

Earthquakes, famines and armed conflict: international responses to humanitarian emergencies

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Kyung Hee University Global Collaborative Summer Program in Humanity, Civilization and Global Governance

Course description

This course offers a challenging introduction to the main debates within the study and practice of humanitarianism, and provides students with a range of conceptual tools for understanding the politics and everyday practice of humanitarianism. We examine the work of UN agencies and international NGOs in response to armed conflict, famine, and natural disasters. We discuss how politics and principles interact to shape the priorities, practice and outcomes of humanitarian response in countries like Haiti, Afghanistan and Syria.

Does the massive expansion of the humanitarian sector suggest the world is becoming more compassionate and civilized? How do the political interests of donor governments drive humanitarian priorities? Does aid do more harm than good? How does humanitarian aid differ from human rights or development work? Should humanitarian action be political? How does law protect in war? The course will grapple with these, and other, important questions regarding the ethics, law, politics and practice of humanitarianism.

Each class is divided into two parts. In the first half of the class, we discuss a case study focused on the international response to a particular humanitarian emergency. In the second half of the class, we turn to a more general theme or topic. Wherever possible, the case study humanitarian emergencies have been chosen as particularly pertinent or interesting examples of the issues and debates in the general topic covered in the second half of the class.

Learning objectives

At the end of this course the students should:

- demonstrate substantive knowledge of the major historical developments in international humanitarianism
- be able to engage in reasoned critical reflection on humanitarian principles and associated approaches to humanitarian action
- understand the strengths and criticisms of some of the main actors in international humanitarian action, including donor states, UN agencies, the Red Cross movement and international NGOs

Week 1: What does it mean to be “humanitarian”?

Humanitarianism is a contested concept, and the first week of this course will introduce students to the central debates and main areas of contestation in international humanitarian action. We will discuss, among other things, what distinguishes humanitarian work from development work, how expansive and ambitious the goals of humanitarian action should be, and to what extent humanitarianism should be political.

Monday

Introduction, and a brief history of modern humanitarian action

- Michael Barnett & Thomas G Weiss (2008) “Humanitarianism: A Brief History of the Present” in Barnett & Weiss (ed.) *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power and Ethics*, pp.1-48.
- Eleanor Davey, with John Borton and Matthew Foley (2013) *A history of the humanitarian system: Western origins and foundations*, HPG Working Paper, pp.1-15.

Tuesday

Case study: Famine in the Horn of Africa 1983-85

- Müller, Tanja R. 2013. "‘The Ethiopian famine’ revisited: Band Aid and the antipolitics of celebrity humanitarian action." *Disasters* 37 (1):61-79.
- Philo, Greg. 1993. "From Buerk to Band Aid: the media and the 1984 Ethiopian famine." In *Getting the message: news, truth and power*, edited by John Eldridge, 104-125. London: Routledge.

Thematic topic: The construction of humanitarian emergencies

- Calhoun, Craig. 2009. "The idea of emergency: humanitarian action and global (dis)order." IILJ International Legal Theory Colloquium Spring 2009: Virtues, Vices, Human Behavior and Democracy in International Law, NYU Law School.

Wednesday

Case study: Rwanda 1994-96

- DANIDA 1996. *The international response to conflict and genocide: lessons from the Rwanda experience. Synthesis Report. Various Authors.* Copenhagen: DANIDA.
- Storey, Andy. 1997. "Non-neutral humanitarianism: NGOs and the Rwanda crisis." *Development in Practice* 7 (4):384-394.

Thematic topic: The principles of humanitarian action

- Slim, H. 1997. Relief agencies and moral standing in war: principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and solidarity. *Development in Practice* 7(4), pp. 342-352
- Fox, F. 2001. New humanitarianism: does it provide a moral banner for the 21st century? *Disasters* 25(4), pp. 275-289.

Thursday

Case study: 2010 earthquake in Haiti

- DARA. 2011. Focus on Haiti: build back better? Madrid: DARA.
- Patrick, Jonathan. 2011. Haiti earthquake response: emerging evaluation lessons. London: DFID.
- Disasters special issue on Haiti, April 2014, see
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/disa.2014.38.issue-s1/issuetoc>

Thematic topic: Law and accountability in humanitarian action

- HPCR. (2011). Humanitarian action under scrutiny: criminalizing humanitarian engagement. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research
- Collinson et al. 2009. Realising protection: The uncertain benefits of civilian, refugee and IDP status. HPG Report 28.
- Darcy, J. (2004), Locating Responsibility: The Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Its Rationale. Disasters, 28: 112–123

Friday

Catch up on anything we have missed or did not have time for

In-class test

Week 2: Agents and actors

In the second week of the course, we turn to the architecture of humanitarian aid, introducing the different kinds of actors operating in the arena of humanitarian action. We look at how different UN agencies and INGOs interpret and implement humanitarian principles, how they are funded, what their strengths and emphases are in terms of response and activities, and how accountable they are—to their funders, the people they are supposed to help, and other stakeholders. We will also discuss the main criticisms made of different organizations. We explore the roles of domestic actors, including the governments of affected states, local and national NGOs, and armed non-state actors.

Monday

Case study: 2004 Asian Tsunami

- Cosgrave, J. (2007). Joint evaluation of the international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami (synthesis report: expanded summary). London: Tsunami Evaluation Coalition.

Thematic topic: Politics of humanitarian financing

- Poole, Lydia. 2014. Bridging the needs-based funding gap: NGO field perspectives. Geneva: Norwegian Refugee Council.
- Kevlihan, Rob, Karl DeRouen, and Glen Biglaiser. 2014. "Is US humanitarian aid based primarily on need or self-interest?" *International Studies Quarterly* 58 (4):839-854.

Tuesday

Case study: Sri Lanka 2009

- Niland, Holmes, Bradley. 2014. Policy Debate - Humanitarian Protection in the Midst of Civil War: Lessons from Sri Lanka. *International Development Policy* 5(2). <http://poldev.revues.org/1629>
- Internal Review Panel. 2012. *Report of the Secretary-General's Internal Review Panel on United Nations action in Sri Lanka*. United Nations.
- Keen, David. 2009. Compromise or capitulation?: report on WFP and the humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka. *Humanitarian Assistance in Conflict and Complex Emergencies*, 23-25 June 2009, Rome. pp.49-102

Thematic topic: UN agencies

- Why humanitarian reform? 40 min presentation by Mark Cutts of OCHA <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UN-vtFbUGs8>
- Barnett, M. 2001. Humanitarianism with a sovereign face: UNHCR in the global undertow. *International Migration Review* 35(1) 244-77

Wednesday

Case study: Biafran war 1967-70

- Waters, Ken. 2004. "Influencing the message: the role of Catholic missionaries in media coverage of the Nigerian Civil War." *The Catholic Historical Review* 90 (4):697-718.

International responses to humanitarian emergencies

- Desgrandchamps, Marie-Luce. 2014. "Dealing with 'genocide': the ICRC and the UN during the Nigeria–Biafra war, 1967–70." *Journal of Genocide Research* 16 (2-3):281-297.
- O'Sullivan, Kevin. 2014. "Humanitarian encounters: Biafra, NGOs and imaginings of the Third World in Britain and Ireland, 1967–70." *Journal of Genocide Research* 16 (2-3):299-315.

Thematic topic: The Red Cross Movement and international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs)

- Forsythe, D. P. 2007. The ICRC: a unique humanitarian protagonist. *International Review of the Red Cross* 89(865), pp. 63-96.
- Stoddard, Abby. 2003. Humanitarian NGOs: challenges and trends, HPG Briefing Paper 12. London: Humanitarian Policy Group/Overseas Development Institute.

Thursday

Case Study: Syria 2011 to present

- Humanitarian Exchange magazine, special issue on the conflict in Syria, No.59, November 2013, available at: <http://www.odihpn.org/humanitarian-exchange-magazine/issue-59>
- Forced Migration Review, special issue on the Syria Crisis, displacement and protection, No.47, September 2014, available at <http://www.fmreview.org/syria/contents>

Thematic topic: (1) National civilian actors (the government of the affected state, local and national NGOs) and (2) Military forces (national military, armed non-state actors, international forces)

- Harvey, P. (2013), International humanitarian actors and governments in areas of conflict: challenges, obligations, and opportunities. *Disasters*, 37: S151–S170.
- Collinson, Sarah, Samir Elhawary, and Robert Muggah. 2010. States of fragility: stabilisation and its implications for humanitarian action. HPG Working Paper. London: Humanitarian Policy Group.

Friday

Student presentations

Week 3: Operations and activities

In the third and final week of the course, we turn our attention to the nuts and bolts of humanitarian response, working through the project cycle from needs assessment, to different kinds of response, to evaluation.

Monday

Case study: Iraq 2003 to present

- de Torrente, Nicolas. "Humanitarian Action under Attack: Reflections on the Iraq War." *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 17 (2004): 1-30.
- Hansen, G. (2008) 'The ethos–practice gap: perceptions of humanitarianism in Iraq', *International Review of the Red Cross*, 90(869), pp. 119–136.

Thematic topic: Assessing needs and designing an appropriate response

- Darcy, J., & Hofmann, C.-A. (2003). According to need? Needs assessment and decision-making in the humanitarian sector. In HPG Report 15. London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Knox Clarke, P., & Darcy, J. (2014). Insufficient evidence? The quality and use of evidence in humanitarian action. In. London: ALNAP.

Tuesday

Case study: 2014 west African Ebola epidemic

- Humanitarian Exchange Magazine (2015) Special Feature on the Ebola crisis in West Africa, see http://odihpn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/he_64.pdf

Thematic topic: Medical humanitarianism

- Calain, P. (2013). Ethics and images of suffering bodies in humanitarian medicine. *Social Science & Medicine*, 98, 278-285.
- Sheather, J., & Shah, T. (2011). Ethical dilemmas in medical humanitarian practice: cases for reflection from Médecins Sans Frontières. *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 37(3), 162-165.

Wednesday

Case study: 2011 famine in Somalia

- 2012 Special issue of Global Food Security – see <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/22119124/1/1>

Thematic topic: Food aid, other forms of material assistance, and cash transfers

- Maxwell, Daniel G, John W Parker, and Heather C Stobaugh. 2013. "What drives program choice in food security crises? Examining the “response analysis” question." *World Development* 49 (0):68-79.
- Harvey, P. (2007). Cash-based responses in emergencies. *HPG Report 24*. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Thursday

Case study: Darfur 2003 to present

- Pantuliano, S. and O'Callaghan, S. 2006. *The 'protection crisis': a review of field-based strategies for humanitarian protection in Darfur*. London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Humanitarian Policy Group. 2007. *Humanitarian advocacy in Darfur: the challenge of neutrality*, HPG Policy Brief 28. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Thematic topic: Protection, dialogue and advocacy

- Slim, H., & Bonwick, A. (2005). *Protection: an ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies*. London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Mc Hugh, G., & Bessler, M. (2006). *Humanitarian negotiations with armed groups: a manual for practitioners*. In. New York: UN OCHA

Friday

Final examination