Dr. Gerry O’Reilly  

GEOPOLITICS & HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Course Title: Geopolitics & Humanitarian Assistance  
Credits: 5 ECTS  
Course Type: Compulsory for all students  
Course Coordinator: Dr. Gerry O’Reilly  
Contact Details: Room: NOHA Secretary

Learning Outcomes
On successful completion of the course students should be:

- Familiar with the principles of humanitarian action in the context of geopolitical methodologies & approaches, risk & assistance
- Appraise the humanitarian / geopolitical contexts
- Describe the geopolitical environment & standpoints: contexts, geographical scales & actors
- Analyse how relationships between the physical environment & human geography intertwine creating geopolitical processes within varying timelines & at different scales - local to global – but within specific contexts
- Critically analyse geopolitical organisational roles & practice - offering aid in decision-making, management, conflict resolution & sustainable development;
- Design & present a detailed description of a humanitarian crisis from a geopolitical perspective in contemporary international relations in an integrated holistic manner
- Critique the logical framework of geopolitical approaches
- Contribute to the development of a security plan for an NGO
- Evaluate the geopolitical implications of a humanitarian intervention for an NGO & target population.

Course Requirements:
(i) Regular attendance at all sections of the module including Part C:
Part A Development, Vulnerability & Risks  
Part B Geopolitical Perspectives: Humanitarian Disasters & Actions  
Part C Conflict & Post-Conflict: Case Studies in Humanitarian Space
Prepare material for class as recommended.

(ii) Project/Report: A case study of a disaster/geopolitical conflict location will be proposed by the student, & then finalised in consultation. The analysis should include the perspectives of: geopolitics, humanitarian risk, aid & assistance. A one-page proposal should be submitted for approval by 1st November. Based on this you will make a short oral presentation in class of about 8 minutes – with handout summaries available (i.e., ready in advance of your presentation & not during or after it) for all students & lecturer. The class representative will give an electronic version of all the presentations on a cd-rom (clearly labelled with ‘GP-HA Class Presentations’ & dated) to the NOHA secretary (word.doc attachments only).

The final project/report: a paper copy of the project/report, & of the oral presentation along with an e-copy (both CLEARLY displaying the student’s name, number, date & key words or title of the project is to be signed into the secretary’s office not later than the first Friday in Jan, of the week you return to college. Note that both a paper & an electronic copy are required. Remember to save a disc copy for yourself. Quality & not quantity is essential, a limit of 5,000 words (approx. 13 pages) including maps, charts etc. is recommended.

(iii) Grading: Exams: two written questions are to be answered out of five choices (50%). Project/Report & Class presentation (50%).

PROJECTS: from the perspectives of: geopolitics, humanitarian risk, action & assistance. Originality is expected in the choice & analyses presented. Each student must choose a different case study or thematic area; this is decided on a first-come, first-served basis e.g., it would not be acceptable for two or three people to do Darfur.

Examples of projects completed in recent years:
Case study of a recent human-made disaster: Darfur, Sudan, Chad, Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Haiti, Colombia, Sri Lanka, Georgia or Former Soviet Republics, Iraq, Afghanistan etc.
Forgotten conflicts: e.g., Chechnya, Nepal, Tibet, N. Korea, N. Uganda etc.

Case study of a potential humanitarian disaster / conflict location*: e.g., Nigeria, Mali, Venezuela, and Bolivia.

Thematic: e.g., Conflict resolution*. Peace processes. Post-conflict areas. The use of symbolic places in peace building, for example, Mostar Bridge, Battle of the Boyne site (RoI), Education in conflict areas & its importance in post-conflict reconstruction. The role of the media in HA. The role of the cinema in HA. Geopolitics & the Internet. Political Islam or Islamism. Al Qaeda. IDPs. Refugees & DIDPs. International organisations both GOs & NGOs.

* Students are particularly encouraged to think about the possibilities offered by these specific themes.

**Timetable: Geopolitics & HA:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Have prepared for class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fri. 24/9/10 10-13H</td>
<td>Part A. Introduction to Humanitarian Action: Definition &amp; concepts</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Read the following: Worksheet: HA FAQs Development, Vulnerability, Risk 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fri. 24/9/10 14-17H</td>
<td>HA &amp; Development</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Read the following: What Is Development - text &amp; notes 2080 Development Brief Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fri. 8/10/10 14-17H</td>
<td>HA: Vulnerability &amp; Risks - What is the relationship between development &amp; humanitarian disasters?</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Make a conceptual framework targeting what the relationship is between levels of development, vulnerability &amp; risk of humanitarian disasters.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fri. 22/10/10 14-17H</td>
<td>Part B. Geopolitical perspectives: Humanitarian Disasters &amp; Actions</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Read the following: GP Worksheet &amp; associated doc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Fri. 29/10/10 14-17H</td>
<td>Geopolitical perspectives: Humanitarian Disasters &amp; Actions</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Fri. 12/11/10 14-17H</td>
<td>Geopolitical approaches to: (i) global issues, (ii) humanitarian risk &amp; (iii) aid. Student case studies presentation &amp; discussion.</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>NOHA Manual themes = Blue Book - Chs. 1-9. * See note below. N.B. Some time will be devoted to students choosing geopolitics - Project/Case studies for sessions in Part C of course.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Fri. 26/11/10 14-17H</td>
<td>Part C. Student case study / project presentation &amp; discussion</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Student prepares: PPT of their project Handout for each student, to be given out before class session begins. Discuss with NOHA administrative assistant.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sat. 27/11/10 10-13H</td>
<td>Student case study / project presentation &amp; discussion</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Ibid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sat. 27/11/10 14-17H</td>
<td>Student case study / project presentation &amp; discussion</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Ibid.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Note: The Blue Book. Aim: To cover the themes laid out in the Blue Book: Geopolitics & HA. If students could work mostly in groups (9 thematic Chapters in Blue Book); depending on the workload, this could include some groups of 3-4 people. Break down the contents page titles of the Blue Book between the respective groups, research & get further information from other sources dealing with the
themes as the original Blue Book is somewhat dated due to the pace of change. Each group write up a short summary for distribution in class along with overhead projection or PPT presentation.

THREE MAJOR THEMES RECOMMENDED BY THE NOHA TEAM IN THE BLUE BOOK:

(i) Intervention: The History of HA & what is the current situation! (Chapters 1-4 Blue Book).
(ii) Geopolitics: The International System - Conflict, Emergency & HA. (Chapters 5-7 Blue Book)
(iii) Environment: Sustainable Development. Migration! (Chapters 8-9 Blue Book)

BASIC KEY TEXTS FOR THE COURSE:
Flint, C. 2006. Introduction to Geopolitics. London: Routledge. (The latter two books are essential reading dealing with the basic A, B, Cs of geopolitics. So start reading it now).
NOHA Geopolitics MANUAL / the Blue Book (Despite its shortcomings, the themes covered are central to the course).
Regan, C. (eds) 2006. 80:20. Dublin: NCDE/Concern/Aidlink/Action Aid. Email: info@8020.ie (The A, B, Cs of development).
Simon, D. 2006. Fifty Key Thinkers on Development. London: Routledge. (Very good compendium). Most of these texts are available in the Dept. Library & also in the main library. See Development Library in the Main Library Building.

Part A Development, Vulnerability & Risks
While it would be rare to find anyone arguing against the basic benefits of development, there is less accord on how this positive change is to be achieved, its benefits distributed, & at what geographical scales this can occur. Levels of development correlate with a community’s ability to cope with humanitarian emergencies (See WORKSHEET for A below).

Key texts for Part A are:


Main Themes
1 Back to Basics & Our Futures
Allen, T. & T. Alan (eds.) 2004 Chapters 1-2

2 Development: Problems, Solutions & Discourses
Allen, T. & T. Alan (eds.) 2004 Chapters 3-9 (specific chapter themes will be highlighted)
O’Reilly, G. File

3 Millennium Development Goals
Allen, T. & T. Alan (eds.) 2004 Chapters 3-9 (specific chapter themes will be highlighted)

4 Politics & Development
Key reading: Regan, C. (eds.) (2006) Chapters (10-14) 15-21 (specific chapter themes will be highlighted)
Allen, T. & T. Alan (eds.) 2004 Chapters 16-21 (specific chapter themes will be highlighted)
Other references & websites

The following publications offer firm theoretical and conceptual frameworks and analysis of development & risk issues.

Websites

Of global and international interest:
http://hdr.undp.org/ (UN Human Development Reports)
http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/hdi_rank_map.cfm (HDI ranking map)
http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/ (Excellent data for on each country)
http://lib.stat.cmu.edu/datasets/humandevel (Human Development Index)
http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/indexes.cfm (HDI and reports)
http://www.undp.org.in/media/misc/30082001at.htm (Critique of India’s Human Development Report)
Worldwatch.Institute@solarhost (Very interesting data)
www.oneworld.net (Development Issues from clear perspectives)
http://nutrition.tufts.edu/research/famine/ (Good data analysis)

Websites with emphasis on Ireland:
www.irlgov.ie (Irish government website, departments including environment and finance).
http://www.irlgov.ie/iveagh (Overseas development aid, Irish Aid)
http://www.trocaire (Third World development and Ireland)
www.crosscare.ie (Voluntary sector dealing with poverty-related issues in Ireland)
www.cpa.ie (Combat Poverty Agency, Ireland)
8020.ie & developmenteducation.ie

PART A: HUMANITARIAN ACTION: WORKSHEET ONE

What is the relationship between levels of Development, Vulnerability and Risk of Humanitarian Disasters?

Last updated 17/09/10

FAQs

1) What is a humanitarian crisis or disaster?
2) What are the main categories of humanitarian disasters?
3) With reference to humanitarian disasters, what do the following terms mean: hazard, vulnerability and risk?
4) What are the geographical phenomena in humanitarian crises and disasters?
5) What is Humanitarianism?
6) What is humanitarian action?
7) Who are the actors or the stakeholders in a humanitarian disaster?
8) What is Geopolitics?
9) What is the connection between humanitarian actions & geopolitics?
10) What are the geopolitical phenomena in humanitarian crises and disasters?
11) What are the responses to humanitarian disasters?
12) What comparisons can be made between past & present case studies of humanitarian disasters, & how can this be related to the Sustainable Development framework?
13) What is the relationship between the level of development and the impact of the humanitarian disaster on the affected area and population?
14) What are the main factors linking human vulnerability, and risk of humanitarian disaster in many post-colonial states?
15) What is the relationship between conflict and hunger?
16) What is ‘development’ - problems, solutions & discourses?
17) What does the term ‘80:20’ refer to?
18) Why is an understanding of demography (including skills & techniques) central to development & humanitarian action?
19) Which indicators give the broadest view of development levels?
20) What are the main schools of thought in relation to development?
21) Approximately what percentage of all food that is cultivated in the Less Developed Countries is farmed by women? Explain the significance of this.
22) What is endowment-entitlement mapping?
23) What is meant by a ‘Human rights approach’?
24) What is the role of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in relation to human-made humanitarian disasters?
25) What is the legal differentiation between an IDP (Internally Displaced Person) and a refugee?
26) What is a DIDP (Development Induced Displaced Person)?
27) What do the terms action, structure and power mean with reference to humanitarian aid?
28) What do the following terms mean: (a) ‘empowerment’ and (b) ‘capacity building’?
29) What are the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals)?
30) What is the main criticism raised by many development NGOs, and especially the anti-globalisation campaigners regarding the MDGs?
31) What are the main factors linking human vulnerability, and risk of humanitarian disaster in many post-colonial states or LDCs?
32) Demography: FAQs
   • What is demography?
   • Why is demography relevant to a course on Humanitarian Action?
   • What three factors help to bring about population change?
   • Why is it useful to express demographic variables as rates (e.g. birth rate, death rate etc.)?
   • What is natural increase?
   • What does the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) measure and why is it so significant?
   • Explain the term ‘replacement level fertility’.
   • What is life expectancy?
   • Explain what is meant by population structure.
   • What does a population pyramid depict?
   • Why is it important to understand population structure?
   • Where is most of the world’s population growth occurring today?
   • Why are less economically developed countries facing a situation that the industrialised countries never had to face (with regard to population)?
   • What was the basic theory put forward by Malthus?
   • What do neo-Malthusians suggest should be done about population growth?
   • What was the perspective put forward by Julian Simon?
   • There are different types of population crises in different regions – explain.
   • When was the first UN-sponsored conference on population issues?
   • What was the main problem with early policies arising from the population conferences before Cairo?
   • Why do people choose to have large numbers of children?
   • High fertility is an effect, not a cause, of poverty. Explain why.
   • Explain why women’s education is such a good predictor of lower fertility.
   • In what ways was the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo such a landmark?
   • Why is the proportion of women living with HIV so much higher in sub-Saharan Africa than elsewhere?
   • Explain how and why the highest impact of HIV/AIDS is on vulnerable populations.
   • Population issues are fundamental to achieving development. In which of the Millennium Development Goals is this reflected?
TASK A: By the end of Part A of the course, you should be able to complete the following task. Take a state or region of your choice & draw up a list of ‘development’ vulnerabilities (backed up with data from reputable sources e.g., UN HDI, UNESCO, ICG, Gini index, demographic data, U5MR etc.) & analyse & illustrate the levels of risk.

SOME GUIDELINES FOR ANSWERING THE ABOVE QUESTIONS: Available in e-material