

COURSE: Accountability in Humanitarian Assistance**LEAD PROFESSOR**

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TIME AND LOCATION: Meets Friday February 5, 9 AM– 5PM; Saturday February 6, 9AM – 5PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Historically, the standards by which international NGOs were held to account were based on donor scrutiny of financial statements and output oriented program results. Since the 2005 Asian tsunami and the findings from the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition report, accountability has been a topic that has garnered much attention within the humanitarian sector and more actors within the humanitarian sphere are insisting that NGOs and the UN also be held to account to the people they intend to serve. As DFID's 2011 Humanitarian Policy has stated: "The people who are on the receiving end of our assistance are rarely, if ever, consulted on how best their needs can be met or able to choose who helps them and how... This has long been recognised as a problem, but little has been done about it." In many disaster contexts, too few people know what they are entitled to receive, how to complain if they do not get it, and are unable actively and meaningfully to participate in the planning and delivery of assistance. A proliferation of codes, standards and frameworks have emerged to guide humanitarian responders in promoting greater accountability to beneficiaries. This trend has gained such momentum, that it is now essentially unquestioned as a driving concept or paradigm for humanitarian action.

This short course will explore the concept of accountability within the humanitarian sector. In particular it will look at the contemporary significance of accountability for humanitarian response – when and why it has become an important concept for humanitarian intervention, and specific events that have led to a shift from donors to recipients of aid as the agents of accountability.

Key questions that will be explored include:

- To whom are humanitarian agencies accountable? What are the competing accountabilities and how do these influence program decisions and agency performance?
- Why is accountability to affected people important during a humanitarian response? Aside from ideological views, why should the humanitarian sector be concerned with accountability to beneficiaries? What are its end goals?
- What does an effective accountability mechanism look like? How do agencies implement it?
- Do these work? In what contexts? How is their effectiveness being measured? By whom?
- Is the current criticism against the humanitarian sector warranted?

PREREQUISITES

None.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The course is designed to introduce students to the underpinnings of humanitarian effectiveness and accountability and provide an analytical framework by which to consider these issues.

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Understand why the humanitarian sector is under considerable strain and the efforts to improve practice and effectiveness.
- Describe the origins of the accountability debate and the historical events that have led to greater demand for accountability in humanitarian action;

- Identify various accountability mechanisms and techniques practiced by humanitarian actors in programming response to complex emergencies including: information sharing, participation, complaints handling;
- Analyze challenges and dilemmas frequently encountered when implementing humanitarian programs and accountability mechanisms
- Propose responses to these challenges in the contexts of humanitarian response
- Dissect the current methodologies and tools used to measure the outcomes of downward accountability.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING POLICY

Students' conceptual understanding and practical knowledge will be assessed through responses to questions and in class exercises, participation in class, and a final paper.

Student grades will be based on:

Class Participation.....	50%
Group Presentations/ assignments.....	35%
Final Paper	15%

Class participation: Half of a student's grade will be based on participation in classroom discussions and exercises. Class attendance and contributions to class discussion and group exercises are mandatory.

Group Presentation: Throughout the course students will be expected to present in groups on a certain topic. This will be either developed during class or prepared as an outside assignment.

Final Paper: Students are asked to write a final paper addressing a critical issue in the accountability debate. Your paper should reflect the results of in depth research, and it should convey your own analysis and conclusions. The paper should be no longer than 5 pages in length, including a proper bibliography (if needed). All pages should be numbered. Further guidelines will be distributed in class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Students are expected to keep up with readings, attend each lecture and participate both in class and group work. The readings will be distributed before class either on line or printed and passed out.
- All assignments are to be submitted on time unless there is a documented compelling health or personal problem.
- Attendance is mandatory for the full duration of the class. As this is a condensed class students are expected to be present for all coursework.

COURSE STRUCTURE

Course concepts, skills, and field lessons are taught through lectures, class discussion, in-class exercises, guest presentations, examination of research findings and program evaluations; and, interactive case studies. Students will be able to access required readings, case studies, and supplemental material electronically.