PPHA 35570

Conflict and Humanitarian Intervention: Blurring Humanitarian, Development and Security Policy

Prof. Rebecca Wolfe

Mon, Wed 10:30-11:50

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10 AM-12PM /or by appointment. Please book using this link:
https://calendar.google.com/calendar/u/0/selfsched?sstoken=UUUxd2dNb0o4NnJZfGRIZmF1bHR8MDIkOGIyODg5YzMwZWRhOTdlYmM1ZjVmYVWmMTY0ZTg

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Overview

When do States and the International system intervene in humanitarian crises? How are those decisions made? What are the ethical dilemmas? And if and how are humanitarian principles maintained in conflict-related crises? Is there a case for non-intervention? Traditionally, the ideal form of humanitarian interventions was about saving lives. However, as humanitarian aid has become politicized, more humanitarian spending is focused on protracted, conflict-related crises, and the closing of humanitarian space due to State and Non-State actors, the ability to maintain these principles is increasingly challenged. If and how does the humanitarian system need to change?

In this course we will cover various topics related to humanitarian interventions, including:

- Principles of humanitarian intervention
- Conflation of humanitarian aid and security policy
- Politics of (non) intervention
- Coercive humanitarianism
- Humanitarian access and security
- Critical and local perspectives on humanitarian sector
New models of humanitarian intervention

The course will include a number of readings (more on that below) and guests who will shed light on the perspectives of various actors—states, multilaterals, implementers and recipients.¹

After this course, students will have strong knowledge of the core debates in the humanitarian field. They also will learn how to analyze the politics of future interventions, understanding the incentives and constraints on actors, and strategize how to move actors in support of intervention (or not).²

Course Structure: This course combines lectures and discussions. There are no clear-cut answers to many of the questions we will explore in the course. My aim is to have you become more comfortable with the questions and think through how to wrestle with the dilemmas they pose and think critically about the ethical and political arguments for or against intervention. Mondays will typically have a longer lecture than Wednesdays. All classes will be synchronous, with recordings posted within 24 hours of class.

Communication: Direct all administrative questions (e.g., finding a reading, Canvas issues, etc) to the TA. They are very happy to help you. This also allows me to focus my time on the content of the course, grading and substantive questions.

In terms of replies, you can expect replies from me or the TAs during the hours of 8 AM to 6 PM CT. You may receive replies outside of these times. However, if you contact us after 6 PM, there is a good chance you will not receive a reply until the next day.

We also will have a Slack channel for the course, where we can answer quick questions relevant for

Assignments

*Note: All written assignments are expected to be single-spaced, 12 point font, with one inch margins. Those submitted that don't follow these instructions will not be graded.*

Individual Assignments/Grades:

**Participation (10%):** Participation will take place in two ways. In class, it is expected students come to discussions prepared to discuss the topic and some of the readings. This is your opportunity to engage more with the material, ask me questions, and debate the thorny issues that are at the heart of humanitarian interventions. In your professional career, you will need to back your opinions with evidence (most of the time), and so use class as an opportunity to hone those skills.

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¹ I spent time debating which word to use: recipient, beneficiary or participant. I chose recipient to not mask the power imbalances inherent in aid. While there are numerous movements to change this dynamic, there’s a long way to go.

² For this course, I pulled from Jeremy Konyndyk’s Field Operations for Humanitarian Assistance and Nick MacDonald’s Conflict & Development courses, with permission. As well as took many people’s very good recommendations.
I encourage you to use both these opportunities for engagement. In this class, there are few, if any, straightforward answers. Wrestling with the ethical and practical issues related to humanitarian interventions will make you better professionals.

**Op-Ed (25%)**: You will pick a current crisis and write an op-ed either for or against a government to intervene in a humanitarian disaster. The crisis may be “natural” or man-made. Papers are due on Fridays by 12 AM via Canvas. Consider the political implications both home and abroad when making your arguments. **Due: April 20, midnight. Submissions over 800 words will not be accepted.**

**Perspective-taking reflection paper (25%)**: In this course, we will spend considerable time discussing the politics of intervention. However, there are people who suffer while those in power decide what to do. That does not mean intervention is always the answer, but I want you to think about how these crises impact people. For this, you will pick a memoir, film/documentary, a piece of art, a poem or novel created by someone who has lived through a humanitarian crisis (I will provide some suggestions on Canvas), and reflect how that perspective changed or provided you new insight into the crisis. For the paper, provide a brief overview of the crisis, including statistics on displacement, food security, injured, killed, etc, and if and how the international community intervened (no more than 1 page), and then how the piece influenced your thinking about the crisis. **Due: May 6, midnight. Submissions over 2 pages will not be accepted.**

**Group Assignments**: Over the course of the term, you will work with a group of students (4) to analyze a humanitarian crisis and come up for a recommendation for a response. It should be a current crisis (there are plenty...) and you will be advising an agency (multilateral, bilateral, or INGO) one of the following: to get involved, to get involved differently, to not get involved or to pull out. For example, the Biden administration has committed to more humanitarian aid for the Tigray region of Ethiopia and announced an envoy. Will this be enough to stop the humanitarian crisis? Does the US have enough clout? Or should they foster a multi-lateral effort? If so, who should be involved? The TA will help organize groups.

**Background to the Crisis (10%)**: This a brief summary of the crisis. All crises are very complicated. However, a skill—whether for briefing or proposal writing—is to succinctly describe the situation and why it matters. The summary will include the following elements: 1) What started the crisis; 2) The humanitarian toll (stats on lives lost, food insecurity, children out of school, etc); and 3) The response by international actors to date.

**Briefing Packet (25%)**: The packet will include a 1-page summary of the evidence and your recommendation and a clear statement of your recommendation; background on the crisis (2 pages—updated from your first assignment based on feedback); an analysis of how other actors are responding or not (2 pages); and an analysis of the political incentives and constraints on intervening (2 pages). This
exercise will assess writing and analysis skills and understanding of the various issues shaping decisions on whether or not to intervene, and how. **Due: May 27. Submissions over 7 pages will not be accepted**

**Group Project Participation (5%)**: For your group project, you will evaluate your peers on their contributions to the both assignments and their teamwork. **Due May 27.**

**Late policy**: Unless arrangements are made in advance, any assignment that is late will receive 10% penalty for each day late.

**Academic Integrity**: All University of Chicago students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Among other things, this means that students shall not represent another’s work as their own, use un-allowed materials during exams, or otherwise gain unfair academic advantage. All students suspected of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Harris Dean of Students for investigation and adjudication. The disciplinary process can result in sanctions up to and including suspension or expulsion from the University. In addition to disciplinary sanctions, I will impose a grade penalty of 0 on the assignment and cannot earn higher than a C in the course for students who have committed academic dishonesty. The Harris policy and procedures related to academic integrity can be found at [https://harris.uchicago.edu/gateways/current-students/policies](https://harris.uchicago.edu/gateways/current-students/policies). The University of Chicago Policy on Academic Honesty & Plagiarism can be found at [https://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/academic-policies/academic-honesty-plagiarism/](https://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/academic-policies/academic-honesty-plagiarism/)

**Pass/Fail Option**: Students who wish to take the course pass/fail rather than for a letter grade must use the Harris Pass/Fail request form ([https://harris.uchicago.edu/form/pass-fail](https://harris.uchicago.edu/form/pass-fail)) and must meet the Harris deadline, which is generally 9am on the Monday of the 5th week of courses. Students who take the course pass/fail must attend class meetings and turn in all assignments, achieving marks on assignments that are overall commensurate with at least a C-letter grade.

**ADA student accommodations**: The University’s policies regarding students with disabilities are available [here](https://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/academic-policies/academic-honesty-plagiarism/). Students who have disability accommodations awarded by the University Student Disability Services Office should inform the Harris Dean of Students office by the end of the first week of class. The Harris Dean of Students Office will work with the student and instructor to coordinate the students’ accommodations implementation.

**Diversity and Inclusion**: The Harris School welcomes, values, and respects students, faculty, and staff from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, and we believe that rigorous inquiry and effective public policy problem-solving requires the expression and understanding of diverse viewpoints, experiences, and traditions. The University and the Harris School have developed distinct but overlapping principles and guidelines to insure that we remain a place where difficult issues are discussed with kindness and respect for all.

- The University's policies are available [here](https://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/academic-policies/academic-honesty-plagiarism/). Specifically, the University identifies the freedom of expression as being “vital to our shared goal of the pursuit of knowledge, as is the right of all members of the community to explore new ideas and learn from one another. To preserve an environment of spirited and open debate, we should all have the opportunity to contribute to intellectual exchanges and participate fully in the life of the University.”
The Harris School’s commitments to lively, principled, and respectful engagement are available here: “Consistent with the University of Chicago’s commitment to open discourse and free expression, Harris encourages members of the leadership, faculty, student body, and administrative staff to respect and engage with others of differing backgrounds or perspectives, even when the ideas or insights shared may be viewed as unpopular or controversial.” We foster thought-provoking discourse by encouraging community members not only to speak freely about all issues but also to listen carefully and respectfully to the views of others.

Some Specific Points Related to Teaching in this Moment:

Class Timing Accommodations: I recognize that there are host of things that may make class attendance challenging: time zones, child or dependent care, illness, etc. All lectures are recorded to provide students’ with flexibility. If you are concerned with your participation grade due to attendance challenging, please reach out to me.

Recorded material policy: The University has developed specific policies and procedures regarding the use of video/audio recordings: these policies are explicitly described in the University’s student manual as well as in the guidelines for instructors available here. A couple of points I want to highlight here:

By attending course sessions, students acknowledge that:

i. They will not: (i) record, share, or disseminate University of Chicago course sessions, videos, transcripts, audio, or chats; (ii) retain such materials after the end of the course; or (iii) use such materials for any purpose other than in connection with participation in the course.

ii. They will not share links to University of Chicago course sessions with any persons not authorized to be in the course session. Sharing course materials with persons authorized to be in the relevant course is permitted. Syllabi, handouts, slides, and other documents may be shared at the discretion of the instructor.

iii. Course recordings, content, and materials may be covered by copyrights held by the University, the instructor, or third parties. Any unauthorized use of such recordings or course materials may violate such copyrights.

iv. Any violation of this policy will be referred to the Area Dean of Students.

Self Care: This is a highly uncertain time, and uncertainty elevates anxiety. I want to encourage you to take care of yourself (on Twitter, you will may see pictures of my elaborate meals). If you find yourself overwhelmed, please do not hesitate to reach out to Student Counseling Services.

Note: All SCS services are covered by the Student Life Fee, and there is no additional cost for students to access their services. See https://wellness.uchicago.edu/mental-health/student-counseling-service-spring-quarter-faq/. Students seeking new services/resources can call 773.702.9800 during business hours (Monday–Friday 8:30 a.m.–5 p.m.) and ask to speak with a clinician. Students needing urgent mental health care can speak with clinicians over the phone 24/7 by calling the SCS at 773.702.3625.
Readings: This is a relatively heavy writing and reading course. However, I offer alternatives when possible—podcasts, documentaries, research summaries.

Books for the Course: There are a number of books that I will rely on for the course. I rarely assign all of the book, but many of them are compelling reads in their own right, and are available used (for example, there are copies of Reiff’s *A Bed for the Night* for as low as $1.50).


Optional: Power, S. (2019). *An Education of an Idealist: Memoir*. NY: Dey Street Books (also available as an audio book). I ask you to read the 2nd half the book, but I would encourage to read it all. Understanding her thinking will be important for understanding US foreign aid policy. Alternatively, read her Foreign Affairs piece that she wrote before she was confirmed: https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-11-20/samantha-power-can-do-power


Podcast series: Rethinking Humanitarianism: https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/podcast. I recommend all of the episodes, though the one on the US election is somewhat less relevant now. As there often is not a clear 1:1 between episodes and class topics, listen as you please. For example, we will talk about the decolonizing aid in a couple of classes.

Course Schedule and Readings:

**Weeks 1-2: Introduction to Humanitarian Intervention**

March 28: Introduction and course expectations

- “First, Do No Harm” – Samantha Power: http://articles.latimes.com/2002/oct/06/books/bk-power6

March 30: History of humanitarian intervention: When did the world start intervening?

- Barnett: Introduction and Chapter 1
- Power: A Problem From Hell, Chapters 1-2
Alternatives

- A Brief History on R2P (film): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zql34A4elhY

April 4: Humanitarian Principles

- Code of Conduct for the ICRC and NGOs in Disaster Relief - https://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/publication/p1067.htm

Week 2-3: Types of Crises: Natural vs. Man-made Disasters

April 6: “Natural” Disasters.

- Cases: Ethiopia and Yemen

April 11: Protracted Crises: What’s Different?

- Mercy Corps (2015), Root Causes of Complex Crises (on Canvas)
- Backgrounders on Yemen:
Weeks 3-4: Politics of Intervention—Perspectives from States & Multi-laterals

April 14: Overview of actors, tools and the calculus of intervening


April 19: Is intervention always the answer? Examining short and long-term objectives

- Reiff, Chapter 5
- Powers, Problem, Chapter 10
  - Video option: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KITshBpITFo
- Case: Rwanda

April 21: Coercive Humanitarianism

- Reiff, Chapter 4 & 6
- Powers, Problem, Chapter 9
- Cases: Bosnia and Kosovo

Alternatives:
April 25: Idealism vs. Reality: Use of Aid to Enhance National Security

- Power, An Education of An Idealist (Focus on the 2nd half of the book; Especially with Power’s new role, it’s important to get insight into her thinking)
- Case: Syria
- Guest: TBD

Alternatives:
- Obama at War (film): https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/obama-at-war/

Weeks 5-6: Politics of Intervention: Perspectives from Implementers

April 27: Closing of humanitarian space

- Stoddard, A. (2020). Necessary Risks, Chapter 1
- Case: Afghanistan
- Guest Speaker: TBD

Alternatives
- The E-team: https://www.netflix.com/title/70299286
- Displaced podcast with Bob Kitchen: https://podcasts.voxmedia.com/show/displaced
May 2: Maintaining humanitarian principles

- Reiff, Chapter 7
- Barnett, Chapter 10
- Stoddard, A. *Necessary Risks*. Chapter 2
- Case: Syria (Part II)

**Weeks 6-7: Politics of Intervention: Perspectives from Recipients**

**Perspective-taking reflection assignment due: May 6**

May 4: Local perspectives on interventions

- Dionne, KY (2018). *Doomed Interventions*. Chapters 4, 5 and 6
- Autesserre, S. (2014). *Peaceland*. Chapters 2 and 3
- Guest Speaker: TBD

May 9: Paternalism and the political economy of humanitarian interventions

- Barnett, Chapter 10

May 11: Protection, safeguarding and abuses

***Note we will talk about sensitive issues in this class***

  - *The Humanitarian #MeToo Movement*

• [https://www.irinnews.org/investigations/2018/02/13/exclusive-oxfam-sexual-exploiter-haiti-caught-seven-years-earlier-liberia]


• UK Parliament Review of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in the Aid Sector (Read Introduction and Conclusion; further reading/skimming optional) [https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmintdev/840/84002.htm]

Cases: Save the Children and Oxfam

**Week 8: What is the evidence on humanitarian and foreign aid? And why do we help?**

**May 16: How do we measure success? Saving lives vs extending crisis**


Optional:

May 18: When and why do we help? The psychology of altruism

  - Shorter article version: https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324688404578545523824389986

May 23: Fixing the Humanitarian System: New Models and Reform May 26:


Alternatives:

- Constructive destruction (podcast): https://www.odi.org/opinion/podcast-constructive-deconstruction
- Displaced Podcast with Jeremy Konyndyk: https://podcasts.voxmedia.com/show/displaced

Optional:

May 25: Course Wrap-Up

Appendix: Full Harris Academic Integrity Procedures

Harris Procedures for Allegations of Plagiarism, Cheating, and Academic Dishonesty

First Violation

If a student is accused by an instructor or teaching assistant of plagiarism, cheating, or any other form of academic dishonesty, the student will be summoned to meet with the Dean of Students and the instructor. In the meeting, the student and instructor both present information about the situation. If it is determined by the instructor and the Dean of Students that the student has, in fact, plagiarized or cheated, the following sanctions will be imposed for the first violation:

- The student will generally receive a grade of 0 on the assignment or exam in question. Please note that grading decisions are fully at the discretion of the instructor, who may decide to impose harsher grade penalties.
- The student may be asked to re-do the assignment or retake the exam (without credit) to ensure that the student has learned how to properly cite sources or demonstrate that he or she has command of material covered.
- A formal letter of finding is sent to the student stating that the student has been found in violation of the code of academic honesty and what the sanctions were. The letter, along with any evidence presented, is archived in Harris Student Affairs records until the student graduates if the student has no other violations.
- Students found in violation of the academic honesty policy are not permitted to withdraw from the course to avoid grade penalties from the instructor.
- In cases where plagiarism or academic dishonesty is egregious, the case may be referred to the Area Disciplinary Committee even on a first offense. The Dean makes all decisions about which cases will go before the Area Disciplinary Committee.
Second Violation

If a student who has already been found in violation academic dishonesty is again accused of academic dishonesty, the case will be sent to the Harris Area Disciplinary Committee. Details about the Area Disciplinary Committee procedures can be found in the University Student Manual. Information about the first violation, including the formal letter of finding any evidence, will be presented to the Area Disciplinary Committee, along with evidence of the current allegation. If the student is found in violation of academic honesty a second time, the Area Disciplinary Committee can assign sanctions including transcript notes, disciplinary probation, suspension or expulsion from the University.

Academic Dishonesty Appeals

If a student has been found in violation of academic honesty and does not believe that either the finding or the sanction is fair or correct, the student has the right to appeal the finding by requesting a hearing from the Area Disciplinary Committee. More information about the Area Disciplinary Committee is available here.