ICIR 322 The Politics and Economics of Non-Governmental Organizations

Course Description & Aims:
This course offers insight on the political role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and faith-based charities in world politics and global governance. Students gain contextual knowledge about the activities of NGOs in various policy fields such as economic development, environmental protection, market regulation, security, democratization, and human rights. Students considering NGOs for their professional careers are offered an opportunity to ponder their choice and plans. By reflecting not only on the transformative potential but also on the limitations of NGOs as political actors, the course addresses the following question: How does global society, as embodied by NGOs, contribute to the socio-political and socio-economic fabric of world politics and global governance?

The history and development of Non-Governmental Organizations at the national and international levels; the identification of social issues: slavery, women’s and minority rights, civilians and the injured in wartime, refugees, civil rights, environmental issues, global political and economic movements; the relation of NGOs with the state and international organizations; the politics, organization and finance of NGOs; NGOs in relationship with business. Students will analyze; assess; evaluate the role of NGOs in international affairs.

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Assessment

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Course Learning Outcomes

At the completion of the course the student will be able to:

1. To analyze and review the perspectives and debates about NGOs, and civil society more broadly, to practice and policy situations
2. To describe NGO values and roles and evaluate how they affect NGO engagement in development
3. To identify key components of NGOs’ organizational structure and management and, in light of these, develop strategies to enhance their effectiveness in service delivery
4. To reflect on socio-cultural diversity and values, world systems and the benefits of local and global development practices for communities engaged in development processes
5. To reflect on the causes and impacts of poverty and conflicts in global contexts and to evaluate the theory and practice of development institutions
### Topic No. | Topic
---|---
1 | Introduction
2 | NGOs in Context  
NGOs, Global Civil Society and Transnational Politics
3 | Organization and Management  
Challenges, Strategies and Consequences
4 | Transnational Campaigning  
Liberal Causes, Influencing Policies and Ethical Aspects
5 | NGO Politics and Government  
Power or Societal Actors
6 | NGO Politics and the Economy  
Corporate Social Responsibility on Business Behaviour
7 | Review  
Midterm Examination
8 | The Problem of Violence and War  
Impartiality, Neutrality, and Independence for Humanitarian Action
9 | Background Session: Christendom, the West, and Islam  
Cosmopolitanism, Liberalism, Communitarianism
10 | Faith-Based Organizations  
Variation
11 | Special Feature: Islam and Faith-Based Organizations  
Compatibility and Challenges
12 | NGOs Politics, Global Governance, and World Order  
Criticisms and Justifications

### Assessment Methods & Criteria

1. **Participation 10%**  
   Students are expected to actively and regularly participate during the lecture, peer presentation, class discussion exercises, case studies and group work which are evenly distributed throughout the trimester. Punctuality, attendance, attentiveness, contribution and behavior will be taken into consideration. It is important to keep up with the course materials in order to be able do so. Relevant readings and case studies will be made available to students electronically or in print.

2. **Group Presentation 20%**  
   Students will be provided a variety of contemporary international political economy topics to select in week 2. They will research, read, synthesize and present in class. Presentations will be in powerpoint format and address issues to be assigned. Critical thinking ability, content, and delivery are important assessment criteria. The presentation shall last no more than 15 minutes, following by Q&A where the presenting group encourages discussion and participation from their listening audience. The presentations of reading materials must (a) briefly summarize the main arguments of the presented text, (b) point out problematic or questionable sections of the reading, (c) provide updated content as necessary, and (d) provide 2-3 questions for further in-class discussion in relation to the presented materials. Although it is a group presentation, students will be graded individually.

3. **Midterm examination: 30%**  
   Students will revise and discuss on contemporary IR events. The examination will comprise essay answer questions which will require students to draw on lectures, course readings and short personal research to answer questions. Students will write a structured argumentative essay with relevant reference to topics, issues and associated theoretical frameworks that have been discussed in class. Answers can be concise, but must be precise.
and attend to all aspects of the question (read the questions carefully!). Midterm examination will take place in week 7.

4. **Final examination: 40%**

Students will revise and discuss on contemporary IR events. The examination will comprise essay answer questions which will require students to draw on lectures, course readings and short personal research to answer questions. Content, argumentation, structure and grammar will be taken into consideration when grading. Final examination will be held in week 13.

**Introduction**

**Topic description:** This week, we look at NGOs from the viewpoint of people in direct contact with the phenomenon. This will galvanize debate and introduce major topics. This includes an interview with a seasoned expert in the field of disaster relief and humanitarian aid; practical advice by a best-selling author on how to be politically effective as a citizen and activist; a newspaper article painting collaboration between development NGOs and businesses as a win-win situation; a more critical intervention by a Berkeley economist frustrated with NGO hyperbole and hardball tactics; an article by a graduate researcher from Oxford impressed by the reach of world civil society to a remote corner of Northern Kenya; and an article on how the Russian state has come to deal with NGOs. This week also discusses who drives NGO Politics: those who do the work, those who pay for it, those for whom the work is done, or some social constituency? It examines the organization and management, relevance, or irrelevance, of membership to the work of NGOs.

**Expected learning outcomes:** The student will be able to analyze and review the perspectives and debates about NGOs, and civil society. The student will be able to appraise the NGO politics. They will be able to evaluate the organization and management, relevance, or irrelevance, of membership to the work of NGOs.

**Readings and activities:**

**Core readings:**

**Supplementary readings:**

**Activities:** Students will participate in brainstorming exercise and class discussion to answer a list of questions derived from lecture and assigned reading. These questions are designed to help students understand this week’s concepts and express their understanding in their own words. Students’ contribution will be counted toward their overall participation credits.
NGOs in Context

**Topic description:** Based on the history and the content of NGOs’ social and political values, this week we will explore the following questions. Do NGOs represent global civil society, and if so in what sense? Do NGOs represent transnational contentious politics, and if so in what sense? Are the NGOs associated with substantive (and typically liberal) values? Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this strategy, as well as alternatives to it. Additionally, the week discusses the tension between the putative drift towards a homogenous “world polity” and the persistence of international inequality and other asymmetries in world society.

**Expected learning outcomes:** The student will be able to analyze and review the perspectives and debates about NGOs to practice and policy situations. They will be able to assess the NGO values and roles and evaluate how they affect NGO engagement in development. They will reflect on socio-cultural diversity and values, world systems and the benefits of local and global development practices for communities engaged in development processes.

**Readings and activities:**

**Core readings:**

**Supplementary readings:**

**Activities:** Students will participate in class discussion to answer a list of questions derived from lecture. Students’ contribution will be counted toward their overall participation credits.

Organization and Management

**Topic description:** The class discusses the similarities and differences between the organization and management of a service NGO, e.g. in the field of international development, and an advocacy NGO. It explores the importance and implications of the fact that NGOs are increasingly operating in a competitive environment where they must vie for contracts and funding. It examines the strategic interdependence between implementing NGOs and their donors; identify the resources that each side offers to or demands from the other side; and discuss the organizational and managerial consequences. Cases will be studied.

**Expected learning outcomes:** The student will be able to identify key components of NGOs’ organizational structure and management and, in light of these, develop strategies to enhance their effectiveness in service delivery.

**Readings and activities:**
Core reading:

Supplementary readings:

Activities: Students will participate in brainstorming exercise to provide solutions to the assigned scenarios. Students’ contribution will be counted toward their overall participation credits.

Transnational Campaigning

Topic description: This week we will explore the following questions: How do networks of NGOs influence policies by means of transnational campaigning? Is there any systematic reason why “liberal” causes are, or should be, more likely to be adopted for transnational campaigning? How do NGOs frame and select issues for transnational campaigning? How do selection practices affect outcomes and the prospects for success? How should NGOs select and frame issues for transnational campaigning? We will discuss this both under ethical aspects and with view to the prospects for success.

Expected learning outcomes: The student will be able to analyze and review the perspectives and debates about NGOs transnational campaigning. Using case studies, they will be able to appraise the effectiveness of how NGOs frame and select issues for transnational campaigning. They will also be able to evaluate the ethical aspects of strategies used.

Readings and activities:

Core readings

Supplementary readings:
**Activities**: Students will participate in class discussion to answer a list of questions derived from lecture. Students’ contribution will be counted toward their overall participation credits.

**NGO Politics and Government**

**Topic description**: This week we will assess different roles of NGOs vis-à-vis the state: against the state, beyond the state, alongside the state, on behalf of the state, instead of the state, etc. We will explore conditions under which these various roles are most likely to occur. It describes the following views: (1) NGOs have power or influence over states. (2) NGOs enact state power. (3) States and NGOs both operate under a new form of governmentality whereby power operates *through* rather than *on* societal actors.

**Expected learning outcomes**: The student will be able to review and analyse the relationship between NGOs and the state. They will be able to evaluate the different roles of NGOs vis-à-vis the state.

**Readings and activities**:

**Core readings**:

**Supplementary readings**:

**Activities**: Presentation group 1 starts this week. Students will be assigned to a reading of politics and economics of NGOs. Using the theoretical and conceptual framework studied, the group will analyze and summarise the reading, conduct additional research and present it in front of class. The audience should be attentive to the presented content which will allow them to participate in the Q&A. Students’ contribution in the Q&A will be awarded participation credits according to the quality of their answer and discussion.

**NGO Politics and the Economy**

**Topic description**: This week we will examine the following questions: Does NGO pressure for corporate social responsibility have a genuine impact on business behaviour? Is there a risk for NGOs to become “co-opted”? What are the advantages and disadvantages of various strategies for both parties concerned? Are business actors and NGOs essentially similar? Or are they driven by different kinds of motivation, such as interests vs. values? If so, how is this reflected in different strategies and practices? What are the examples?

**Expected learning outcomes**: The student will be able to analyze the impacts NGOs have on business behaviour. They will be able to assess the interests and values behind the operation of NGOs and businesses.
Readings and activities:
Core readings:

Supplementary readings:

Activities: Presentation group 2. Students will be assigned to a reading of politics and economics of NGOs. Using the theoretical and conceptual framework studied, the group will analyze and summarize the reading, conduct additional research and present it in front of class. The audience should be attentive to the presented content which will allow them to participate in the Q&A. Students’ contribution in the Q&A will be awarded participation credits according to the quality of their answer and discussion.

**Review and Midterm**

**Topic description:** Review and Midterm

**Expected learning outcomes:**
The student will be able to analyze and review the perspectives and debates about NGOs, and civil society more broadly, to practice and policy situations; to describe NGO values and roles and evaluate how they affect NGO engagement in development; to identify key components of NGOs’ organizational structure and management and, in light of these, develop strategies to enhance their effectiveness in service delivery. They will also be able to reflect on socio-cultural diversity and values, world systems and the benefits of local and global development practices for communities engaged in development processes.

**Readings and activities:** Review

**The Problem of Violence and War**

**Topic description:** The class will explore the continued validity, or need for revision, of classical principles such as impartiality, neutrality, and independence for humanitarian action in conflict zones. It discusses the role of NGOs and other civil-society actors in fostering human security in violent environments and improving the prospects for durable peace. What can they add to the provision of human security by public and commercial actors, and to the role of conflict stakeholders in the negotiation and implementation of peace? Humanitarian tasks are the “core business” of NGOs. But the military often undertakes humanitarian tasks to win the “hearts and minds” of people. Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) can also be contracted for similar tasks. Who should do what kind of humanitarian tasks, and what are the implications for humanitarian NGOs?
**Expected learning outcomes**: The student will be able to evaluate the role of NGOs and other civil-society actors in fostering human security in violent environments and improving the prospects for durable peace. They will be able to analyse the causes and impacts of poverty and conflicts in global contexts and to evaluate the theory and practice of development institutions.

**Readings and activities:**

**Core reading:**

**Supplementary readings:**

**Activities**: Presentation group 3.

Students will participate in class discussion to answer a list of questions derived from lecture and case studies.

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**Christendom, the West, and Islam**

**Topic description**: This week we will examine the following questions: How are the following concepts and related real-world phenomena connected: Christendom; “the West”; Islam; political Islam; Islamism; religious fundamentalism; world society; civilization; cosmopolitanism; liberalism; communitarianism; secularism; science; globalization? In this context, we will also discuss politically salient questions such as the following:

- Is Islam a civilization clashing with Christendom and/or the West?
- Is the cosmopolitan West a secularized and globalized version of Christendom?
- Is there a liberal-cosmopolitan Islam? If so, is it the exception or can it be the rule?
- How else can we make sense of the above universe of concepts and real-world phenomena?

**Expected learning outcomes**: The student will be able to describe NGO values and roles and evaluate how they affect NGO engagement in development; and to reflect on socio-cultural diversity and values, world systems and the benefits of local and global development practices for communities engaged in development processes.

**Readings and activities:**

**Core readings:**

**Supplementary Readings:**

**Activities:** Presentation group 4.
Students will participate in class discussion to answer a list of questions derived from lecture and case studies.

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**Faith-Based Organizations**

**Topic description:** This week we will explore the following questions: Are faith-based organizations (FBOs) representatives of transnational civil society, are they an expression of a backlash against neoliberal globalization, or what are they? We will discuss different kinds of faith-based organizations. Which features of faith-based organizations (FBOs) are likely to facilitate or impede collaboration with secular actors? Under what situational circumstances is collaboration more or less likely? What else may foster or hamper collaboration? The week also covers the discussion of the variation between different types of Christian Faith-based organizations (FBOs), as well as the variation between Christian and non-Christian FBOs.

**Expected learning outcomes:** The student will be able to understand the different kinds of faith-based organizations and the conceptual discussion for its operation. They will be able to evaluate how faith-based organizations may foster or impede collaboration with secular sectors.

**Readings and activities:**

**Core readings:**

**Supplementary reading:**
Activities: Presentation group 5.
Students will participate in class discussion to answer a list of questions derived from lecture and case studies.

Special Feature: Islam and Faith-Based Organizations

Topic description: This week, the class outlines the Islamic institution of zakat and compares it with other (religious and nonreligious) traditions of charitable giving and forced redistribution. How is zakat enacted by Muslim Charities? What are the practical implications for their work? Is the spectrum of Muslim charities equivalent to the spectrum of Christian charities? Under what circumstances are Muslim charities compatible with, and when do they pose a challenge to the liberal understanding of transnational civil society? How are Muslim charities affected by opportunity structures such as the presence of non-Muslim aid organizations, the global war on terror, and the ascendency of republican Islamism in Turkey? Are their responses strategic or are they tactical?

Expected learning outcomes: The student will be able to describe NGO values and roles and evaluate how they affect NGO engagement in development; and to reflect on socio-cultural diversity and values, world systems and the benefits of local and global development practices for communities engaged in development processes.

Readings and activities:
Core readings:

Supplementary reading:

Activities: Presentation group 6. Students will participate in class discussion to answer a list of questions derived from lecture and case studies.
NGO Politics, Global Governance, and World Order

Topic description: The concluding session offers an opportunity to reconnect the topics covered in the course to broader normative issues and questions of global governance and world order. It outlines the most pungent criticisms raised against NGOs and assess their normative content, moral justification, and fairness. It asks questions such as how would you characterize NGOs in generic terms: as the vanguard of global civil society? As an expression of the emergent world polity? As harbingers of transnational contentious politics? Or as what else? How are Islam and Muslim Faith Based Organizations related to global civil society?

Expected learning outcomes: The student will be able to outline the most pungent criticisms raised against NGOs and assess their normative content, moral justification, and fairness.

Readings and activities:
Core readings:

Supplementary Readings:

Further Reading