International Grassroots Development
Dr. Helen Fox  RCSS 315  Fall, 2002 Tues/Thurs 10-12
(Fulfills Jr./Sr. writing requirement)
Office Hours - by appointment in either
1128 Angell Hall (Sweetland) or
120 Tyler (RC), or in various coffee shops.
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Required Reading:
1. Coursepack available at MBS and/or Ulrichs
3. One novel from "The List" (See Paper #2)

Recommended Reading (Available at Shaman Drum)

Vandermeer, John and Ivette Perfecto (1995), *Breakfast of biodiversity: The truth about rainforest destruction*. Oakland, CA: Institute for Food and Development Policy. Two U of M professors link rainforest destruction with free market capitalism, poverty and food security. This short, readable book will especially interest SNRE folks and others who are interested in Central America.

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 do "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 become acquainted with some global issues, social protests and "development" projects as they affect and are affected by people at the grassroots level

- 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 learn how to get involved in grassroots development, both globally and locally

The course will be divided into three parts:

**Part I  What's the problem? What's the solution?**

In **Part I** we will listen to a variety of voices-in-writing from both the "north" and the "south" suggesting how development is supposed to work and why it has so often failed to live up to expectations. We will hear from northern economists and political figures, development agencies and development practitioners, social critics, anthropologists (both live and fictional), journalists and professors. As well, we will hear voices from the south: heads of government, philosophers, novelists, academics, lawyers, and committed development practitioners. From this cacophony of voices you will emerge with some understanding of the different strands of the debate and come to tentative conclusions about what makes sense to you. This thinking will eventually become part of a final paper that will detail what, in your opinion, "good development" should look like.

At the same time you are discovering where you stand you will also be refining your ability to look at the world from points of view of those who come from backgrounds very different from your own. To this end, you will choose a novel written by someone who lives in and/or identifies with a "developing" country and write from their perspective about what they see as "the problem." Learning to look at problems from the perspectives of the people experiencing them is one of the most important skills you can learn if you want to work for peace and justice anywhere in the world.
**Paper #1** My initial thoughts on "good development" (A draft of 3-5 pages to start your thinking and conversation).

**Paper #2** What's "the problem"? (A "creative" piece. Five or more pages, with substantial revisions).

### Part II  Issues, Projects and Protests -- Student-led group presentations.

Students will work in groups to research and present specific examples of significant issues or development projects to the rest of the class. Examples might be the impact of the AIDS epidemic on women's health and human rights in Africa; environmental concerns arising from the construction of hydroelectric dams in India or China; or the question of indigenous people's rights to the profits from patents on their traditional medicines. Examples of significant development projects might be the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh that lends money to women's small business cooperatives, and so on. 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 should choose one or two on-line articles for the whole class to read as background material. Please be sure to send the class e-mail list the articles or web addresses a couple of days before your presentation.

**Paper #3:** Report and Analysis of a Development Presentation (not your own) (6-8 pages).

### Part III: Planning for Action: Working in the Global Neighborhood

Almost everyone who has taken this class over the past six years has felt one over-riding concern: "What am I going to do with my life? How can I help advance the cause of social and economic justice? Where can I get some experience, and learn the more practical issues of organizing, facilitating, grant writing, working across cultures and classes with people in poor communities? Where do I, as a privileged person, fit in to grassroots development, either locally or internationally?" This part of the course should help you with these questions and give you options. Speakers on internship and work opportunities and dialogues with RC grads and others who have started on international and local social justice careers will be the focus. Your ideas for how to set this up and what you want to get out of it will be very welcome.

**Paper #4:** My idea of "good development." (12-15 pages, completely rethought and revised from Paper #1).

### Major Writing Assignments:

Papers #1 and #4 "My idea of good development" This paper will be done in two parts. Near the beginning of the course you will write your initial thoughts about what you believe "good development" should look like. This draft will be three to five pages long and will be passed to other students for comments and questions. I will then read and give suggestions that will move your thinking further. Your final paper will be literally a revision of this draft; your ideas will be substantially modified or completely changed, or your former position will have been made stronger by the addition of reasons -- evidence
that you have gained from the readings and reflections you have done during the course. 
(3-5 pages, completely revised at the end of course to 12-15 pages) At least one individual conference with me is required during the writing of Paper #4.

Paper #2 "What's "the problem"? For this paper you will read a novel written by a third world author from the following list in order to understand the author's view of "the problem." You will then write a paper that presents "the problem" as your author (or any of the novel's characters) see it. Be creative! You may write in any 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 add a little historical context (check an encyclopedia) 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. An individual conference with me is required before or during rewrite. (Five or more pages, with substantial revisions)

List of novels to choose from (for Paper #2)
I encourage you to choose a group or region of the world you're not familiar with. You can challenge yourself still further by reading in the original language. Find these in the library, at Shaman Drum or Border's, or order your book, well in advance, from any bookstore or on line.

Most groups that 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 the 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.

Cliff, Michelle (1984). Abeng. New York: Penguin. "Abeng is an African word meaning conch shell. The blowing of the conch called the slaves to the cane fields in the West Indies. The abeng had another use: It was the instrument used by the Maroon armies to pass their messages and reach one another." This is Jamaica from the point of view of a light-skinned child of comparative privilege who comes to understand the painful contradictions of class, color, family, and history. If you’ve been to Jamaica as a tourist this is a must-read.

Erdrich, Louise (2001). The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse. Ojibwe, 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 Lopolda's wonder-working is motivated by evil?” My “best read” this summer. A New York Times Notable Book.]

Gordimer, Nadine (1981) *July's People* New York: Penguin. **South Africa.** A winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature. The tables are turned when a white South African family, fleeing a violent take-over by blacks, must take refuge in the village of their former servant. The book has made the newspapers recently for being recommended for the “banned” list in some South African high schools (after being required reading for many years) because it is “deeply racist, superior and patronizing.” The assessment was made by civil servants (all white) in Gauteng, South Africa's wealthiest province, which encompasses Johannesburg and Pretoria. Read more about the controversy, the book, and the author on line.

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.

Okri, Ben (1991) *The Famished Road.* NY: Doubleday. **Nigeria.** A spirit-child lives between the realities of third world poverty and a radiant spirit-world of terrible wonders and ecstasies. Written in a style that takes you in to the world of the African magical imagination. “We were all told stories as kids in Nigeria,” Okri says. “We had to tell stories that would keep one another interested, and you weren't allowed to tell stories that everybody else knew. You had to dream up new ones. And it never occurred to us that those stories actually contained a unique worldview. It's very much like the river that runs through your backyard. It's always there. It never occurs to you to take a photograph or to seek its mythology. It's just there; it runs in your veins, it runs in your spirit. And for me, it was only after I had made too deep a journey into modernism, after I had begun to feel that my ambition was better than my craft, after a period of loneliness and homesickness away from Nigeria, that slowly all those old stories came back to me with new faces and new voices. And I saw that all human beings have their signatures stamped in the stories they tell themselves in dreams, the stories that are embedded in their childhood." Winner of the Booker Prize for Fiction.

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. 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 and 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.

Paper #3 "Report and Analysis of a Development Presentation." This paper is a write-up of the facts presented in a student group presentation (not your own) and an analysis of those facts.

For example, in a presentation on Ecotourism, one student wrote 5 pages on the presentation itself, dividing it into subheadings: "So, what is ecotourism? " "What are the reasons for the success of ecotourism in Costa Rica?" "The problems and contradictions of ecotourism." The remainder of the paper was devoted to answering these questions: "So what?; How does this fit into (my) ideas of good development?" "By the way, what is sustainable development?" "Ecotourism as a model for sustainable development." "What are possible solutions concerning ecotourism in Costa Rica?"

In other words, after you organize and write up the facts, ask yourself interesting questions like this student did, and proceed to try to answer them. You may leave the reader with more questions if you like. (Six to eight pages, with revisions).

Random Short Pieces

Everyone (including myself) may spend some time writing during several of our class sessions. Each writing task will address the day's topic in some way. None of the questions will have a "right" answer, but all will draw upon the readings and previous class discussions. At other times I might ask you to write a lucid, one-page response to a discussion or presentation. All of this writing should appear in your portfolio (see Assessment, below).

All writing, no matter how informal, should be carefully edited for clarity, word choice, grammar, and typos.

CALENDAR

Part I: What's the Problem? What's the Solution?

Tues. Sept. 3 Introduction to the course.
Thurs. Sept. 5 The human face of global poverty
Tues. Sept. 10 Where did the idea of “development” come from?
Thurs. Sept. 12 No class (I will be out of town).

Weekend at some convenient time: Video: Salaam Bombay (1988) at Helen's house, 2266 Georgetown Blvd. Ann Arbor. Attendance required (if you can't make it, I’d like you to rent the video and view it on your own). This highly acclaimed feature film, made by Indian woman film-maker, Mira Nair,
will help give you a concrete idea of the kind of issues and problems we will be discussing in
developing countries world-wide. It’s about street children (played by actual street kids), child
prostitution, drugs, pimps, foreigners, the Indian middle class, and the complex nature of good and
evil. I’ve seen it a dozen times and I’m always finding something new.

Tues. Sept. 17 Grassroots Development Conference: a simulation
Thurs. Sept. 19 Explanations for “underdevelopment”
Choose your novel from the list for Paper #2
Tues. Sept. 24 Explanations, continued
Thurs. Sept. 26 Some examples of grassroots development projects
Tues. Oct. 1 DUE: Paper #1: "My initial thoughts on good development"
Peer feedback.
Thurs. Oct. 3 The complications of culture
Tues. Oct. 8 More culture
Thurs. Oct. 10 Discussion of novels.

FALL STUDY BREAK

Thurs. Oct. 17 DUE: Paper #2: "What's "the problem" in the
third (or fourth) world?" Peer feedback.
Tues. Oct. 22 Science and the “developing” world
Thurs. Oct. 24 Colonialism and racism
Form groups and choose topics for student-facilitated presentations.
Tues. Oct. 29 More colonialism and racism
Thurs. Oct. 31 Popular education/Freire
Tues. Nov. 5 Literacy
Thurs. Nov. 7 Gender and “development”
Tues. Nov. 12 Ideas for change

Part II: Issues, Projects, and Protests: Student-facilitated group presentations

Thurs. Nov. 14 Student Presentations Group 1
Tues. Nov. 19 Group 2
Thurs. Nov. 21 Group 3
Tues. Nov. 26 Group 4

THANKSGIVING RECESS

Part III: Planning for Action: Working in the Global Neighborhood

Tues. Dec. 3 Writing workshop for final paper.
DUE Paper #3: "Report and Analysis of a Development Presentation"

Thurs. Dec. 5 Presentations by class members on internships and study abroad.
Tues. Dec. 10 More presentations. 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.

ASSESSMENT

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 do mark the
“random short pieces” with a ++ (you’ve impressed me); + (okay, but some deeper
thinking, 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 we both think it would be helpful. You may endlessly revise (and I will
endlessly comment on) any or all of assignments (except Paper #1 which is meant to be a
draft only) if you want to re-think them or express your ideas more smoothly and precisely. Your writing in this course will be evaluated by PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT. You are responsible for placing all your written work, including ALL DRAFTS of your major writing assignments and ALL IN-CLASS WRITING securely in a binder or cardboard folder and handing it in on Tues, Dec. 10, the last day of class. It is your responsibility to keep a list of these papers as they are assigned so you will be sure to have everything required in your portfolio. 

*Your grade/evaluation will be determined by the quality and depth of the writing and the quantity and nature of the revisions as well as the work you have put into your group presentation and your participation in class discussion and experiential activities.*

**My Expectations:**

*Attendance, in class and at two scheduled conferences*

*Active, enthusiastic, open-minded participation*

*Time and care put into writing, revising, and group presentations*

*Depth and originality of thought and written expression*