

Harris School of Public Policy
University of Chicago
PPHA 35530

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Critical Development Theories and Approaches
Winter 2025
PPHA25530

This course provides an introductory overview of Critical Development Studies (CDS), covering major theories, concepts, and approaches. Students will investigate and critique diverse ideas and texts related to the discourse and practice of normative international development. In the first part of the course we delve into key philosophical concepts and major theoretical frameworks and trends of international development from the post-World War II era to the present. Students will explore the underlying assumptions and modalities of modernization theory, critically examining concepts like progress, social change and liberal modernity. We will further examine dependency and world-systems theory, post-colonial and post-development thought and the contemporary articulation of decoloniality by Latin American and African scholars. The latter part of the course delves into major trends, approaches, and best practices of CDS. Specifically, the themes we will explore include gender, race and culture, environmental justice and indigeneity and participatory and rights-based community development. This course is designed to be a theory-intensive reading course, appropriate for students interested in the theoretical underpinnings and critiques that continue to shape and inform the field and practice of global development.

Class Format: This is a reading intensive course and discussions will be focused around the weekly assigned texts. Readings will be available on Canvas. Each class will begin with a short lecture, most classes will feature a short film/online interview followed by group presentations and/or group exercises. Some classes will include debates, roundtable discussions and may incorporate classroom teachback sessions consisting of pairs of students taking turns to teach back to each other on the core themes and ideas presented in the lectures/readings.

Course Requirements

Group Presentation -20%

Group Response -10%

Mid Term Test -25%

Deep-Dive Theory Overview and Reflection (5-6 pages) -20%

Take Home Final Exam -25%

Group Presentation (20%)

Students will be organized into small groups of 3-4 (Groups A, B, C &D) to present on the assigned readings of a designated week. For your week, you will lead a small group discussion during class. As facilitators, you are expected to:

- a) Prepare a 15-20 minute presentation offering 3 core ideas emerging from the assigned readings. The purpose of this presentation is to tease out and synthesize the most relevant, pertinent, insightful ideas/arguments raised in the readings that your group has thoughtfully determined to be essential for the class to know and understand. The 3 core ideas ideally should be synthesized from all of the assigned readings that week. Do not present a summary or an overview of the readings. The goal is to compile a course primer at the end of the quarter that includes the cumulative core ideas from the class, so students can refer to it for their future work, projects or research.
- b) Facilitate a 10-15 minute discussion following the presentation. A group is assigned to respond to your presentation and ask a set of questions as well as respond to your group's questions. Please circulate 2-3 questions one or two full days before your presentation (using canvas groups), to give the response group enough time to prepare their responses.
- c) You are responsible to time manage the presentation and response group.

Group Response (10%)

Your assigned group (see above) will be designated a week to respond to the student presentation, ask and answer questions. For your response week, your group should be prepared to do the following:

- a) Following the presentation offer a 1-2 minute response. Your remarks should be related to the 3 core ideas presented. Your group may agree and expand on the core ideas, push back on the framing of the ideas or engage in any way that is thoughtful and constructive.
- b) Ask the group 1-2 follow up questions about the presentation and/or readings. This question does not have to be uploaded on canvas beforehand.
- c) The student presentation group will also circulate 2 questions to your group members 1-2 days before and you must consult, discuss and devise an oral response to the questions based on the readings as well as personal insights/reflections. You will be allocated 10 minutes to respond.

Mid Term Test (25%)

This is an in-class test covering lectures and readings from Week 1-Week 5. No aids allowed. The test is short answers (compare and/or contrast) and the list of terms/concepts will be posted one week before. Refer to the handout for more details.

Deep-Dive Theory Overview and Reflection Paper (5-6 pages) (20%)

In a 5-6 page paper (excluding bibliography), choose one theorist discussed in the course and write a synthesized overview of the main ideas, themes and arguments put forward, as well as notable critiques published by other scholars. Finally "weigh in" on the theorist/theory offering your own informed ideas, perspectives and thoughts. Feel free to agree and/or disagree, be sure to offer well thought out, informed reflection. Refer to handout for more details.

Take Home Final Exam (25%) Students will be given a 24hr take home exam on the last day of class. Students are expected to answer the questions drawing from lectures and assigned readings. Refer to handout on Canvas for details.

Course Schedule

Week 1. Introduction to Critical Development Studies (CDS)

Rist, Gilbert. "Metamorphoses of a Western Myth", pg. 25-36 in *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*. London: Zed Books, 2002

Bowles, Paul and Henry Veltmeyer. "Introduction to Critical Development Studies: Four Characteristics with Illustrations from Seven Decades" *The Essential Guide to Critical Development Studies*. Routledge.

Arsel, Murat, and Anirban Dasgupta. 2015. "Critique, Rediscovery, and Revival in Development Studies." *Development and Change* 46, 4: 644-665

Week 2: Colonial Legacies and the making of the "Third World"

Anibal Quijano (2007) Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality. *Cultural Studies*, 21(2-3), 168-78.

Mukherjee, Aditya. 2010. "Empire: how colonial India made modern Britain." *Economic and Political Weekly* XLV, no. 50: 73-82

Fanon, Frantz. 1976. "Concerning violence." In *The Wretched of the Earth* (chap. 1): 29-74

Week 3: Modernization

Rostow, Walt. 1971. "The Five Stages of Growth - A Summary," chapter 2 of *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, Cambridge U.P. [1960,] 4-16.

Fukuyama, Francis. 1989. "The End of History," *The National Interest* (Summer 1989). pp 3-18

Huntington, Samuel. P. (1971). The change to change: Modernization, development, and politics. *Comparative Politics*, 3(3), read pps 283-305 and you can skim or skip till end 322.

Recommended:

Banuri, T. 1990. "Modernisation and its Discontents: A Critical Perspective on Theories of Modernisation." In F. Apffel-Marglin and S. Marglin, ed. *Domineering Knowledge: Development, Culture and Resistance*. Oxford: Clarendon, 73-101

Ekbladh, David. 2010. *The Great American Mission: Modernization and the Creation of an American World Order*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Przeworski, Adam, and Fernando Limongi. 1997. "Modernization: Theories and Facts." *World Politics* 49, 2: 155-183.

Week 4: Dependency/World-Systems Theory and Globalization

Gunder Frank, Andre, 1988. "The Development of Underdevelopment," in C.K. Wilber (ed.), *The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment*. New York: Random House. p. 109-119

Wallerstein, Immanuel. (2004). "Historical Origins of World-Systems Analysis: From Social Science Disciplines to Historical Social Sciences" In *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*.

Stiglitz, Joseph. 2002. Globalism's Discontents in *The Globalization and Development Reader*.

Sachs, Jeffrey. 2002. "The Antiglobalization Movement," in *The Globalization and Development Reader/*

Recommended:

Cardoso F.H. (1982) Dependency and Development in Latin America. In: Alavi H., Shanin T. (eds) Introduction to the Sociology of "Developing Societies". Sociology of "Developing Societies". Palgrave, London, pp. 112-127

Harvey., David. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1-19.

Wade, Robert Hunter. 2004. "Is globalization reducing poverty and inequality?" World Development 32(4): 567-89.

Vincent Ferraro. 1996. "Dependency Theory: An Introduction", in The Development Economics Reader, edited by Giogrio Secondi, London: Routledge

Florida, Richard. 2005. "The World is Spiky: Globalization Has Changed the Economic Playing Field, But Hasn't Leveled It." The Atlantic. p. 48–51.

Week 5: . Post-Colonial, Decolonial Theory and Epistemic De-Linking

Mignolo, W., & Tlostanova, M. (2008). The logic of coloniality and the limits of postcoloniality. In R. Krishnaswamy & J. C. Hawley (Eds.), (2008). The postcolonial and the global (pp. 109–123). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Kapoor, I. (2023). Decolonising Development Studies. *Review of International Studies*, 49(3), 346-355

Mwambari, D. (2019). Local positionality in the production of knowledge in Northern Uganda. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 18, 1609406919864845.

Falola, Toyin. 2024. Chapter 2 Decolonization and Decoloniality in Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni and African Decolonial Studies. Routledge

Recommended:

Pieterse, Jan N. & Parekh, Bhiku. (1995), "Shifting imaginaries: decolonization, internal decolonization, postcoloniality", in J. Nederveen Pieterse e B. Parekh (orgs.), *The decolonization of imagination: culture, knowledge and power*, Londres/Nova Jersey, Zed Books, pp. 1-20.

Week 6: Anthropology and Development: The Rise of the Development Expert

Film: The Take

James Ferguson. (1994). *The Anti-Politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. University of Minnesota Press. Read Chapter 1-2.

William Fisher, 1997, "Doing Good? The Politics and Anti-Politics of NGO Practices. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26:439-464.

Kothari, Uma (2005) Authority and Expertise: The Professionalisation of International Development and the Ordering of Dissent, *Antipode* 37(3) 425-446.

Recommended:

Gregory Mann. 2015. *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel: The Road to Nongovernmentality*. Cambridge University Press

David D. Gow (2002) *Anthropology and Development: Evil Twin or Moral Narrative?*

Cooper, F. 1997. "Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backwards Africans, and the Development Concept." *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*. University of California Press.

Week 7: Gender, Culture and Race

Mohanty, Talpade Chandra. 2011. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" in Nalini Visvanathan et al ed. *The Women, Gender and Development Reader*. London: Zed Books, (pp.83-89)

White, Sarah. 2011. "The gender lens, a racial blinder?". in Nalini Visvanathan et al ed. *The Women, Gender and Development Reader*. London: Zed Books, (pp.95-99)

Patel, K. (2020). Race and a decolonial turn in development studies. *Third World Quarterly*, 41(9), 1463-1475

Fanon, Frantz. 1965. "Algeria Unveiled." *A Dying Colonialism*. Grove

Recommended:

Jack Donnelly, "Human Rights, Democracy and Development", *Human Rights Quarterly* 21, no. 3(1999): 612.

Pailey, R.N., (2020). De-centering the 'White Gaze' of Development. *Development and Change*, 51(3), 729-745.

Uma Kothari. 2002. "Feminist and Postcolonial Challenges to Development." In Uma Kothari and Martin Minogue, eds. *Development Theory and Practice. Critical Perspectives*. Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave.

Week 8: Participatory Methodologies and Community-Centered Development

Chambers, Robert E. (1997). Chapter 1 and 2 in *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the First Last*. London: Intermediate Technology Publishing.

Freire, Paulo. (1968). Chapter 1. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Seabury Press, New York

Ilan Kapoor (2002) "The devil's in the theory: a critical assessment of Robert Chambers' work on participatory development" *Third World Quarterly*. Vol. 23, No. 1, p. 101-117.

Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, 2001, "The Case for Participation as 'Tyranny,'" pp. 1-15, in *Participation: The New Tyranny?*, Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, eds. New York and London: Zed

Week 9: Sustainability, Environmental Justice and Indigenous Knowledge

Film: Climate Change Documentary:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UftuDAkwM3I>

Whyte, Kyle. "Indigenous climate change studies: Indigenizing futures, decolonizing the Anthropocene." *English Language Notes* 55, no. 1 (2017): 153-162

Hernandez J, Meisner J, Jacobs LA, Rabinowitz PM (2022) Re-Centering Indigenous Knowledge in climate change discourse. PLOS Clim 1(5): e0000032.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pclm.0000032>

Carson, Rachel. 2002. *Silent Springs*. Penguin. Read Chapters 1-2

Recommended:

Shawn Wilson, "What is an Indigenous Research Methodology?"

Linda Smith, "On Tricky Ground: Researching the Native in the Age of Uncertainty"

Whyte, Kyle. "Indigenous women, climate change impacts, and collective action." *Hypatia* 29, no. 3 (2014): 599-616.

Schroeder, Heike. "Agency in international climate negotiations: the case of indigenous peoples and avoided deforestation." *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics* 10, no. 4 (2010): 317-332

Resources Available to Students

Please familiarize yourself with the resources available at the University. Here are some links:

- [Harris Academic Support Programs and Handbook](#)
- [Student Wellness](#)
- <https://grad.uchicago.edu/>

Academic Integrity

The University of Chicago and the Harris Public Policy take great pride in upholding the highest academic standards. All students are expected to abide by the following academic expectations:

- All work submitted by a student must be the student's own original work.
- Students must not gain unfair advantage on any test, exam, project, or other assessment. Course instructors have the authority to set rules for their any exams, assignments, or other assessments for their courses related to what materials or behaviors are and are not allowed. Students who violate these rules have committed academic dishonesty.
- Falsely recording class attendance for yourself or someone else constitutes academic dishonesty.
- Acceptable use of generative AI for classwork is determined by the instructor and outlined in the course syllabus. If you are unsure whether use of AI is allowed please consult your instructor.
- Students may not submit previously submitted work from one course (final paper, etc) to fulfill the academic obligations in another course, unless the student has received permission to do so by the course instructor.
- Any works that are cited by the student as part of a greater work must utilize proper text and summary citations to properly identify the proper source(s).
- In the case of group work, students must be prepared to identify their individual contribution (including proper citations of original work cited) when requested by the course instructor.

Students are also subject to the [University Academic Honesty Policy](#).