RINT 523 International Development Policy

Six of 7 billion people on the planet live in relative poverty with respect to the inhabitants of advanced countries, 1 billion of them in dire need. Development is the name we give to the universal game of their attempts to grow into a world of improved living standards. Is there room at the top for all? Or must there be winners and losers? While economic policy is clearly the major consideration in this process, other factors such as domestic governance, international relations and global market conditions play an important role in the success or failure of efforts by less developed economies (LDCs). This course seeks to provide students with a rich view of common issues and realities faced in the challenges of development, and of the evolution of thinking within the international development aid community regarding different country strategies and priorities.

This is an economic policy course designed for students who may not have majored in economics but have taken courses and possess a basic background in the subject. It is primarily aimed at graduate students choosing the Global Economic Policy concentration in the Master of International Affairs degree program. As such, it will also provide a broad overview of key concepts and information that will be useful to students who chose other concentrations in the MIA program.

Graduate students in the fields of Public Administration, Political Science and Economics are welcome to take this course. Select undergraduate seniors from the above majors and Globalization Studies, as well as students in the Honors College, are welcome to apply for enrollment subject to the instructor’s permission.

Instructor: Prof. Kenneth Coates, kcoates51@gmail.com

Class Time and Place: The class will meet Wednesday evenings 5:45PM - 9:25 PM in Milne 215. This is a synchronous distance-learning course with students in both Milne 215 and in the SUNY Global Center in NYC; Professor Coates will be teaching from NYC.

Prerequisite: Completion or concurrent enrollment in RINT 502 Economics for Global Affairs, or equivalent.

Course objectives: By the end of this course, students should have become familiar with the concept of economic development and:

- Appreciated the aims of economic development in raising the living standards of the vast majority of the world’s population, in particular those living in abject poverty.

- Understood the immense challenges involved in this undertaking, both in seeking out the spaces for economic growth internally and on competitive global markets, as well as putting in place the appropriate domestic institutions and policies.

- Become acquainted with the structure of the international development aid community and the evolution of its approaches to the issues of development over the years.

- Become aware of the proposition that – beyond certain minimum living standards – development is a relative concept that must take into account the sustainability of the quality of life for future generations.
Teaching and learning modalities:
This course will be taught as a combination of lectures, group discussions and audio-visual presentations, including the diagrammatic representation of socioeconomic trends in a plane geometry framework. The course work will include reading assignments for each session, group projects, quizzes, and a final exam. In addition to class and online discussions via Blackboard, we will utilize the synchronous distance-learning tool, Zoom, to enable members of the class and guest lecturers to join class from remote locations as well as to enable groups of students to work together on group projects. The mastering of these interaction techniques should be considered an integral part of the learning process in preparing participants for insertion in today’s hi-tech workplace, by allowing them to sharpen their communication and presentation skills.

There will be a strong emphasis on class participation. Students are expected to come to class with questions, comments and a critical view of the assigned readings for each session, whose purpose is to lay the groundwork for a better understanding of the corresponding presentations. The classroom experience – whether virtual or presential – should be enjoyable; the only stressful element should be the lack of preparation.

Each session will cover the different concepts included in the underlying theme, usually in separate presentational slots separated by short discussion periods, and conclude with a rounding up of the parts into a general perspective that links the theme to the continuity of thought throughout the development of the course.

The purpose of the occasional quiz is to ensure students are keeping up with and understanding the readings and presentations. In this sense, it complements class participation as an indicator, since not all participants are equally overt in their engagement. Group or course projects, on the other hand, allow for teamwork, research, critical thinking and the development of written and verbal communication skills at a self-imposed pace. The final exam is always aimed at testing whether students have understood and retained sufficient course content to apply newly acquired analytical skills in a more demanding context. Its weight in a graduate course should be focused primarily on helping differentiate between levels of achievement.


Selected readings from other sources have been set in preparation for sessions.

Outline of Topics and Readings:
Session 1) 08/31/16 - What do we mean by economic development? - Development indicators - definitions of poverty and prosperity – absolute vs relative poverty – the problems with measurement – distribution. Reading: Sachs Ch. 1-2; World Bank Development Indicators 2016.


Session 3) 09/14/16 - Moving up the ladder – success stories - the causes of wealth – the need for markets – access to technology - social and political experiments in central planning. Reading: “New Growth Theory, Technology and Learning: A Practitioner’s Guide” Joseph Cortright Impresa, Inc 2001; Sachs Ch. 3-5;

Session 5) 09/28/16 - Inward vs Outward looking growth models – trade vs protectionism - implications and vulnerabilities – industrialization and value added - internal factor mobility Reading: Globalization and the Least Developed Countries: Potentials and Pitfalls, David Bigman. Ch 5


Session 12) 11/30/16 - The development ceiling: imposed from above or below? – Middle income trap - politics vs policies – democracy vs autocracy – populism and the problem of irrational expectations – the global village “Avoiding middle-income growth traps” Agénor, Canuto and Jelenic, World Bank, December 2012