International Grassroots Development
RCSS 315.001 Winter, 2007
Mon-Weds 10-12  28 Tyler
Instructor: Dr. Helen Fox
Fulfills Advanced Writing in the Disciplines requirement
Office Hours - by appointment in either of my offices (1128 Angell Hall or 120 Tyler)
or in various coffee shops.
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Attendance Policy: Because of the participatory nature of the course, missing more than two classes may result in a substantially lower grade/evaluation. You are expected to arrive on time and leave when class is over. Please let me know if and when you need to be absent.

Required Reading:
1. Coursepack (Available at Ulrichs)
3. One novel from "The List" (see paper #2)
4. A book and/or articles on the topic of your group project (see Student-Led Group Presentations, below)

Recommended Reading


Stiglitz, Joseph (2002). Globalization and its discontents. New York: W.W. Norton. Stiglitz was a Nobel prize-winner in economics, chief economist and senior vice president for the World Bank, and chair of Bill Clinton’s Council of Economic Advisors so you’d think he would be pretty mainstream. However, this book is a scathing critique of the IMF (International Monetary Fund) policies and practices that so profoundly affect poor countries and people worldwide, with specific recommendations to make globalization (which he sees as inevitable) work better for everyone. Very readable, even for those without a background in economics. A “National Bestseller.”

Friedman provides a strong counter-argument to many of the authors you’ll read in this course.


**List of novels and first-hand accounts to choose from (for Paper #2)**

These books may not describe “development” directly, but they are all written by people with strong personal connections to the global South, and they all tell stories that illuminate the lives and contradictory realities of people we commonly think of as oppressed, poor, angry, helpless, wise, authentic, rebellious, or in need of aid or “development.”

*I encourage you to choose a region of the world or political perspective you're not familiar with. You might challenge yourself still further by reading in the original language. Find these in the library, at Shaman Drum, or order on line.*

Barghouti, Mourid (2000). *I saw Ramallah*. New York: Anchor Books. *Palestinian.* “Barred from his homeland after the 1967 Six-Day War, the poet Mourid Barghouti spent thirty years in exile – shuttling among the world’s cities, yet secure in none of them; separated from his family for years at a time; never certain whether he was a visitor, a refugee, a citizen, or a guest. As he returns home for the first time since the Israeli occupation, Barghouti crosses a wooden bridge over the Jordan River into Ramallah, yet he is unable to recognize the city of his youth. Sifting through memories of the old Palestine as they come up against what he now encounters in theis mere “idea of Palestine,” he discovers what it means to be deprived not only of a homeland but of “the habitual place and status of a person.”

http://www.hesperian.org/buy_books.htm#WHND This book “combines self-help medical information with an understanding of the ways poverty, discrimination, and cultural beliefs limit women's access to care and health. Developed with community-based groups and experts from over 40 countries, this book helps ordinary people understand, treat, and prevent most health problems affecting women. I recommend this or any of the other Hesperian Foundation books for anyone interested in the health sciences, or working in developing countries, or both.
Erdrich, Louise (2001). *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*. **Ojibwa**, North America. “For more than a half century, Father Damien Modeste has served his beloved people, the Ojibwe, on the remote reservation of Little No Horse. Now, nearing the end of his life, Father Damien dreads the discovery of his physical identity, for he is a woman who has lived as a man. To complicate his fears, his quiet life changes when a troubled colleague comes to the reservation to investigate the life of the perplexing, difficult, possibly false saint Sister Leopolda. Father Damien alone knows the strange truth of Sister Leopolda’s piety and is faced with the most difficult decision of his life: Should he reveal all he knows and risk everything? Or should he manufacture a protective history though he believes Leopolda’s wonder-working is motivated by evil?”

Farmer, Paul: *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*. (2005). Berkeley: University of California Press. **Haiti, Russia, Cuba, Chiapas**. Paul Farmer is a medical anthropologist at Harvard, a doctor at a rural health clinic in Haiti, and founding director of Partners in Health. Farmer argues passionately for closing the income gap across and within societies in order to improve health outcomes, and has some amazing stories about his own advocacy for the right of the poorest global citizens to the same kinds of medical technology available in wealthy countries. In comparing three approaches to poverty alleviation: charity, development, and social justice, Farmer argues that “only the latter encourages privileged actors such as physicians and academics to adopt a moral stance that would seek to expose and prevent pathologies of power.”

Gordimer, Nadine  (2002) *The Pickup* New York: Penguin USA. **South Africa**. “A casual encounter between a wealthy suburban white girl and an educated but poor Arab man in a garage in contemporary Cape Town sets in motion unimagined consequences. “Abdu” is in fact Ibrahim ibn Musa, an illegal immigrant with a degree in economics from a benighted African country. Conscience-stricken Julie Summers seeks escape from the narrowed horizons of her privileged background in the newly democratic, non-racial South Africa. Julie and Ibrahim enter into an intense relationship—their sexual desire the only shared experience that mediates their cultural difference. When the authorities catch up with Ibrahim and his repatriation to his own economically ravaged desert country can no longer be avoided, Julie takes a step that amazes her friends, family and above all herself.”  Gordimer won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1991.

Llosa, Mario Vargas (1989) *The Storyteller (El Hablador)*. New York: Penguin. **Peru**. “This is a tale of a researcher gone native. The term is used derogatively by anthropologists, for to go native is to lose the perspective, the observer status that is essential to the practice of any science. But scientific detachment is itself in question when it reduces human beings to objects, pretending that the trained mind can understand human behavior without bias, without participation, without imagination and without moral concern. No novelist is likely to let such a pretense go unchallenged.”  (from a review by Ursula LeGuin). A beautiful, humanist linking of the ancient and modern worlds. "National Bestseller." Look for it in Spanish or English.
Maraire, J. Nozipo (1996) *Zenzele: A Letter For My Daughter.* Zimbabwe. A mother writes to her daughter, a graduate student at Harvard, about the differences between generations, her own development as an African woman, the participation of women in the Zimbabwean struggle for independence, and many other stories of their prominent family, told in the spirit of African oral history. There is much wisdom in this book, not only about Africa, but also about strong women, challenge, and the paths one might embark on in life. A New York Times Notable Book of the Year.

Perkins, John (2004) *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man.* San Francisco: Berritt-Koehler, Inc. From the book jacket: "Economic hit men," John Perkins writes, "are highly paid professionals who cheat countries around the globe out of trillions of dollars. Their tools include fraudulent financial reports, rigged elections, payoffs, extortion, sex, and murder. . . John Perkins should know: he was an economic hit man. His job was to convince countries that are strategically important to the U.S. – from Indonesia to Panama – to accept enormous loans for infrastructure development, and to make sure that the lucrative projects were contracted to U.S. corporations. Saddled with huge debts, these countries came under the control of the United States government, World Bank, and other US-dominated aid agencies that acted like loan sharks – dictating repayment terms and bullying foreign governments into submission.” Perkins recently spoke at Rackham, telling the credible story of how he got sucked into all this right out of college.

Roy, Arundhati (1997) *The God of Small Things* New York: Random House. India. A celebrated first novel. In answer to an interviewer's question: "What does it mean to be an Indian novelist today? What does it mean to be Indian?" the young author replies, "You know, I think that a story is like the surface of water. You can take from it what you want. Its volubility is its strength. But I feel irritated by this idea, this search. What do we mean when we ask, 'What is Indian?" 'What is India?' 'Who is Indian?' . . . I don't think it's a question that needs to be asked, necessarily. I don't think along those lines, anyway. I think perhaps that the question we should ask is, 'What does it mean to be human?'"

Sembene, Ousmane [1960] (1971) *God's Bits of Wood (Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu)* New York: Anchor. West Africa. The story of a critical anti-colonial railroad strike in Senegal, Mali, and Burkina Faso from the points of view of the bosses, the workers, and their families by a Senegalese writer and film-maker. Sembene is a Socialist who worked as a plumber, bricklayer, and apprentice mechanic before teaching himself to read and write in French, thus beginning, almost accidentally, his literary career. Immensely popular in Africa, Sembene is considered to be one of the founders of the African realist tradition. Read the book in either French or English.

**TO DO WHILE READING:** Most people who are now thought to be in need of “development” have at one time or another been subject to physical, mental, and/or spiritual domination, severe loss, even genocide. As you read, I'd like you to think about two questions: 1) What are you learning about the people – their character, their culture, their personalities, their situation, their responses to oppression – that you didn’t know before? 2) What insight does this give you into your idea of “development” in the current
context – how it can affect people, how it should or shouldn’t be practiced, what it should mean? Keep notes on these questions while you’re reading; we’ll discuss your insights in class before the paper is due.

COURSE SYLLABUS
In this course, I would like to engage your thinking about some questions that have been on my mind ever since I was a Peace Corps Volunteer in India in 1964 -- What is "development"? What could it be? Who has the right, or the duty, or maybe the privilege to help others in their "development"? Can the world really be "developed" or improved, or do we just substitute new problems for the ones we had?

As I work with international students and faculty and engage in activism and “development” work, both at home and abroad, I continue to think and write about these questions. I do have some answers, at least for myself, and these answers have led me to a particular style of teaching, one which engages the students as much as possible in thinking things out for themselves and coming up with their own ideas about how to achieve a just world.

I don't like lecturing much, though sometimes I will give you some background or help you clarify the many, confusing viewpoints of authors you'll be reading. I love to write, and I expect that you do to, or that you will like it better as you work on some of the questions I ask you to write about -- or that you will pose for yourselves and your classmates.

This will not be an easy course; my standards for writing, thinking, and active participation are quite high. You can be sure that I will challenge you in class and in conference; I will expect you to challenge me as well. There will be few "right answers," few "right ways" to do an assignment, though I will give you, I hope, clear guidelines.

COURSE GOALS
* To understand that "development" takes many forms, each of which may be based on different assumptions, philosophies, ideas of history and culture, and views of human potential and human needs

* To understand some of the major strands of the "development debate" in economic, political, social and cultural terms and to use this knowledge to come to a personal idea of what "development" should mean and how it should be practiced

* To analyze specific global issues, social protests and "development" projects

* To come to your own conclusions about what “good development” might be and how it should be practiced.
PAPERS
All writing must be carefully edited for clarity, word choice, grammar, and typos. As you can see from the way I’ve written this syllabus, I value writing that is personal, direct, clear, and unpretentious.

Paper #1: NOT! *My initial thoughts on "good development" as I define it.* This is NOT a paper in any traditional sense, but rather, three to five pages of lists, free-writing, diagrams, drawings, poems, photos, diary snippets, or any other creative ways to start your thinking and conversation about the subject of this course. Be prepared to explain your work to a small group of your peers.

Paper #2 *What's the problem in the global South?* Five or more pages with substantial revisions. Americans have long been criticized for jumping in and attempting to “fix” things before thoroughly understanding the problem. This paper requires that you look at “the problem” in the global South through the eyes of the author or character, even if you disagree with their interpretation. Since most of the world tells stories that indirectly suggest ideas, rather than specifically explicate or analyze them, this paper should be modeled after that style. Be creative! You may write in any (non-academic) style whatsoever, as long as you address "the problem" and are aware of the needs of your audience (myself and your classmates). You will probably need to give a little historical context (check on line) at the beginning of your paper to orient your readers: What country are we in? What historical period? What's happening? Revision is required after audience reaction.

Paper #3: *Comparison/evaluation of two kinds of grassroots development.* Six or more pages. Choose two of the five grassroots projects/movements presented by student groups (not the one covered by your own presentation) to compare in ways you find significant. This should look like a traditional, academic, compare and contrast paper. Do not simply describe the two approaches; explicitly show how they are similar or different, and say what you think of them and why. Start by asking yourself what you approve of in each one, what excites you, what disturbs you, what they leave out or gloss over, and how they fit with your own emerging values and goals for “good development.” Use specific examples to illustrate your points. Think of someone outside the class as your audience – an interested and supportive parent or friend. Use ordinary, reader-friendly language. No citations are necessary unless you’ve quoted directly from a text.

Paper #4: *My idea of "good development."* Twelve to fifteen pages (or more) of academic writing, that is, a carefully worked out and well-supported argument for your own view of the problem and your suggestions for solutions with evidence and examples from the readings, activities, and reflections you have done during the course. An individual conference with me is required during the writing of Paper #4.

Reaction papers. After a film, a visitor, or a particularly rich and/or unresolved discussion I may ask you to write a 2-3 page reaction piece that tells me your thoughts, questions, confusions, and/or new learning.
ASSESSMENT OF WRITING
Most of your writing assignments will not be graded; I feel that grades often stifle the critical thinking, creativity and risk-taking that are necessary to the writing process. I will give you plenty of feedback on each piece you write, marking the reaction papers and Papers 2 and 3 with a ++ (you’ve impressed me); + (okay, but some deeper thinking, greater clarity, more accurate editing, and/or significant details would improve it); or RW – a mandatory rewrite after careful consideration of my comments and an individual writing conference if you and I both think it would be helpful. You may endlessly revise (and I will endlessly comment on) any of these assignments.

STUDENT-LED GROUP PRESENTATIONS
Students will work in groups to research and present five distinctly different grassroots development strategies:

  Group 1. Landless Rural Worker’s Movement, a Brazilian people’s movement to reclaim and redistribute land, and “develop” it together.
  Group 2. Sarvodaya Movement, a Buddhist movement in Sri Lanka that promotes empowerment through spiritual awakening, sustainable development, and peace.
  Group 3. Grameen Bank. A large-scale micro-credit program started by Mohammed Yunis, a Bangladeshi economist that provides small loans to impoverished women. Yunis won the Nobel Peace Prize for this program in 2006.
  Group 4. Village-level entrepreneurship. The brainchild of U-M business school professor C.K. Prahalad, this enthusiastically capitalist model believes in the inventiveness and energy of impoverished people, who, with a little help, can develop small businesses that meet the needs of people like themselves.
  Group 5. The World Social Forum 2006. Not exactly a project, but “an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and inter-linking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neo-liberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a society centered on the human person.” This year, the WSF is “polycentric,” being held in Karachi, Pakistan, Bamako, Mali, and Caracas, Venezuela more or less simultaneously.

Each group presentation will take a two-hour class period and might involve readings, discussion, short film clips, guest speakers, experiential activities -- whatever it takes to make the subject come alive and impart substantial, specific information as well as involve the class in critical analysis. Each group presentation should address the following questions (and any others your group decides are important) in a creative way:

What does the project or endeavor try to accomplish?
What does “development” mean to the leaders or organizers of this project?
What does it feel like to be a person affected by this project or movement?
To what extent are the “beneficiaries” in charge of their own development?
What assumptions are made about why people are poor?
How are culture and/or gender issues addressed by the project?
How does the project address these causes of poverty? To what extent is it effective?
Each group should send one or two handouts to the class electronically, two or three days before your presentation.

Required reading for members of each group:

Group 1. Brazilian Landless Rural Workers Movement (http://www.mstbrazil.org/)

Buddhism at work. Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press.


**CALENDAR**

Mon. Jan. 8.  Introduction to the course

Weds. Jan. 10  The human face of global poverty

Mon. Jan. 15  MLK DAY – NO CLASS  Attendance at one MLK event REQUIRED (at U-M or elsewhere, any day: see MLK schedule on U-M website)

Weds. Jan. 17  Where did the idea of “development” come from?

Mon. Jan. 22.  Motivations for “development”

Weds. Jan. 24  Explanations for underdevelopment

Mon. Jan. 29  Globalization. Choose your book from the list for Paper #2

Weds. Jan. 31  Globalization debate

Mon. Feb. 5  Examples of grassroots development projects in the Global South

Weds. Feb. 7 **DUE: Paper #1: "My initial thoughts on good development as I define it"** Peer feedback

Mon. Feb. 12  Complications of culture

Weds. Feb. 14  More culture

Mon. Feb. 19  Discussion of your chosen books. Form groups and order books for student-facilitated presentations.

Weds. Feb. 21 **DUE: Paper #2: "What’s ‘the problem’ in the Global South?"** Peer feedback.

WINTER RECESS

Mon. Mar. 5  Colonialism and racism.

Weds. Mar. 7  More Colonialism. Discussion of “A Small Place.”

Mon. Mar. 12  Education

Weds. Mar. 14  Health

Mon. Mar. 19  Student Presentations Group 1

Weds. Mar. 21  Group 2

Mon. Mar. 26  Group 3

Weds. Mar. 28  Group 4

Mon. Apr. 2  Group 5
Weds. Apr. 4  War and militarism as barriers to “development” DUE Paper #3:  
Comparison/evaluation of two kinds of grassroots development projects.  
Mon. Apr. 9  Writing workshop for final paper  
Weds. Apr. 11  Reflections and loose ends.  
Mon. Apr 16  PORTFOLIOS DUE -- All drafts of all papers (see Assessment, below).  
Brunch and last discussion/course evaluation at Helen's house or some other convenient location.

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT.  
At the end of the course you should securely fasten all your written work, including ALL DRAFTS OF YOUR MAJOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS AND ALL IN-CLASS WRITING in a cardboard binder and hand it in on the last day of class. It is your responsibility to keep a list of the in-class writing as it is assigned so you will be sure to have everything required in your portfolio. Your grade/evaluation for the course will be determined by the quality and depth of the writing, the quantity and nature of the revisions, the work you have put into your group presentation, and your active participation in class discussion and experiential activities.

MY EXPECTATIONS OF YOU:  
Active, enthusiastic, open-minded participation  
Time and care put into writing, revising, and group presentations  
Depth and originality of thought and written expression  
Pro-active learning, i.e.  
• looking up material you feel you need to know more about  
• talking with your classmates about your ideas outside of class  
• making appointments to meet with me for conversation and/or writing help  
• using the Sweetland Writing Center for more serious writing problems