

FRESHMAN SEMINAR PROPOSAL

Each year, hundreds of thousands of American youth volunteer services abroad in the Peace Corps, Operations Crossroads or on study abroad programs in developing countries. However, many of them experience a huge cultural shock upon landing in a developing country because they were never prepared on what to expect.

Studies also show that Americans, in general, have a limited understanding of the so-called Third World, where the vast majority of humanity lives. However, in the face of globalization and with the United States being the sole world superpower, this narrow view is no longer tenable.

This freshman seminar is designed to expose students to economic, political, educational, and socio-cultural conditions in the developing world. In particular, the goal is to help students understand the concept of development as a medium of interaction between rich and poor countries. The course will introduce students to basic development concepts and definitions, factors influencing the development process, indicators of development, and development problems. The industrialized countries spend billions of dollars each year in aid to the poor ones. This course will help students understand the concept, process, and impact of aid. The course will not get deep into development theory rather the goal is to wet the students' appetite so that they might decide to pursue higher level development courses.

The course will provide a forum where students challenged, in a friendly matter, to discover for themselves living conditions in the developing countries. Through readings, lectures, debates, case studies, group presentations, and other activities they become more informed knowledgeable about countries, to the point of even offering solutions to problems. Assignments will include readings, class participation and group projects. A letter grade will be administered. To be offered in winter. This will be an evening class—meeting once a week.

Robert Agunga is Associate Professor and Coordinator of the Agricultural Communication Program, Department of Human & Community Resource Development. He has a joint appointment with the School of Communication and the Department of African and African-American Studies. He has published extensively on communication and development, including a textbook, *Developing the Third World: A Communication Approach* and an invited article in *Harvard International Review*. He is a consultant to several international development assistance organizations, such as the United Nations Development Program and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Dr. Agunga has worked in agricultural and rural development projects in many countries in Africa, including Ghana, Ethiopia, Sudan, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe and brings this first-hand experience to his students.

AGR COMM 137
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DEVELOPING WORLD
Agricultural Communication

Course Details

Instructor: Robert Agunga
Quarter: Winter
Day: Tuesday, Time: 5:00 – 7 p. m.

Instructor Contact

Office: 203AA
Office Hours: By appointment
Email: Agunga.1@osu.edu
Phone: 614.292.4624

Course Description

This course is designed to help students develop a better understanding of the developing world. Each year, hundreds of thousands of American youth volunteer services abroad in the Peace Corps, Operations Crossroads or on study abroad programs. This course will help reduce the cultural shock students often experience upon landing in these countries by preparing them on what to expect. Also, it is common knowledge that Americans, in general, have a limited understanding of the so-called Third World, where the vast majority of humanity lives. However, in the face of globalization and with the United States as the sole world superpower, this narrow view is no longer tenable. Lastly, the U. S. spends billions of dollars each year in development aid. Students will learn about how this aid is implemented and what impact or lack of it, it has on recipient countries. It is hoped that interest generated in this course will spur students to seek higher-level courses in international development.

Format

This course is designed to elicit active student participation. There are weekly reading assignments to prepare students for class discussion. The class will meet for 2 hours once a week. Class sessions will comprise of lectures, discussions, video/slide shows, active student participation and group presentations. No textbook is assigned. However, students will be given topics which they will have to research for each class.

Academic Accommodations

Students in need of accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor. Please note that the instructor relies on the Office of Disability Services for assistance with accommodation strategies. If you have not contacted the Office for Disability Services, please do so as soon as possible.

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct of any kind will not be tolerated. If you have questions about what activities constitute academic misconduct you should consult Faculty Rule 3335-23-04. Faculty Rule 3335-23-05 outlines procedures to follow should suspected academic misconduct occur.

Context

This is designed as an introductory course in international development studies, tailor-made for a freshmen class. The course focuses primarily on the dialectics of Third World development whereby students are introduced to the socioeconomic, political, and cultural conditions in developing countries; an analysis of the meaning and problems of development; the role of development aid and the impact it has made or failed to make over the years. Through group projects, students will contact research on some aspect of development and present their findings to the class.

Textbook

No textbook is assigned. However, students will be given topics to research for weekly discussions.

Requirements

The following are expected of all students in the course:

- a. Attendance is mandatory and unexcused absences will result in a lowering of grade.
- b. Students are expected to come to class prepared, work diligently, respect each other, and do their absolute best in all assignments.
- c. Class participation is essential.
- d. Deadlines must be met.

The Group Project

Students will undertake a group project and submit a 4 - 6 page report. The group will also make a 15-minute presentation to the class. The exact nature of this assignment will be discussed further, early in the quarter. Initially, a brainstorming exercise will generate topics. For example, a group (of 3-4 members) can research on examine how to internationalize the university. Another could investigate how high school students are learning about other countries in the wake of Internet and World Wide Web. Another group could interview new immigrants in Columbus, such as the Somalis, to find out how they are adjusting to their sophisticated new environment. A group can also develop a profile of a developing country—highlighting its people, cultures, exports and so forth.

Why it is important for students to work in groups must be stressed. Also, rules must be established to ensure that the group culture does not turn into anarchy. The saying that there is strength in numbers is important when it comes to group assignments. Working together, students can achieve more than doing so individually. As a freshman class, group assignments also promote class cohesiveness and interaction. Above all, in real life, one has to work with people of diverse backgrounds so the group project should be viewed as preparation for the workplace. For a fruitful group experience, however, here must be strong guidelines. Peer review must be instituted to ensure that there are no coasters.

Grading

The course will be graded based on the following assignments:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| a. Group research paper/project | 60% |
| b. Group presentation | 20% |
| c. Class attendance and participation | 20% |

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

Getting acquainted and review of syllabus

Start with a role-play exercise or an icebreaker, such as "Who am I?" where a student wears the nametag of a country at the back. For example, Japan, Ghana, and Jamaica. As they mingle in the crowd, the student will ask: "Who am I?" to whoever s/he meets. The person being asked will read the nametag and provide a clue, such as indicate the made goods exported from that country. These clues help the person narrow down the country until s/he is able to answer the question. Easy clues, such as the name of the capital city or main exports, should be saved for the last. After students are warmed up sufficiently, introduce why this course is important drawing on Thomas Friedman's (2005) book: "The world is flat" globalization in the twenty-first century.

Week 2

The interdependency of nations

Discuss the geography of development. For example, display a world map and highlight the developing countries. Ask students if they see a common pattern? For example, are all these countries located on the equator? What are the soil and climatic conditions, literacy levels, language variations, etc. Next, display maps of Peter and Mercator projections of the world and explain how images can muddy the development debate. For example, why does the Mercator projection portray the United States larger than Africa when in fact, the United States is only one-fourth the size of Africa?

Next, describe the three worlds in one world concept—East, West and Third World and how that geopolitics played out during the Cold War and after. Breakdown the developing nations into various groups to show the diversity and why it is impossible to generalize. Help students understand the interdependency of nations. For example, what products come to the U.S. from other countries? What does the U. S. export in return? How would life be like without these foreign products or even foreigners in our midst? Help students understand the value systems nations hold based on religion and other factors, such as connection between the Moslem religion, the cartoons, the riots, freedom of speech, role of mass media, etc. Show how the explorations of Christopher Columbus and Vasco Da Gama changed the world forever, linked the political and economic systems of the world and thus, creating the interdependency of nations.

Week 3

What is development and what are the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals?

Ask students to bring to class a list of 3-5 items they value most. Compile these on the notice board, such as food, shelter, liberty, religion, lifestyle, political system, etc. For each item, help students discover the polarization. Take food for example. Are there countries that have too much, too little, etc. For those who don't have, why don't they and what can they do about it? For those who have in excess should they sell to the needy? And, if the needy can afford to pay for it, then what? If the loans pile up to a point where they can't pay because the interest rate is too high, then what? Is access to food a basic human right? Is population control a necessity for those who can't feed themselves? If so, who decides that? Discuss North vs. South, East vs. West, Cold War and post-Cold war relations. Launch into the role of the United Nations System and perhaps, talk about the United States/U.S. confrontations. Should the U.S. control the UN? How many industrialized countries have met the goal of contributing 0.7% of GNP to the UN?

Week 4

Development problems in historical perspective.

This is more of a continuation of Week #3. Through brainstorming, compile a list of development problems, such as health, agriculture (food production and distribution), income levels, illiteracy, poverty, land ownership, unemployment, inequality, population explosion, etc. Discuss the United Nations human development index (HDI) and the ranking of nations based on this index. Compare indexes, such as, infant mortality rate, life expectancy, gender inequality, debt crisis, consumption of global non-renewable resources, etc. Encourage students to debate whether the situation of developing countries is a basket case, that is, there appears to be no solution in sight?

Week 5

Group projects

By this time, the students have warmed up to each other, developed an understanding of the issues/problems of development and are ready to undertake group projects as discussed earlier. Brainstorm on topics and allow students to determine whether they will find their own members or whether instructor should assign them randomly to groups. Discuss the benefits and negatives of either approach.

Week 6

The meaning of development aid.

Help students understand basic terms, such as development aid versus development assistance, aid fatigue, basic needs, appropriate technology, capacity building, popular participation, etc. the geopolitics of development, digital divide and electronic colonialism, center versus periphery, etc. Who benefits from the aid process? Why do rich countries give aid? Differences between aid and loans, etc. Discuss types of development aid organizations—multilateral, bilateral, governmental and nongovernmental aid organizations. Discuss how much is given in aid, what conditionalities are attached, and how these conditions vary from one industrialized country to another?

Week 7

Who benefits from development aid?

Discuss the myths of aid. For example, is it aid or loans? Analyze financial flows between rich and poor countries to show that aid may be benefiting the givers rather than the receivers, something that Americans hardly understand. Show how aid conditionalities may be limiting its effectiveness. Draw on the works of Susan George, such as “How the other half dies” and a “Fate worse than debt” and “Ill Fares the Land” or Graham Hancock’s book, *Lords of poverty*.

Week 8

Preparing, presenting, and evaluating the group research paper

Give students tips on how to write the research paper, such as data gathering, outlining, handling citations, etc. Encourage them to use innovative ways to make their presentations, such as role-playing, using power point, etc. Assist them in using power point software, equipment in the classroom, etc. Give them a handout on how the presentations and research papers will be graded. Encourage peer evaluation to ensure that those who work hard are rewarded and those who slack, punished. Stress that research presentation is part of scholarship and should be done well.

Week 9

Development case studies.

Present two or three case studies to show that the development situation is not as hopeless as one might get from the literature. Discuss new paradigms of development, such as a focus on poverty reduction over industrialization and other capital-intensive projects, people empowerment over state control, and an increasing emphasis on the involvement of other social scientists, not economists alone who have occupied the driver's wheel of development over the past decades. Return to the MDGs and review problems associated with its implementation and achievement. Discuss the World Bank's October 2006 Congress on Communication for Development to show current efforts at improving the success rate of development aid.

Week 10

Group presentations and course evaluation.

For the course evaluation, have students complete the SEIs and provide open-ended comments. Assure them confidentiality of their evaluations until grades are submitted. Have someone conduct the evaluation in the first 15 minutes of the class. Instructor steps out for this exercise and return to conduct group project presentations. Determine presentation time based on number of groups. Prepare a list of the order of presentations. Tell presenters how time will be managed. Encourage them to relax, speak with confidence, and respond to questions. Let students know when their papers and presentation evaluations will be made available to them. Encourage them to come and discuss any concerns they may have about the grading before grades are submitted. Encourage them to stay in touch even after the course is over. Refer them to higher-level courses they could take if they want to learn more about development.