

POLS*3320: THE POLITICS OF AID AND DEVELOPMENT

Course Syllabus
Department of Political Science
University of Guelph

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Professor Craig Johnson

Office: MacKinnon 5th Floor
Email: cjohns06@uoguelph.ca
Office hours: By appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

POLS*3320 explores the politics, history, and ethics of foreign aid and international development. A central theme concerns the challenge of delivering foreign aid in a context of economic crisis, great power politics, and global environmental change.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this 12-week course, students will gain a critical understanding of the ways in which foreign aid programs have been used to serve different political interests and policy agendas over time. They will use theories of geopolitics, political economy, and public policy to understand the motivations, modalities, and impacts of foreign aid policies and programs. They will identify and assess the ability of multilateral, bilateral, and nongovernmental aid agencies to address enduring development challenges, such as poverty, inequality, political persecution, and climate change.

ORGANIZATION

The course is divided into five parts. **Part One** introduces the international aid regime, identifying the major forms of bilateral and multilateral assistance that have been used to organize Western aid giving since the end of the Second World War. **Part Two** explores the geopolitics of aid, including China's (real and perceived) threat to Western (and mainly American) power, the geopolitics of multilateral governance, the geopolitics of bilateral assistance, and the geopolitics of international food aid. **Part Three** considers the political economy of aid, investigating the ways in which national and transnational economic interests have shaped the political economy of Western food aid, Canada's support for international mining, and China's "belt and road" initiative. **Part Four** explores the "hubris" of aid, a term that I use to describe the ambitious efforts of donors and aid agencies to control development projects and outcomes through the use of randomized control trials (RCTs), carbon offsets, and family planning campaigns. Finally, **Part Five** concludes the course by reflecting upon the ways in which our class readings, lectures, and discussions influence our thinking about the perceived utility of foreign aid.