IDEV 691-02
Rethinking Development: Taking Stock, Challenging Myths, Seeking Inspiration

Instructor: Laura Murphy, International Health and Development
Semester: Spring 2011
Schedule: Friday, 1-4 pm
Room: Weinmann Hall, room 302
Credit hours: (3)

Overview

This is a graduate seminar to debate and assess new ideas and trends in thinking about, and doing, international development. Despite nearly 60 years of dedicated international development actions and aid, the world is full of poor people facing numerous deprivations; rising consumption levels and inequalities undermine human and ecological systems; ethical, environmental, social, and political challenges defy easy technological or policy solutions. Such pernicious problems and persistent injustices call for rethinking of conventional notions of development: what it means, how we go about it, and who is involved. We seek not to critique past practice only, but to identify constructive new ideas, illuminating cases, and articulate individuals involved in shaping contemporary development landscape and helping the poor to achieve valued freedoms.

 In this class, we take an interdisciplinary perspective to review debates around foreign aid, the role of the private sector in development, the nature of effective policies, and movements for redirecting production/consumption patterns for well-being. We work from new paradigms for development reflecting insights from complexity science (dynamic systems) and rich philosophical accounts of human flourishing captured in the capability approach (human development). With these new lenses, we assess trends and problematic concepts, such as aid and technical assistance, technology, sustainability, scaling-up. We contrast conventional projects and programs (including the Millennium Villages Projects) with network and entrepreneurial models of action. We learn from the case of mobile phones in Africa and India to appreciate the complex interactions of relevant actors and diverse actions involved in enabling this technological transformation, and the interdependent freedoms sought by ordinary poor people as they adopt cell phones into their lives. The class is a seminar style course, oriented around active engagement and participatory discussion, rather than formal lectures and exams. Class size will be limited to 25 graduate students with prior development coursework; advanced undergraduate students will be allowed with permission of the instructor.

Description of the Course Content

Far from being the unproblematic extension of scientific knowledge and financial assistance by professional development institutions to the poor: "development" is a problematic industry, a contested and sometimes resisted practice, and an incoherent ethical domain. Some argue that development is dead; others that the complex "development apparatus" begs critical rethinking and innovative action to regain its integrity and pro-poor stance. Through this course, some comfortable but unworkable assumptions about development will be shattered, to be replaced by new lenses and inspirations ideas for creative arenas of action.

Myths persist that can stifle problem-solving and even disguise positive actions that are already occurring. One myth is that more financial aid is what is needed—countered here with arguments against external foreign assistance. The growth myth posits that ecologically and socially sustainable improvements in quality of life around the world are possible without painful restructuring of both national economies and legislation and of individual consumer values; the de-growth movement provides alternatives. Another myth is that effective policies (governance) emerge un-problematically out of the supply of rigorous (scientific, quantitative) empirical evidence to official policy-makers in governmental and non-governmental sectors; this myth is countered by empirical research into actual policy-making processes.

This complex, ambiguous and disappointing situation exists not only for poorer, aid-receiving "developing countries" and their populations, but also within rich countries, thus surpassing the old dichotomies of north/south and parameters of the nation-state. Globalization and innovation, meanwhile, bring new opportunities to expand valued freedoms; through networks, small individual actions can have much larger impacts. Insights from ecological, physical and social sciences provide paradigm-shifting language and lenses on change.

In this class, we review several academic, popular, and grassroots critiques of issues, such as whether foreign aid is sufficient to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the role and limits of the private sector, the nature of effective policy-making and projects, and how to redirect global economies and consumption (through changing values? or economic incentives?). We seek out constructive ideas, illuminating cases, and articulate individuals who can help reveal the dynamic reality of contemporary development actions and effects in places that have actually been experiencing and encountering development. We look at various network models of action, social change, and funding, and explore examples of places, projects, programs, policies, and products that seem successful in enhancing development. This effort reveals that beyond the public/private realms is a messy pluralistic mesh of cultural, creative, community, technical, scientific, bureaucratic and other actors at work.

Scholars and Topics
We draw from diverse scholars and observers from around the world to review key themes to illustrate larger arguments around the need to rethink development as a certain set of assumptions and "technical" and institutional practices. At the start of the class, we adopt a framework building from cutting edge models of development reflecting insights from chaos and complexity theory ("dynamic systems approaches") around networks and systems, combine with normative, philosophical accounts of human flourishing (freedoms, human rights, human development, and the capabilities approach). These suggest relevant and meaningful "ends" and processes and provide lenses to examine and assess a range of actions. We delve into debates around foreign aid and whether and how aid should be continued, given our frameworks. We examine policy-making and the unintended effects of formal development projects and programs, comparing them with network and "DIY" philanthropy models of action, such as Kickstarter, KIVA, social entrepreneurship, and civil society alliances. We continue to unpack and examine a range of cross-cutting "problematic concepts", such as technology, sustainability, and scaling-up. The "Millennium Villages" program is one case study of mainstream technical assistance to tackle poverty. We seek out other examples of evidently successful actions that enhance human development; the case of mobile phones in Africa and India will be one but students can identify others and research and share their findings in class. These cases will inevitably reveal the contingent and flexible roles take by actors reflecting many domains: formal policy-makers in the government, international agencies, private sector firms, consumers and citizens, civil society, technology designers,

science and engineering research, and humanitarian/development agencies—and perhaps other unexpected non-human actors as well.

Audience
The course is intended for graduate students in the program in international development (Payson Center). It will also interest graduate students in Latin American Studies, International Health and Development, and other departments across the university (political science, sociology) who seek a forum for in-depth deliberation around themes of development and social change (and who have adequate preparation). Advanced undergraduates with appropriate preparation will be welcome, if space allows and with permission of the instructor.

Prerequisites
Students should have prior, advanced coursework in international development theory and/or history, such as INHL 7200 (Development Theory), or IDEV graduate coursework such as international political economy (IPER) or "Six Decades of Development." Check with the instructor to see if you have adequate background.

Format
The class is a seminar style course, oriented around active engagement and participatory discussion, rather than formal lectures and exams. Class size will be limited and we will meet once/week for 3 hours. Longer class sessions promote richer discussion. In-between class sessions, students will investigate, read, work together in small groups, and design and prepare for class discussion and other activities. In class, students will actively engage with the materials and ideas and help lead discussions and debates. There will be occasional mini-lectures and presentations to consolidate ideas. We will engage with outside speakers and events on campus that are relevant to the course content. The material is cumulative and you need to keep up. The scheduled class sessions include space for student-suggested themes that we will discuss and decide upon together. Suggested additional themes are "social movements", "gender and feminist theory", "making a living as a development worker in a post-developmental world", "faith-based development practice" and "ethics in development").

Assessment
Student grades will be based on a variety of individual written assignments (50%), to include 8 short assignments (one-page note, book reviews, short essays, critiques, prepared handouts for class activities and presentations throughout the semester). Each student will write an individual final paper (worth 25% of grade), to comprise a critical investigation into (and coherent presentation around) a "problematic theme" (one raised in class or a new theme suggested by the student during the class). Active Participation is required in this seminar: reasonable, informed, pro-active and productive engagement with class activities is expected of all students in class discussion, panels, debates, and other participatory activities (worth 25% of total grade). More specific details on assignments will follow in class.

Learning Objectives
By the end of the semester, students who participate fully and keep up with readings, activities, and assignments can expect to be able to:

- Articulate the state of mainstream international development theory, related institutions, and standard practices.
- Critically assess these practices arising from mainstream theory in relation to the set of normative social, ethical, and environmental outcomes (the dynamic systems and capabilities approach).
- Explain contemporary alternatives to mainstream development practice (from around the world, in general and using specific examples).
- Correctly use relevant terminology, concepts and frameworks.
- Construct compelling and persuasive normative and strategic arguments for articulating an approach to development action and ends in a specific context (place, problem, population).
- Identify appropriate data sources and research approaches to generating knowledge that are consistent with specific development paradigms and practices
- Communicate through written and visual presentations to specific audiences

Readings and Resources
Readings for this course draw from African, Asian, Latin American, North American, and European scholars, academics, practitioners, and informed observers. Resources include published scholarly books and journal articles, as well as reports, websites, and blogs. Books will be placed on reserve at the library.

Core Texts (most are inexpensive paperbacks; buy from the bookstore or an online source, or find on reserve)
- Sachs, Wolfgang. *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power, Second Edition*. Zed Books; Second Edition, (February 16, 2010)
- Maathai, Wangari. *The Challenge for Africa* [Paperback] Anchor (October 19, 2010)
- Moyo, Dambisa. *Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is a Better Way for Africa* Farrar, Straus and Giroux; 1 Reprint edition (March 2, 2010)
- Uma Kothari (Editor). *A Radical History of Development Studies: Individuals, Institutions and Ideologies [P*aperback]. Zed Books (December 15, 2005)
- Joseph Hanlon, Armando Barrientos, David Hulme. *Just Give Money to the Poor: The Development Revolution from the Global South* Kumarian Press (April 2010)
- Mohamed Yunus. 2010. *Building Social Business: The New Kind of Capitalism that Serves Humanity's Most Pressing Needs* [Paperback] Public Affairs.

Electronic materials available through Blackboard or other website

Chambers, Robert. 2010. Paradigms, Poverty and Adaptive Pluralism IDS Working Paper344, July 2010. Institute of Development Studies, UK
Shahani (eds). 2009. *An introduction to the human development and capability approach: freedom and agency. (E-book, selected chapters)*
IDS, 2007 *Mobile Phones for Development*, Briefing paper, Institute for Development Studies, Brighton, UK.
Leach, Melissa et al, 2010. *Dynamic Sustainabilities: Technology, Environment, Social Justice (Pathways to Sustainability Series)*. Online/ electronic versions of selected chapters.

Murphy, Laura, 2008, "13 Ways of Looking at the Mobile Phone". Working paper, manuscript. Hybrid Technologies Project.

ODI, 2008. Review of the Millennium Villages Projects. Overseas Development Institute (ODI), London. Reference materials for MVP portion.

UNDP, *Human Development Report* (multiple years, background material, selected chapters TBD)

World Bank, 1999. *Voices of the Poor (*various chapers*, reference)*

Internet Sites and Blogs (sites we plan to visit --*provisional*

- http://scidev.net/en/ News, views and information about science, technology and the developing world
- http://www.eldis.org/ Excellent online portal for development-oriented articles and resources
- http://aidwatchers.com/ (Blog managed by Development Research Institute at NYU)
- Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies (CIS) India http://www.cintdis.org/
- Reimagining Development at IDS, UK http://www.ids.ac.uk/go/reimagine
- http://www.gnh-movement.org/
- http://www.gnhusa.org/ (Gross National Happiness Movement)
- http://www.kickstarter.com/
- http://www.ophi.org.uk/ (Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative)
- http://www.steps-centre.org/ourresearch/index.html
- http://sei-international.org/index.php/rethinking-development (Stockholm Environmental Institute)
- Second International Degrowth Conference http://www.degrowth.eu/v1/
- http://mobileactive.org/
- The Story of Stuff, http://storyofstuff.com/
- The Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment, and Energy; http://www.wupperinst.org/en/home/
- Stockholm Resilience Centre http://www.stockholmresilience.org/
- International Institute for Environment and Development http://www.iied.org/
- www.worldbank.org/developmentdialogue
- LightingAfrica.org website
- Add more! Please send or share on blackboard

Schedule
Date, Themes, Readings & Resources, Assignments, External events of interest

Friday, January 14   *Taking Stock of Development Thinking*
Themes and questions: What is the state of development theory/thinking and practice in a post-developmental new millennial era? Is development still a laudable aspiration, and a useful organizing principle? Or is it just another industry, a modern "apparatus" that has various unintended effects? (or both?) Does it work, for whom, and how? We review major conventional theories, critiques, contemporary debates, and concerns from around the developing world (North and South). We introduce the normative (ethical and social justice) frameworks we use in the course, which integrate human rights, freedoms, capabilities with dynamic systems and ecological perspectives of resilience and diversity.

Readings: Wolfgang Sachs (Preface, Introduction, Development), Maathai (Chapters 1-3), HDCA "Briefing Paper" on capabilities, STEPS Centre Overview
Websites: HDCA, STEPS centre
Assignment # 1, due Monday Jan 17 via email: "Taking Stock" Two page written summary (table, graphic, and bullet points can be used) of the main ideas of Capabilities, Dynamic Systems, plus a brief review of the state of "mainstream development theory" so far. (10 points)

January 21   *Challenging Myths: Foreign Aid and the Case for International Assistance*
Themes and questions: Rethinking the relationship between international aid, donors, markets, and debt in an era of dependency, corruption, and chronic poverty. We review debates around official foreign aid vs. the rise (again) of the private sector, the "bottom of the pyramid," and the micro-credit phenomenon. What is the role of official financial aid in advancing human development? What's at the heart of these debates around different types and levels of aid, debt, dependency and corruption?
Readings: D. Moyo (Part I of book), Wolfgang Sachs (chapter on Development), Kothari (Introduction, Ch 1, 2), Maathai (Ch 4)
No assignment today.

External events of interest, Jan 20 & 21: Thomas Lovejoy, lecture and panel, on Forests, Climate and Adaptation

January 28   *AID myths continued: Alternatives to foreign aid*
What are alternative approaches to financial and technical assistance? We review a range of mainstream market and non-market approaches to 'development' including the Do-It-Yourself Philanthropy world, "social entrepreneurship", social business, micro-credit and other alternative lending and giving programs, cash transfers (conditional and direct). We look at "mini-case studies" of the Lighting Africa Project and the role of the WB/IFC, NGOs, technical experts and consumers in the household energy sector; and direct cash transfers to the poor.
Readings: Moyo (part II of book) Nick Kristof article "DIY", Yunus, "Social Business"; Hanlon, Barrientos and Hulme, Cash Transfers
Websites: KIVA.org, Kickstarter.org, Lighting Africa
Assignment #2, bring to class: Describe and defend (give reasonable cause) for your "favorite" alternative (so far, based on readings) to conventional international foreign assistance. (10)

External event of interest, Wed evening, February 2: Talk by Bill Drayton, Ashoka Foundation (social entrepreneurship, alternative models of promoting change)

February 4   *Problematic Concepts: S/sustainability*

The concept of sustainability has come to be widely used, with mixed and even vacuous content. What do we mean by S/sustainability? What exactly do we want to sustain, and for whom, how, and where? By rethinking the concept of sustainability since the 1987 WCED/Brundtland Commission; can we salvage it from the wasteland of jargon, as an overused generic measure of a good project or simply the self-sufficiency of a project? We return to ecological principles, dynamic systems approaches, and a focus on resilience and diverse pathways. Lessons from environmental history, common property resource management, from resilience and change in contemporary urban settlements, and notions of ecological footprints, rucksacks and other ideas from industrial ecology and studies of consumption/production linkages.
Readings: Leach et al, 2008 STEPS Working Paper # 1 on "Dynamic Systems", Wolfgang Sachs (chapters on Population, Environment, Resources, Participation), Wangari Maathai (rest of book, esp Ch 11, 12, 13)
Relevant Websites: STEPS centre, IIED.org, StoryofStuff.com, de-growth movement, Stockholm Resilience Institute
Assignment #3, bring to class: Describe and compare (words, pictures, table) the WCED vs. STEPS definitions of "Sustainability" and sustainability. What might Wolfgang Sachs say? Give examples. (5)

February 11   *Problematic Concepts: Technology and Expertise*

Rethinking the nature and role of professional expertise, scientific knowledge, indigenous knowledge, and modern technologies in human development in an age of hyper-innovation and change. What are relevant types of knowledge to advance human development, according to different models of development? Who possesses—or should possess--relevant expertise, technology, and other forms of knowledge(s)? How are appropriate knowledge systems generated and transmitted, and by whom? Development Projects? Large programs? Capacity building? Education? In the home? What are alternatives?   Examples from agriculture and health sectors, the MVP, and Lighting Africa provide case studies of different approaches to innovation, diffusion, and technological change.
Readings: W. Sachs (Chapters on Science, Technology), Kothari (Ch 1, 4), Maathai (Ch 14), ODI report on Millennium Village Project (MVP); "hybrid technologies" project manuscripts,
Websites: STEPS Centre blog, http://www.steps-centre.org/ourresearch/knowledgesociety.html
 SciDev.Net
Assignment #4: TBD

February 18   Problematic Concepts: *Scaling Up*

Themes and Questions: What do we want to scale up and replicate? Why is "scale-ability" so trendy? What is the relevant scale of action? Related concepts we tackle are "best practices" and "blue-prints". How can we extrapolate from workable small, local actions that work in one setting to larger-scale and sustained impact. Different models of action by government (state actors), non-governmental organizations, the marketplace, and through the network? Issues and implications for action lead us from countries and populations to people in specific networks. One case study will include issues of replicability and scale-ability are aspects of the Millennium Village Projects: what aspects and lessons from the village or location level can be "scaled-up", and to what level?
Readings: STEPS Dynamic Systems, Governance (e-papers). Sachs (Planning, Progress), Chambers (2010), ODI 2008 (MVP)

Websites: TBD
No assignment today.

February 25   Problematic Concepts: *Measurement and Assessment*
Themes and Questions: Discourses of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, the Human Development Index (HDI) and related measures, the expectations for certain types of "monitoring and evaluation" (M/E) reflect a wide-spread emphasis on objective, quantitative and linear accounting of development processes and outcomes using universal and standard measures and schematics, and often at a national level. Where do these frameworks, indicators and research methodologies and data sources "come from" (historically, institutionally)? Are they adequate for assessing human development processes and ends and the types of action we see happening? What criteria or conditions allow these approaches to be useful? What are alternative processes, data, and indicators for diagnosing, designing, and assessing change?

Readings: World Bank "Voices of the Poor" (excerpts/chapters), W. Sachs (selected chapters), STEPS Centre working paper on "Assessment", Deneulin with Shahani (eds, selected e-chapters), Chambers (2010)
Relevant websites: MDGs; Gross National Happiness project, UNDP.org, capabilitiesapproach.org
Assignment 5: TBD (5)

March 4   Problematic Concepts: *Policy-Making*
What is a policy? What makes for a good policy for development? What sorts of evidence—quantitative, narrative or other—influences policy-making for development projects? What sorts of policies have had beneficial human development outcomes for the poorest (but are not necessarily related to development agencies and projects/programs)? What is the role of non-governmental actors in shaping (intentionally, unintentionally) government policies for aid and emergency relief? What is the role of new types of donors in shaping development policy (research, action)? We will address some myths and examine real institutional practices that reveal how national and agency policy-making happens.

Readings: Students will select from among several authors/works and present their cases based on their reading. Suggested texts are Mosse's *Development Brokers and Translators*; Holmén's *Snakes in Paradise, NGOS in the Aid Industry in Africa;* Hillhorst's *The Real World of NGOs; and Alex de Waal's* Famine Crimes, and James Ferguson's *The Anti-Politics Machine*
Assignment 6: Book review and handout for the class on your chosen text. We'll share and debate issues around "policy" (10)

March 11   Mardi Gras holiday

March 18   Whose development success story? *The Case of Mobile Phones in Africa*
Cell phones have become popular in developing countries among the poorest: How do mobile phones serve the poor? How do they contribute to "human development"? What was the role of formal "development" actors: government policy, development projects, and (charitable) aid agencies –how did they contribute to the revolution in cellular communications at the bottom of the pyramid? What was the role of private sector and (private) consumer behavior? What do recent pilot projects in "m-health' and "m-development" contribute to our appreciation for cell phones and their potential for "replicating" and "scaling"? The cell phone appears to be an example of cross-cutting, multi-sectoral

innovations that serve a wide range of human development aims for diverse people—what lessons can we take from this phenomenon? Are social justice and ecological "sustainability" relevant concerns in relation to assessment of cellular communications?

Readings: IDS 2007, Economist 2009 special section; Murphy "hybrid technology" project reports on mobile phones and development

Websites: MobilActive.org; kiwanja.net; GMSA website, Nokia.

Assignment 7: Reflect on the case of cellphones as an innovation, and related m-development ventures by development agencies. Use 3-4 problematic concepts introduced so far in class (ie., policy-making, technology, scale-ability) (10)

March 25   Open Sessions: Students suggest topics and authors.

April 1   Open Sessions: Students suggest topics and authors.

April 8   Open Sessions: Students suggest topics and authors.

External event of interest April 12-16: Susan Watkins, PhD speaking and workshopping on themes of health, demographic change, and development in sub-saharan Africa

April 15   *Wrap up: Stocked and Inspired?*
Review of themes, lessons, findings from the course so far. What have we learned about contemporary "development" thinking—theories, debates, institutions, actions, and practice? What are the most compelling arguments? What are the most contentious and thorny debates? What myths, assumptions and expectations have been unraveled? What (who) has inspired you and provided new models for development? We will revisit the original course objectives and reflect on our progress, valuable analytical lenses, new perspectives, theoretical approaches, and practical actions. Students will present outlines or proposals for their final papers; class debate and discussion.

Readings & Resources: TBD based on class/student suggestion
Assignment 8: TBD

April 30   **Final Papers Due. (**Via email: See guidelines to follow for more instructions.)