Spring Term 2019
Managing Humanitarian and Refugee Crises:
Challenges for Policy Makers and Practitioners  PA 5823
Friday, February 8, from 3 pm to 8 pm
Saturday, February 9, from 8 am to 4 pm

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Preliminary Syllabus (November 2019)

(A final syllabus will be prepared and uploaded by or before December 15.)

Course overview:

This is a one credit course, and conducted in two sessions – Friday, February 8 from 3 pm to 8 pm (with breaks), and Saturday, February 9, from 8 am to 4 pm (also with breaks).

From Syria and Somalia, to Burma and Bangladesh, to the countries of Central America and beyond, persecution, human rights violations, civil conflict and complex emergencies, which principally impact populations in the global south, pose compelling challenges to the capacities of governments, NGOs, and international organizations to prevent and alleviate suffering, provide refuge, and promote recovery. Especially in recent years, policy-makers have increasingly questioned the ability of the international community to achieve those objectives. Moreover, a new presidential administration in the United States came to office in 2017 with approaches on refugee, migration, and humanitarian issues that differ dramatically from its predecessors, and this has increased the complexity of efforts to address refugee and humanitarian challenges.

This course, which will involve lecture, guest lecture from practitioners and policy-makers (including refugees and former refugees who are now working in the field), and class discussion, will examine the efforts of governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and others to respond to humanitarian, recovery, and reconstruction challenges posed by persecution, human rights abuse, civil conflict, and complex emergencies.

We will also examine the role and institutions of the United States government—in terms of its practices and policies involving overseas humanitarian assistance, U.S. refugee admissions, and asylum and temporary protection in the United States.

This one-credit course will take a broad and integrated approach, designed to give students a wide understanding of the lay of the humanitarian land and the questions with which advocates, policy makers and policy practitioners grapple.
Over the course of our two days together, I am planning to welcome a number of guest speakers by Skype. These will include U.S. government and United Nations officials and officials of major humanitarian NGOs. A large number of refugees and former refugees are working in this field, and they will be among our guest speakers.

**Learning objectives:**

Students in this one credit class will gain a broad understanding of the policy issues that are involved in international refugee and humanitarian response – an understanding that will integrate concepts from a range of fields – as well as knowledge of the key institutions that define and impact policy and practice in this area. Students will also gain an appreciation of key dilemmas faced by policy-makers and practitioners involved in response to complex crises, challenges to achieving policy and operational objectives, and strategies for success. Students will also learn about U.S. policy on international refugee and humanitarian assistance, and on domestic refugee, asylum, and related issues. Of course, we will not have the chance to go into the depth and detail of a three credit course, but there is much we can do in two days.

**Readings**

There will be about 12-15 hours of readings, all of which you will need to complete before our first class on February 8. I am still determining the right mix of readings, and will add readings to this syllabus (and post the revised syllabus) prior by December 15.

**Prerequisites:**

There are no formal prerequisites, other than a keen interest in the material, though those who are not graduate students should contact me before the class begins.

**Course requirements and grading**

*To be completed any time before the first class*

You will be asked to complete all of the readings before class.

You will also be asked to complete short responses to about 12 assigned questions drawn from the readings. Each response should be about 1-2 short paragraphs, and the exercise is designed to ensure students have considered the readings carefully before the two class sessions. Taken together, the 12 responses should total between 1400 and 1700 words.

Because you will be completing this assignment before we’ve had the chance to discuss the materials, the principal criterion for my evaluation of this exercise will be whether you demonstrate that you have read the material with at least some care. This first assignment will count for 25% of your grade.

**Late submissions:** It is important that you complete this assignment before our class, as you will be at a great advantage if you have thought about and integrated the material before we meet.
Thus, I regret that, if you do not do complete the assignment before we begin class on February 8, you will be penalized a half grade for the course (and will still be required to complete the assignment).

**To be completed during the two classes: class participation**

**Class participation.** Students will be evaluated by the quality of their engagement and all students (whether or not they are hand-raisers) will be given the chance to engage. This will constitute 50% of your overall grade, and it may include a short in-class presentation (5-10 minutes) developed during the course of the two days of class.

**To be completed after class (by or before March 4)**

A 700 word (about 2-3 pages) *thought paper* on a humanitarian policy of your choice, with your perspectives drawn from what you’ve learned in class. This will constitute 25% of your overall grade.

**Late submissions:** For each week (or portion thereof) that you are delayed in completing this assignment, you will be penalized one half grade on your paper.

**Organization of the course**

I will organize our two day class around 6-9 broad topic areas (though we might devote more time to some than to others), and we will spend 1-2 hours or so, on average, on each topic. As mentioned, I’m planning to have guest presenters for many of those topic areas, and class conversation will be a very important component of our two days.

In general, each section will start with a short presentation of the material, followed by discussion. Over the course of the two days, we’ll structure discussions in various ways to keep it interesting. In some cases, we will have traditional class discussion. In other cases, we will break up into small group conversations, and have groups to present their observations/conclusions at the end of the hour long session.

**Topic areas for the course (preliminary list)**

I have presented a preliminary list of topic areas, below. This list may be modified slightly in the final version of the syllabus (to be completed by December 15), but this should give you a very good idea of what we will see to cover.

1. **A History and Overview of Humanitarianism**

We will consider the origins of both the concept of humanitarianism and the field of practice. What are the critical components of humanitarianism, and how do we understand the evolution of concepts like neutrality and impartiality, the interests of stakeholders and related issues? What is the larger political context in which humanitarian activities take place? We will consider and assess the breadth of the humanitarianism, as officials and representatives of NGOs have sought to go beyond the saving of lives, and have attempted to promote
reconciliation and recovery in countries around the world.

2. The State of the Humanitarian World, and Where Does Humanitarianism Fit in Relations between States?

We’ll examine and discuss worldwide humanitarian trends, and then consider the fact that efforts to address crises take place within a larger international political context. How do policy-makers and practitioners make sense of that larger context, and how does it impact the actions they take or fail to take?

3. The United Nations, International Institutions, and Human Rights and Humanitarian Law Designed to Address Global Crises and to Protect Human Rights in Situations of Conflict: Do they Matter?

We will examine the United Nations and other international institutions that establish the institutional and the legal context through which governments and international organizations involve themselves in humanitarian issues and through which the human rights of individuals affected by conflict are recognized and protected. What does the UN Charter suggest about the role of governments in responding to complex crises, what norms and institutions have been developed to provide such capacity, and what are the challenges to their effectiveness? We will also introduce the legal regimes surrounding various humanitarian issues and designed to safeguard rights, such as the Geneva Conventions, the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and other international instruments. And we will consider – very briefly – the “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine.

4. The International Humanitarian Players, and Key International Humanitarian Issues

We will first consider the major public international institutions that have emerged to address international humanitarian issues, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and UN Funds and Programs that are involved in humanitarian issues (UNHCR, UNICEF, the World Food Program, etc.). Aspiring policy-makers and practitioners should know how these institutions seek to translate the concepts of humanitarianism into programs involving billions of dollars from governments around the world.

We’ll also use this section to consider some of the key policy issues with which these institutions, and governments of the world, are now dealing. For instance, we will consider global initiatives designed to promote international “compacts” on refugees and on migration, focusing on longer term solutions what have in many cases been defined as intractable conflicts.

5. NGOs in International Humanitarian Response

Whether it is the Minneapolis-based American Refugee Committee, the International Rescue Committee, Medecins Sans Frontieres, Save the Children, or dozens if not many hundreds of others, non-governmental organizations are playing a key role in international humanitarian response. How well organized and effective is the NGO community in humanitarian response? To what extent are NGOs in the developing world engaged? What program and
normative issues, such as a rights-based approach to humanitarian assistance, are they bringing forward? And what issues of accountability arise in this context, for the NGOs themselves, as well as for policy-makers who must make decisions about providing support to these organizations? We’ll try to at least touch on many if not most of these issues.


There are many offices, agencies, and departments involved in the delivery of U.S. humanitarian assistance – and that number increases if we use an expanded definition of humanitarian assistance that includes peace-building. The bulk of U.S. civilian humanitarian assistance comes from two sources: the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the State Department. We will consider the activities of USAID and State, and explore a range of program and policy issues – including some that have emerged in the new administration of Donald Trump.

We will also examine “domestic” protection issues in the United States: the U.S. refugee admissions program, asylum (including at the southwest border of the United States), and temporary protected status, among other issues.

7. Peacekeeping

In the decade of the 1990s, in particular, United Nations peacekeepers became the tool of choice in many situations involving international efforts to address complex humanitarian crises. But United Nations peacekeeping was not originally developed with such ambitious objectives. We will consider the theory behind traditional peacekeeping, and how that has changed in recent decades, and the challenges that this poses.

8. Women, Peace and Security

This is a critical area for humanitarians, and one that is tragically and regularly neglected in humanitarian settings. Practitioners and scholars involved in humanitarian issues have considered women, peace and security from several perspectives: the imperative of preventing and punishing violations of the human rights of women in situations of persecution and conflict and the differential needs of women in humanitarian settings. In addition, they’ve emphasized the importance of reconstruction efforts that recognize the role of women as agents of economic, social and political development; and on the value of promoting greater inclusion of women in positions of leadership in peacebuilding programs.

Further information about the course.

Attendance

As we only meet on two days, attendance is critical. If you have special issues concerning attendance that emerge before or during class, let me know and we can discuss. Note that any requirements we have in our class are subject to University policy, as described in
https://policy.umn.edu/education/makeupwork

**Special note on stressful issues and on mental health and stress management:**

Because humanitarian crises often involve human rights abuses and great suffering, some of the topics, readings, and discussion may involve issues that impact students personally and profoundly. I will work hard to address challenging issues with sensitivity, but you should feel free to speak with me if we are dealing with material you find personally difficult. We will of course keep all such discussion private.

More generally, you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating, and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via https://diversity.umn.edu/disability/home.

If you are enrolled with Disability Services and would like to make an accommodation request, I encourage you to share this with me as soon as possible so that we can be of maximum support to you. See more on their services at the end of the syllabus.

Remember also that there are advisors in the Humphrey Student Services office who are trained and experienced counselors. They are available at very short notice to address any concerns you have and provide further resources within the University. You can visit Humphrey Student Services in HHH 280, or on 612-624-8162.

**Other University Policies**

I have included below a description of additional, University-wide policies on a range of issues, which you may also wish to review. They provide information on general student conduct, use of personal electronic devices in the classroom, scholastic dishonesty, make-up work, grading, sexual harassment, equity and diversity, disability accommodations, and academic freedom and responsibility.

**Student Conduct Code**

The University seeks an environment that promotes academic achievement and integrity, that is protective of free inquiry, and that serves the educational mission of the University. Similarly, the University seeks a community that is free from violence, threats, and intimidation; that is respectful of the rights, opportunities, and welfare of students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University; and that does not threaten the physical or mental health or safety of members of the University community.

As a student at the University you are expected to adhere to Board of Regents Policy: Student Conduct Code. To review the Student Conduct Code, please see:

Note that the conduct code specifically addresses disruptive classroom conduct, which means "engaging in behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either the instructor's ability to teach or student learning. The classroom extends to any setting where a student is engaged in work toward academic credit or satisfaction of program-based requirements or related activities."

Use of Personal Electronic Devices in the Classroom

Using personal electronic devices in the classroom setting can hinder instruction and learning, not only for the student using the device but also for other students in the class. To this end, the University establishes the right of each faculty member to determine if and how personal electronic devices are allowed to be used in the classroom. For complete information, please reference: http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/STUDENTRESP.html.

Scholastic Dishonesty

You are expected to do your own academic work and cite sources as necessary. Failing to do so is scholastic dishonesty. Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. (Student Conduct Code: http://regents.umn.edu/sites/default/files/policies/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf) If it is determined that a student has cheated, he or she may be given an "F" or an "N" for the course, and may face additional sanctions from the University. For additional information, please see: http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/INSTRUCTORRESP.html.

The Office for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity has an information page related to scholastic dishonesty: http://www1.umn.edu/oscai/integrity/student/index.html. If you have additional questions, please clarify with your instructor for the course. Your instructor can respond to your specific questions regarding what would constitute scholastic dishonesty in the context of a particular class – e.g., whether collaboration on assignments is permitted, requirements and methods for citing sources, if electronic aids are permitted or prohibited during an exam.

Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences

Students will not be penalized for absence during the semester due to unavoidable or legitimate circumstances. Such circumstances include verified illness, participation in intercollegiate athletic events, subpoenas, jury duty, military service, bereavement, and religious observances. Such circumstances do not include voting in local, state, or national elections. For complete information, please see: http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/MAKEUPWORK.html.
Appropriate Student Use of Class Notes and Course Materials

Taking notes is a means of recording information but more importantly of personally absorbing and integrating the educational experience. However, broadly disseminating class notes beyond the classroom community or accepting compensation for taking and distributing classroom notes undermines instructor interests in their intellectual work product while not substantially furthering instructor and student interests in effective learning. Such actions violate shared norms and standards of the academic community. For additional information, please see: http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/STUDENTRESP.html.

Grading and Transcripts

The University utilizes plus and minus grading on a 4.000 cumulative grade point scale in accordance with the following:

A  4.000 - Represents achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements
A-  3.667
B+  3.333
B  3.000 - Represents achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements
B-  2.667
C+  2.333
C  2.000 - Represents achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect
C-  1.667
D+  1.333
D  1.000 - Represents achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements
S  Represents achievement that is satisfactory, which is equivalent to a C- or better.

For additional information, please refer to: http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/GRADINGTRANSCRIPTS.html.

Sexual Harassment

"Sexual harassment" means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of
unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or academic environment in any University activity or program. Such behavior is not acceptable in the University setting. For additional information, please consult the UMN policy document, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, Stalking and Relationship Violence: https://policy.umn.edu/hr/sexharassassault

**Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action**

The University provides equal access to and opportunity in its programs and facilities, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. For more information, please consult Board of Regents Policy: http://regents.umn.edu/sites/default/files/policies/Equity_Diversity_EO_AA.pdf.

**Disability Accommodations**

The University of Minnesota is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. Disability Services (DS) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations.

If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, chronic health, sensory, or physical), please contact DS at 612-626-1333 to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

If you are registered with DS and have a current letter requesting reasonable accommodations, please contact your instructor as early in the semester as possible to discuss how the accommodations will be applied in the course.

For more information, please see the DS website, https://diversity.umn.edu/disability/.

**Academic Freedom and Responsibility**

Academic freedom is a cornerstone of the University. Within the scope and content of the course as defined by the instructor, it includes the freedom to discuss relevant matters in the classroom and conduct relevant research. Along with this freedom comes responsibility. Students are encouraged to develop the capacity for critical judgment and to engage in a sustained and independent search for truth. Students are free to take reasoned exception to the views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled.* When conducting research, pertinent institutional approvals must be obtained and the research must be consistent with University policies.

Reports of concerns about academic freedom are taken seriously, and there are individuals and offices available for help. Contact the instructor, the Department Chair, your adviser, the associate dean of the college, or the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs in the Office of the Provost.