Institutions, Governance, and International Development

Instructor:

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Description:

This course introduces the theory and practice of institutional reform in developing and transitional countries. International development became a global concern in the 1940s and 1950s, as the world grappled with the end of the World War II, decolonization in Africa and Asia, and the establishment of international organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund.

Since then, progress has been uneven. On one hand, many economies have transformed themselves. The proportion of the global population living in absolute poverty has decreased considerably and access to basic capabilities has increased, particularly in large countries such as Brazil, Russia, India and China. On the other hand, problems still abound. Nowadays, industrialization coexists with environmental degradation; urbanization with spatial exclusion; medical breakthroughs with drug resistance; and technological innovation with illiteracy.

The challenge of development remains enormous, and the meaning, ethics, and appropriateness of this enterprise continue to be highly political and therefore hotly contested. Not surprisingly, reasonable people disagree on what development is, what should be pursued first, how it ought to be done, and who should pay the costs and reap the benefits. The field of international development is overwhelmingly large, and this course carves out a narrow slice of this larger pie. It does not offer blueprints, pre-packaged tools, ready-to-use frameworks or any one-right-answer. Rather, it directs students to go beyond easy dichotomies and search for the levers of change that matter, particularly concerning the governing of the economy. Of course, it is much easier to criticize other people’s ideas than to suggest something new, pragmatic, and likely to work.
Rigorous analysis is essential to this task, and this course provides an intellectual structure to support that examination and analysis. The goal of the course is in essence to ask “what is development?” -- How might we conceive it? How might we enact it? And what elements of social, political, and economic life must we consider as we reflect on that question. A review of past practice and understanding is critical to this endeavor, just as are explorations of potential useful practice and theory. In both the review of the past and our envisioning of possibilities going forward, the reasonable people in this course will disagree, and one important aim of this class is to learn how to mine those disagreements for questions or perspectives that may still be implicit or overlooked.

The course is composed of four modules. The first module offers a brief survey of the history of development thinking, leading to the contemporary emphasis on institutions and governance. The second module explores the various institutions that development theorists and practitioners have argued are central to development, and examines whether, and in which ways, some have been in fact conducive and others are detrimental to development, and under what conditions. The third module explores the strategies that governmental and non-governmental actors have adopted to build the institutions they view as critical to development, and the processes and structures adopted to that end. The course concludes with a glimpse of the path ahead. Most centrally, it features student explorations of these questions through your final projects. The courses closes with a discussion of new possibilities for development, and the questions we need to ask to begin to envision them.
Course objectives

To support students in the ability to:

1. Understand the evolution of the theory and practice of international economic development, including current trends and challenges;

2. Acquire a critical perspective on blueprints, received wisdoms and other misconceptions prevalent in international development thinking;

3. Identify some of the roles played by national and local governments, private businesses, NGOs, citizens and international organizations in promoting economic development;

4. Think analytically and strategically about existing levers of institutional reform, improved governance and opportunities for pragmatic change;

5. Be a step closer to becoming reflective practitioners, i.e. professionals endowed with a sophisticated grasp of the art, science, opportunities, limits and dangers of action in the international development sphere, and with the ability to articulate their ideas about these issues carefully and effectively.

Requirements:

The grade will be based on the following:

35% Class Participation
   15% participation in discussion
   20% reflection essays (each essay is worth 10%)

30% Midterm Exam

35% Group Exercise
   10% group presentation
   25% final paper

Active class participation means coming to class prepared to engage in a thoughtful and reflective discussion, and being able to ask good questions at least as much as being able to answer them. Quality of participation is more important than quantity, but these two are often correlated. Class participation is a central component of the pedagogical experience in the course. Students have consistently noted that learning from their colleagues has been a highlight of the class: students’ reflections on the material assigned but also student accounts of their own experience in development practice enrich the course experience enormously.
As part of the participation requirement, each student is required to prepare two reflection essays of 500 words each. The reflection essays should not summarize the readings; they should provide commentary on the readings, linking the main themes and insights presented to current events where appropriate. You may briefly recap the argument of the reading(s) that you will comment on — you may choose whether to comment on one single reading or two or more of the readings assigned. However, your review of the arguments you will discuss should consist of no more than 200 words. At the end of your reflection essay, please include two questions for further contemplation. The reflection essays are due Sunday 2pm before the Monday class period for which the readings are assigned and should be circulated to the class as a whole. We will also group together the reflection questions for the week and circulate those to the class in a separate email. You will receive a grade and feedback on your essay from Teaching Colleague within ten days of submission. A sign-up sheet for reflection essays will be passed around on the first day of class. Please plan to select one date on the first half of the fall semester (Sept 17 - Oct 22) and one date on the second half (Oct 29 - Dec 12).

A take-home midterm exam will be distributed mid-way through the class. It will consist of one essay question (out of a choice of two), and should be no more than 5 pages in length. The exam is open book, open note and you will have two weeks to complete it. Please note that the exam is an individual exercise, and should not be discussed with your colleagues in class.

The group exercise is a synthetic analysis of materials on institutional reform in a particular country. The class will be divided into country groups, and each group will examine one aspect of the institutional makeup and suggest courses for its reform in the country studied. Please submit your team preferences by September 17. You will get your team assignments by September 20. Groups are expected to choose an area of institutional reform to study. They must prepare a 1-page abstract of the topic and a short 1-page bibliography (10 items) by October 1. You will get initial feedback on your abstract from the professor by October 4. You will either get approval or be asked to resubmit a revised abstract. Groups must get final approval for the abstract topic by October 17 (Wednesday). Groups will conduct research on their topic, using a wide range of sources. The groups will meet outside of class time to discuss the case materials, prepare group presentations, and write a final group paper of approximately 20-25 pages in length.

Presentations:
Groups will make their presentations to the class on December 3rd and 10th.

Final Project Papers—due date:
Papers are due Friday December 14 at noon.

Format and Submission:

All assignments should be written on Times New Roman size 12, doubled-spaced lines (not 1.5), one inch margins all around. Please submit them as .doc or .docx

The assignments must include citations in the text and a bibliography at the end of the document. Use the following format for citations: if you are citing an idea or a concept, include (author’s last
name year) immediately after the passage, once per paragraph. If you are transcribing a passage, include the page number. For instance:

“…this type of engagement has been called responsive (Ayres and Braithwaite 1992, Braithwaite 2005), flexible (Bardach and Kagan 1982), tit-for-tat (Scholz 1984), creative (May and Burby 1998), and adaptive (Hawkins 1984).”

Use footnotes instead of endnotes.

One important skill this class seeks to cultivate is the clear and grounded articulation of ideas about development. If you would like additional support with the craft of writing, Wagner tutors are available to help students with their writing skills. Please see details on http://wagner.nyu.edu/students/services/writing.php. This webpage has additional details on other useful resources, including NYU Writing Center and several links concerning plagiarism and how to cite properly.

Please submit:

- Reflection Essays (2), and Final Papers to the instructor (natasha.iskander@nyu.edu) and Teaching Colleague (gundula.loffler@nyu.edu) by email.
- Team Preferences, Abstracts, Midterm Exams, and all logistical questions/issues to Logistical Assistant (mgm396@nyu.edu) by email.

Please remember to include your mailbox number in the paper and use the following convention to name your files:

IGID [your lastname (or country team for final projects)] [assignment]

For example: IGID Alvarez Reflection Essay 1.doc
IGID Alvarez Exam

Late submissions: late submissions for reflection essays will not be accepted. Please consult with the instructor if you will not be able to turn in your reflection essay, and if a substitute essay is possible, it may be accepted.

Late submissions for exams will be penalized by half a letter grade per day.

**Readings:**

There is one required book for the course. This book offers an easily accessible synthesis of many of the ideas we will be considering in the course, and will prove especially valuable to students who are newer to the field of economic development

This book is available for purchase at the NYU Professional Bookstore and is also on reserve at Bobst Library. It is also available in electronic format through varied vendors, such as amazon.com, etc.

There are several electronic readers for the course. Each reading is listed as a separate reader. To order the reader from NYU bookstore, please consult the following link:

https://www.bookstores.nyu.edu/WKSCRIPTS3/wkf?BEGIN.ORDER.PROCESS

All the other required readings are either available on Blackboard or available online. Finally, this syllabus does not include optional readings, but there are plenty of those available. If interested in further reading in a particular topic, please consult the instructor.

A final word on the readings: In the past, students have asked for a textbook. There are some textbooks devoted to international development out there, but as far as I know none of them covers the materials we cover in this course. This is not necessarily a coincidence or a market opportunity. Rather, it is an indication that international development remains a contested field, without a main corpus of agreed upon theories, and therefore filled with hopes and possibilities.

Assigned readings cover a wide range of topics. Authors come from different countries and represent different political positions, academic disciplines and research traditions. Some texts may seem old, but to dismiss them would be a mistake. They are assigned because they make important points that remain valid, or are the original articulation of a powerful idea. Please consider the readings on their own terms, but also in terms of the insight they may offer emergent discussion about development today.

One valuable contribution to the project of considering and reconsidering development is the suggestion and circulation of readings that you may find relevant or interesting for the discussion at hand. The materials presented in this course are not exhaustive, nor are they meant to be. They represent a sampling of “mainstream” development theory and practice – by that, I mean the development theory and practice that has garnered the most institutional and political support. There is much to critique in this array of development practice, but a critique must begin with a familiarity with the logical underpinnings of the theory and practice. Please feel free to complement the courses emphasis with readings that challenge these perspectives, or with materials that offer real world illustrations of dynamics relevant to the course.

This course in context

This is an introductory course and therefore it does not include some important, often cited, and sometimes-controversial topics related to international development. Many of these topics are covered in the more than thirty international development courses offered at Wagner, including PADM-GP.2202: Politics of International Development with John Gershman, PADM-GP.2203: International Economic Development with Jonathan Morduch, PADM-GP.2204: Development Assistance: Accountability and Effectiveness with John Gershman and Paul Smoke, PADM-GP.2226: Protecting Rights and Promoting Development with Salo Coslovsky, HPAM-GP.1831: Introduction to Global Health Policy with Karen Grepin, and URPL-GP.2665: Decentralized
Development Planning and Policy Reform in Developing Countries with Paul Smoke. Other faculty at NYU who teach courses relevant to international development are Rosalind Fredericks (Gallatin) and Dana Burde (Steinhardt, affiliated Wagner). Make sure to check their course offerings. The full list of international development courses and pre-approved NYU-wide development electives is provided at: http://wagner.nyu.edu/courses/listings.php?subc=intdev

**Classroom Etiquette**

Come prepared to engage with your fellow students, professor, and the material to be discussed. I assume everyone has read the articles and chapters indicated in this syllabus. I may start the class by asking a student to summarize the main points to initiate the discussion so come prepared. If you have professional (or personal) experience relevant to the discussion, I encourage you to share it with the class.

Many people bring their laptops or tablets / iPads to class. That is fine if you are taking notes or sporadically consulting relevant materials online. Access to internet can be handy to find data or settle a factual dispute. However, do not navigate the web, check your facebook page, post on twitter, read the news, respond to email or conduct any activity not directly related to the class. I will not be seeing your screen, but those sitting next to you will, and aimless navigation can be distracting. Please respect your colleagues and keep your focus.
Overview of Course Schedule

SECTION I: THE CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS AND PRACTICAL CHALLENGES OF INSTITUTIONS IN DEVELOPMENT

September 10  What is development? Vying notions…
September 17  Evolving Development/Institutional Reform Paradigms: From Plan…
Submission: group exercise - Team Preference
September 24  To Market…
October 1  …and Back, and Beyond
Submission: group exercise - Abstract

SECTION II: INSTITUTIONS AND GOVERNANCE

October 8  Rule of Law
October 15  Fall Recess
October 22  Property Rights and Governance
EXAM HANDED OUT
October 29  Knowledge and Development

SECTION III: INSTITUTIONS, GOVERNANCE, AND PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM

November 5  Accountability, Anti-Corruption and Good Governance
Submission: EXAM DUE
November 12  Industrial Policy and Labor Relations
November 19  Public-Private Partnerships and Citizen Engagement
November 26  Governing Knowledge
SECTION IV: SYNTHESIS: INTEGRATED INSTITUTIONAL REFORM IN COMPARATIVE CONTEXT

December 3    Country Case Presentations
December 10   Country Case Presentations
December 12   Conclusion

*December 14*    *Submission: group exercise – Final Paper*
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Outline and Reading List

I. The Conceptual Foundations and Practical Challenges of Institutions in Development

Introduction: What is development? Vying definitions...

http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/unbound/interviews/ba991215.htm

http://www.fpif.org/articles/poverty_capitalism_interview_with_ananya_roy

http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/2012/01/stiglitz-depression-201201


A. Evolving Development/Institutional Reform Paradigms: From Plan...


B. To Market…


C. …and Back, and Beyond – Institutions for coordination or knowledge?


II. Institutions and Governance: Property Rights, Knowledge, and Organizational Learning

A. Rule of Law


**B. Property Rights, Public Goods, Investment and Innovation**


**C. Knowledge**


III. Institutions, Governance, and Public Sector Reform

A. Accountability, Anti-Corruption, and Good Governance


B. Industrial Policy and Labor Relations


C. Public-Private Partnership and Citizen Engagement


**D. Governing Knowledge: Organizational Learning and Change**


**IV. Synthesis: Integrated Institutional Reform in Comparative Context**

A. Student Presentations

B. Musing…how far have we traveled, where shall we go?