(March 28, 30)


Additional Reading:


Mbembe, Achille. 2000. ‘At the edge of the world.’ Public Culture 12/1.


Zenawi, Meles. African Development: Dead Ends and New Beginnings.

PART 4: KEY THEMES in CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENT

Week 10. Environment and Resources

(Spring 2011)


Additional Reading:


Duke University Press.


**Week 11. Gender, Empowerment, and Microfinance**

(April 11, 13)


Additional Reading:


Connelly, M.P. et al. 2000. “Feminism and Development: Theoretical Perspectives.” In Jane L. Parpart, M. Patricia Connelly, V. Eudine Barriteau (Eds.). *Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development*


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**Week 12. NGOs**  
*(April 18, 20)*


**Additional Reading:**

**Week 13. Cities**
(May 2, 4)

**Additional Reading:**

**Week 14. Wrap-up** (May 9)