

PIA4127: POVERTY AND THE POLITICS OF AID

Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Poverty and the Politics of Aid

Subject Code

PIA - Public and International Affairs

Course Number

4127

Academic Unit

Public and International Affairs (PIA)

College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

AIS4127 Poverty and the Politics of Aid

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course aims to provide a comprehensive exploration of poverty and aid, delving into its diverse dimensions, theoretical underpinnings, and real-world implications. Over 13 weeks, we will scrutinise the complexities of aid allocation,

effectiveness, and emerging trends while considering the ethical dimensions of development. By engaging with pivotal readings, case studies, and discussions, students will gain a critical understanding of the actors, policies, and challenges shaping poverty reduction efforts globally. From gender dynamics to microfinance, food insecurity, and south-south cooperation, this course equips students with a nuanced perspective on the intricate interplay between global aid mechanisms and local contexts.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs	Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Explain core concepts regarding poverty and aid	x	x	
2	Distinguish competing measures and theories of poverty	x	x	
3	Evaluate the significance of social hierarchies and inequality	x	x	
4	Identify nuanced features of poverty in the global context	x	x	x
5	Devise a theoretically-informed empirical analysis of poverty and the politics of aid	x	x	x

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs	Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lectures	The instructor will present concepts, theories and case studies on poverty related issues	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2	Participation	Students will contribute to discussions arising from lectures and classroom activities	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
3	Readings	Each week, students are required to read carefully selected articles and/or book chapters that are highly relevant to the topics being discussed	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

4	Presentation	Students will work in groups and demonstrate their ability to critically evaluate real-world challenges related to poverty and aid	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	
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Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- " for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Participation	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	20	-	Yes
2	Mid-term Individual Essay	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	30	-	No
3	Group Presentation	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	20	-	No
4	Final Group Essay	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	30	-	No

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

1. Participation

Criterion

Able to engage and demonstrate well-informed participation in classroom discussions and activities.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Actively participate in classroom discussions and activities.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Reasonably participate in classroom discussions and activities.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Limitedly participate in classroom discussions and activities.

Marginal (D)

Minimally participate in classroom discussions and activities.

Failure (F)

Show no participation in classroom discussions and activities.

Assessment Task

2. Mid-term Individual Essay

Criterion

Show understanding of the concepts, theories, and case studies on poverty-related issues.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Have an excellent understanding of theories about poverty and aid. Proficiently apply authors' arguments from readings and display a robust capacity for critical analysis.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Have a good understanding of theories about poverty and aid. Reasonably apply authors' arguments from readings and display a commendable capacity for critical analysis.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Have an adequate understanding of theories about poverty and aid. Capably apply authors' arguments from readings and display a commendable capacity for critical analysis.

Marginal (D)

Have a basic understanding of theories about poverty and aid. Attempt to engage with authors' arguments from readings but lack depth in critical analysis.

Failure (F)

Have a limited understanding of theories about poverty and aid. Fail to cite any readings from the course list.

Assessment Task

3. Group Presentation

Criterion

Able to deliver an effective group presentation on a case of poverty and aid, and engage in peer's presentations and subsequent discussions.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Have an excellent understanding of theories related to poverty and aid, and a strong ability to apply them critically. Provide constructive feedback to peers' presentations and actively participate in discussions.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Have a good understanding of theories related to poverty and aid, and an evident ability to apply them critically. Provide valuable feedback to peers' presentations and participate in discussions.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Have an adequate understanding of theories related to poverty and aid, with some ability to apply them critically. Offer feedback to peers' presentations and participate in discussions to a reasonable extent.

Marginal (D)

Have a basic understanding of theories related to poverty and aid, with attempts to apply them critically. Provide limited feedback to peers' presentations and rarely participate in discussions.

Failure (F)

Have a limited understanding of theories related to poverty and aid, and a lack of critical application. Do not provide feedback to peers' presentations and fail to participate in discussions.

Assessment Task

4. Final Group Essay

Criterion

Able to write a group essay critically applying theories related to poverty and aid to a real-life scenario. Students are required to reference course readings as sources.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Have an excellent understanding of theories related to poverty and aid. Proficiently apply authors' arguments from readings on the research topic and display a robust capacity for critical analysis.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Have a good understanding of theories related to poverty and aid. Reasonably apply authors' arguments from readings on the research topic and display a commendable capacity for critical analysis.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Have an adequate understanding of theories related to poverty and aid. Capably apply authors' arguments from readings on the research topic and display a commendable capacity for critical analysis.

Marginal (D)

Have a basic understanding of theories related to poverty and aid. Attempt to engage with authors' arguments from readings on the research topic but lack depth in critical analysis.

Failure (F)

Have a limited understanding of theories related to poverty and aid. Fail to cite any readings from the course list on the research topic.

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Poverty, development, development aid, aid effectiveness, ethics, international non-governmental organisations, microfinance, food security, gender

Reading List**Compulsory Readings**

Title	
1	Nil

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Bali Swain, R., Garikipati, S. and Wallentin, F. Y. (2020) 'Does Foreign Aid Improve Gender Performance in Recipient Countries?' , <i>Journal of International Development</i> , 32(7), pp. 1171–1193.
2	Bateman, M. (2010) 'Microfinance as poverty trap' , in <i>Why Doesn't Microfinance Work?</i> London: Zed Books.
3	Carothers, T. and De Gramont, D. (2013) <i>Development Aid Confronts Politics: The Almost Revolution</i> . Baltimore: Carnegie Endowment.
4	Collier, P. (2008) 'Aid to the Rescue' , in <i>The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press.
5	Easterly, W. (2006) 'Planners versus Searchers in Foreign Aid' , <i>Asian Development Review</i> , 23(2), pp. 1–35.
6	Gray, K. and Gills, B. K. (2016) 'South–South cooperation and the rise of the global South' , <i>Third World Quarterly</i> . Routledge, 37(4), pp. 557–574.
7	Hanlon, J. (2004) 'It is Possible to Just Give Money to the Poor' , <i>Development and Change</i> , 35(2), pp. 375–383.
8	Hicks, R. L. et al. (2008) <i>Greening Aid?: Understanding the Environmental Impact of Development Assistance</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press.
9	Hulme, D. (2015) <i>Global Poverty: Global Governance and Poor People in the Post-2015 Era</i> . London and New York: Routledge.

10	Johnston, D. (2005) 'Poverty and Distribution: Back on the Neoliberal Agenda?' , in Saad-Filho, A. and Johnston, D. (eds) <i>Neoliberalism: A Critical Reader</i> . London: Pluto Press, pp. 135–141.
11	Kohn, M. (2013) 'Postcolonialism and global justice' , <i>Journal of Global Ethics</i> , 9(2), pp. 187–200.
12	Langan, M. (2018) 'Neo-Colonialism and Donor Interventions: Western Aid Mechanisms' , in <i>Neo-Colonialism and the Poverty of 'Development' in Africa</i> . Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 61–88.
13	Mahadevan, R. and Hoang, V. (2016) 'Is There a Link Between Poverty and Food Security?' , <i>Social Indicators Research</i> . Springer Netherlands, 128(1), pp. 179–199.
14	Mawdsley, E. (2017) 'Development Geography I: Cooperation, Competition and Convergence between "North" and "South" ' , <i>Progress in Human Geography</i> , 41(1), pp. 108–117.
15	Moyo, D. (2009) <i>Dead Aid: Why Aid is not Working and How There is a Better Way For Africa</i> . New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
16	Petras, J. and Veltmeyer, H. (2002) 'Age of Reverse Aid: Neo-liberalism as Catalyst of Regression' , <i>Development and Change</i> , 33(2), pp. 281–293.
17	Quibria, M. G. (2014) 'Aid Effectiveness: Research, Policy and Unresolved Issues' , <i>Development Studies Research</i> . Taylor & Francis, 1(1), pp. 75–87.
18	Sachs, J. (2015) 'Why Some Countries Developed While Others Stayed Poor' , in <i>The Age of Sustainable Development</i> . New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 101–138.
19	Sakue-Collins, Y. (2021) '(Un)doing Development: A Postcolonial Enquiry of the Agenda and Agency of NGOs in Africa' , <i>Third World Quarterly</i> . Routledge, 42(5), pp. 976–995.
20	Sen, A. (2000) 'Poverty as Capability Deprivation' , in <i>Development as Freedom</i> . Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks, pp. 87–110.
21	Smith, L. C., El Obeid, A. E. and Jensen, H. H. (2000) 'The geography and causes of food insecurity in developing countries' , <i>Agricultural Economics</i> , 22(2), pp. 199–215.
22	Thérien, J. P. (2002) 'Debating Foreign Aid: Right versus Left' , <i>Third World Quarterly</i> , 23(3), pp. 449–466.
23	Unwin, T. (2007) 'No End to Poverty' , <i>Journal of Development Studies</i> , 43(5), pp. 929–953.
24	Vanhaute, E. (2011) 'From Famine to Food Crisis: What History Can Teach Us about Local and Global Subsistence Crises' , <i>Journal of Peasant Studies</i> , 38(1), pp. 47–65.
25	Weber, H. (2006) 'The Global Political Economy of Microfinance and Poverty Reduction: Locating Local "Livelihoods" in Political Analysis' , in L.Fernando, J. (ed.) <i>Microfinance: Perils and Prospects</i> . London: Routledge, pp. 37–54.