

**PSC 435: Humanitarian Action in World Politics**  
**Spring 2023**

Tu/Th 12:30-1:50, Eggers 155

Professor Lamis Abdelaaty

Email: [labdela@syr.edu](mailto:labdela@syr.edu)

Virtual Office Hours: Th 9:30-11:30

**Course Description** This course deals with the global politics of humanitarianism. It is grounded in the international politics subfield, but students are expected to engage with ideas from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Topics covered include the historical evolution of humanitarian norms and principles, key actors in the humanitarian sector, and institutional frameworks governing humanitarian action. We also explore the challenges associated with emergency relief, development aid, and military intervention. The emphasis throughout the course is on critically assessing the underlying foundations, dilemmas, and consequences of international humanitarianism.

**Learning Objectives** After taking this course, students should be able to:

- Understand the historical origins of international humanitarianism
- Distinguish between the different actors, governance arrangements, and political dynamics that are characteristic of the global humanitarian enterprise
- Consider specific case studies in light of the concepts and arguments covered
- Reflect critically on the practical and ethical challenges associated with humanitarian principles and action; the responsibility and accountability of humanitarians; and the effectiveness of humanitarian relief, aid, and intervention

**Course Requirements** Students should attend and participate actively in every class session. The participation grade will also include the quality of feedback that students provide their peers during in-class workshops, as well as any unannounced quizzes on an assigned session's reading materials. Students must make regular progress on a research paper over the course of the semester and submit a prospectus on February 7, a narrative essay on March 2, and a draft on April 4. Each student will also present their research in one of the research panels scheduled for April 18, 20, and 25. The final 15-17 page research paper will be due on May 5.

Participation	30%
Presentation	20%
Research Paper	50%

Prospectus Prepare a 2 page prospectus that describes the question you plan to address in your research paper. Points to cover:

- What question do you intend to address? Explain the question, showing how it is related to the broad topic of “Humanitarian Action in World Politics.”
- What makes your question puzzling? What disagreements among scholars, gaps in knowledge, or complexities or inconsistencies characterize the question?
- What is at stake in addressing this question? Why is it significant? To whom does it matter?

Narrative Essay Write a 7-8 page essay in which you provide a first-person, chronological account of your thinking process as you research your question. Guidelines:

- Begin by stating the question that you intend to address in your final research paper. Then, reflect on where you stood on this issue before you began your research, and why.
- Narrate and reflect on your thinking process as you investigated your question. Re-count: (i) Descriptive details of your search, such as googling, trips to the library, and conversations with others. (ii) Summaries of the new arguments or information you recovered along the way, including at least three academic works. (iii) Your own mental wrestling to make sense of new material, for instance changing your mind, feeling confused, or “aha!” moments.
- Conclude by summing up how your ideas evolved during your process of research and reflection.
- Attach a preliminary bibliography of peer-reviewed scholarly articles or books.

Research Paper Submit a 1 page cover letter with your final paper that describes the revisions you made in response to the comments on your draft. Grading criteria for the final paper:

- Research Question and Thesis: Does the paper address an appropriate question that is puzzling and significant? Does it have a clear thesis that responds to that question? Is the thesis contestable?
- Ideas and Argument: Does the paper present logical and persuasive reasoning in support of the thesis? Does it consider and respond to opposing views fairly and effectively? Is the argumentation thoughtful and insightful?
- Use of Evidence: Does the paper provide appropriate and sufficient evidence to support the argument? Does it effectively integrate information from suitable research sources? Are sources cited appropriately?
- Organization and Clarity: Does the paper have a logical and coherent structure? Does it remain focused on the argument throughout? Does every paragraph have a clear and unified purpose or function?
- Mechanics and Editing: Are sentences well-constructed? Does the paper avoid errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation? Is the style efficient, not wordy or unclear?

**Required Texts** The following book is required and available for purchase at the SU Bookstore. A copy has been placed at the Bird Library course reserves. It is also available as an [e-book](#) through Summon (there are, however, restrictions on printing, copying, and downloading).

Michael Barnett and Thomas G. Weiss, eds., *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

All other readings are available electronically via Blackboard.

## Policies

- *Attendance:* Students sometimes need to miss class sessions for a variety of legitimate reasons. I do not need documentation, and you will not be penalized. Simply pick any one of the session's readings and email me within 48 hours with the following: 1) a one-sentence summary of the reading; 2) one sentence on an insight you gained from the reading; 3) a one-sentence critique of the reading; and 4) one probing question that you would pose to the author. Contact me if you are unable to make up your absence in this way, or if you will be missing classes for an extended period of time. **Please do not come to class if you are feeling ill, are awaiting results of a diagnostic test for COVID-19, or have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.**
- *Participation:* Your participation ensures that everyone benefits as much as possible from the course. Your participation grade will reflect the quality (not merely the quantity) of the remarks and questions you raise in class. All participants are expected to listen attentively and respond respectfully to others. As part of your grade, I will ask you to self-assess your level of participation.
- *Readings:* You should arrive at every class session having carefully read the assigned readings. This will be necessary for you to participate in class discussions. Occasionally, you may be assigned a short op-ed or newspaper article covering current events in addition to the readings listed below.
- *Written Assignments:* The prospectus, narrative essay, draft, and final research paper must be submitted in hard copy on the day and time indicated below. The final research paper must be submitted on Blackboard on the day and time indicated below. All written assignments should be double-spaced, with 12-point Times New Roman font and standard (1 in.) margins. It is your responsibility to ensure that each of your assignments is received on time. Late assignments will not be accepted.
- *Trigger Warning:* Because of the nature of the topics covered in this class, the course readings or class discussions may generate intellectual and emotional discomfort. These responses are natural parts of intellectual growth. If, however, your emotional response becomes acute psychological distress (triggering), please communicate with me. I invite you to contact me if you have concerns in this regard.

- *Pronouns/Names*: Syracuse University community members may indicate a preferred name and designate the pronouns they use for themselves in “MySlice” under “My Profile.” For more information on designating personal pronouns and preferred names, access: [answers.syr.edu/PronounFAQ](https://answers.syr.edu/PronounFAQ) or [answers.syr.edu/PreferredNameFAQ](https://answers.syr.edu/PreferredNameFAQ)
- *Faith Tradition Observances*: Syracuse University’s [Religious Observances Policy](#) recognizes the diversity of faiths represented in the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their traditions. Under the policy, students are given an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance, provided they notify their instructors no later than the academic drop deadline. For observances occurring before the drop deadline, notification is required at least two academic days in advance. Students may enter their observances in MySlice under Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances/Add a Notification.
- *Disability Statement*: Syracuse University values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. There may be aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion and full participation in this course. I invite any student to contact me to discuss strategies and/or accommodations (academic adjustments) that may be essential to your success and to collaborate with the Center for Disability Resources (CDR) in this process. If you would like to discuss disability-accommodations or register with CDR, please visit [Center for Disability Resources](#). Please call (315) 443-4498 or email [disabilityresources@syr.edu](mailto:disabilityresources@syr.edu) for more detailed information. The CDR is responsible for coordinating disability-related academic accommodations and will work with the student to develop an access plan. Since academic accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact CDR as soon as possible to begin this process.
- *Discrimination or Harassment*: Federal and state law, and University policy prohibit discrimination and harassment based on sex or gender (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, and retaliation). If a student has been harassed or assaulted, they can obtain confidential counseling support, 24-hours a day, 7 days a week, from the [Sexual and Relationship Violence Response Team](#) at the Counseling Center (315-443-8000, Barnes Center at The Arch, 150 Sims Drive, Syracuse, New York 13244). Incidents of sexual violence or harassment can be reported non-confidentially to the University’s Title IX Officer (Sheila Johnson Willis, 315-443-0211, [titleix@syr.edu](mailto:titleix@syr.edu), 005 Steele Hall). Reports to law enforcement can be made to the University’s Department of Public Safety (315-443-2224, 005 Sims Hall), the Syracuse Police Department (511 South State Street, Syracuse, New York, 911 in case of emergency or 315-435-3016 to speak with the Abused Persons Unit), or the State Police (844-845-7269). I will seek to keep information you share with me private to the greatest extent possible, but as a professor I have mandatory reporting responsibilities to share information regarding sexual misconduct, harassment, and crimes I learn about with the University’s Title IX Officer to help make our campus a safer place for all.

- *Health & Wellness*: Mental health and overall well-being are significant predictors of academic success. As such it is essential that during your college experience you develop the skills and resources effectively to navigate stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health concerns. Please familiarize yourself with the range of resources the Barnes Center provides ([ese.syr.edu/bewell/](http://ese.syr.edu/bewell/)) and seek out support for mental health concerns as needed. Counseling services are available 24/7, 365 days, at 315-443-8000, and I encourage you to explore the resources available through the Wellness Leadership Institute, [ese.syr.edu/bewell/wellness-leadership-institute/](http://ese.syr.edu/bewell/wellness-leadership-institute/).
- *Academic Integrity*: Syracuse University's [Academic Integrity Policy](#) reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit and for upholding course-specific, as well as university-wide, academic integrity expectations. The policy governs citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and truthfulness in all academic matters, including course attendance and participation. The policy also prohibits students from: 1) submitting the same work in more than one class without receiving advance written authorization from both instructors and, 2) using websites that charge fees or require uploading of course materials to obtain exam solutions or assignments completed by others and presenting the work as their own. Under the policy, instructors who seek to penalize a student for a suspected violation must first report the violation to the Center for Learning and Student Success (CLASS). Students may not drop or withdraw from courses in which they face a suspected violation. Instructors must wait to assign a final course grade until a suspected violation is reviewed and upheld or overturned. Upholding Academic Integrity includes abiding by instructors' individual course expectations, which may include the protection of their intellectual property. Students should not upload, distribute, or otherwise share instructors' course materials without permission. Students found in violation of the policy are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered, as outlined in the Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric. Students are required to read an online summary of the University's academic integrity expectations and provide an electronic signature agreeing to abide by them twice a year during pre-term check-in on MySlice. The Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric establishes recommended guidelines for the determination of grade penalties by faculty and instructors, while also giving them discretion to select the grade penalty they believe most suitable, including course failure, regardless of violation level. Any established violation in this course may result in course failure regardless of violation level.
- *Academic Integrity Online*: All academic integrity expectations that apply to in-person instruction also apply to online instruction. In this course, all work submitted must be yours alone. Using websites that charge fees or require uploading of course material (e.g., Chegg, Course Hero) to obtain assignments completed by others and present the work as your own violates academic integrity expectations in this course and may be classified as a Level 3 violation, resulting in suspension or expulsion from Syracuse

University.

- *Turnitin*: This class will use the plagiarism detection and prevention system Turnitin. You will have the option to submit your papers to Turnitin to check that all sources you use have been properly acknowledged and cited before you submit the paper to me. I will also submit all papers you write for this class to Turnitin, which compares submitted documents against documents on the Internet and against student papers submitted to Turnitin at Syracuse University and at other colleges and universities. I will take your knowledge of the subject matter of this course and your writing level and style into account in interpreting the originality report. Keep in mind that all papers you submit for this class will become part of the [Turnitin.com](https://turnitin.com) reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers.
- *Student Academic Work Policy*: I intend to use academic work that you complete this semester in subsequent semesters for educational purposes. Before using your work for that purpose, I will either get your written permission or render the work anonymous by removing identifying material.
- *Use of Class Materials and Recordings*: Original class materials (syllabi, lectures, slides, assignments, handouts, etc.) and recordings of class sessions are the intellectual property of the course instructor. You may download these materials for your use in this class. However, you may not provide these materials to other parties (e.g., web sites, social media, other students) without permission. Doing so is a violation of intellectual property law and of the student code of conduct.

## Course Outline

### Introduction – Jan 17, 19

Tu

- Th
- International Rescue Committee, “The Top 10 Crises the World Can’t Ignore in 2023,” [www.rescue.org/article/top-10-crises-world-cant-ignore-2023](https://www.rescue.org/article/top-10-crises-world-cant-ignore-2023) (2022).
  - B&W: Michael Barnett and Thomas G. Weiss, “Humanitarianism: A Brief History of the Present,” p. 1-48.

**Concepts & Principles – Jan 24, 26**

- Tu • “The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief,” in *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*, 4th ed. (Geneva: Sphere Project, 2018), p. 385–391.
- B&W: Michael Barnett and Jack Snyder, “The Grand Strategies of Humanitarianism,” p. 143-171.
- Th • B&W: Laura Hammond, “The Power of Holding Humanitarianism Hostage and the Myth of Protective Principles,” p. 172-195.
- B&W: Peter Redfield, “Sacrifice, Triage, and Global Humanitarianism,” p. 196-214.

**Historical Foundations – Jan 31, Feb 2**

- Tu • B&W: Craig Calhoun, “The Imperative to Reduce Suffering: Charity, Progress, and Emergencies in the Field of Humanitarian Action,” p. 73-97.
- Th • Ben Taub, “Lake Chad: The World’s Most Complex Humanitarian Disaster,” in *The New Yorker*, [www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/12/04/lake-chad-the-worlds-most-complex-humanitarian-disaster](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/12/04/lake-chad-the-worlds-most-complex-humanitarian-disaster) (December 4, 2017)

**Peer Review Workshop – Feb 7**

(*Prospectus due in class at 12:30pm*)

**Virtual Library Instruction Session – Feb 9****Actors – Feb 14, 16**

- Tu • Thomas G. Weiss and Cindy Collins, “Actors and Arenas,” in *Humanitarian Challenges and Intervention: World Politics and the Dilemmas of Help* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), p. 39–68.
- Mariano Aguirre, “The Media and the Humanitarian Spectacle,” in *Reflections on Humanitarian Action: Principles, Ethics, and Contradictions*, ed. Humanitarian Studies Unit (London: Pluto Press, 2001), p. 157–176.
- Th • Ilan Kapoor, “Celebrities: Humanitarians or Ideologues?,” in *Celebrity Humanitarianism: The Ideology of Global Charity* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 12–46.
- Secret Aid Worker, “Has Anyone Worked out If Celebrities Are Worth the Effort?,” in *The Guardian*, [www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/jun/30/secret-aid-worker-celebrities-angelina-jolie](http://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/jun/30/secret-aid-worker-celebrities-angelina-jolie) (June 30, 2015).

**Governance – Feb 21, 23**

- Tu • Justin Elliott, Jesse Eisinger, and Laura Sullivan, “The Red Cross’ Secret Disaster,” in *ProPublica*, [www.propublica.org/article/the-red-cross-secret-disaster](http://www.propublica.org/article/the-red-cross-secret-disaster) (October 29, 2014).
- B&W: Janice Gross Stein, “Humanitarian Organizations: Accountable – Why, to Whom, for What, and How?” p. 124-142.
- Th • B&W: Jennifer C. Rubenstein, “The Distributive Commitments of International NGOs,” p. 215-234.
- B&W: Stephen Hopgood, “Saying ‘No’ to Walmart? Money and Morality in Professional Humanitarianism,” p. 98-123.

**Individual Meetings – Feb 28****Peer Review Workshop – Mar 2**

(Narrative Essay due in class at 12:30pm)

**Emergency Relief – Mar 7, 9**

- Tu • B&W: James D. Fearon, “The Rise of Emergency Relief Aid,” p. 49-72.
- Mary B. Anderson, “Aid’s Impact on Conflict Through Implicit Ethical Messages,” in *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – or War* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1999), p. 55-66.
- Th • Fiona Terry, “The Afghan Refugee Camps in Pakistan,” in *Condemned to Repeat? The Paradox of Humanitarian Action* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 55-82.
- Linda Polman, “Goma: A ‘Total Ethical Disaster,’” in *The Crisis Caravan: What’s Wrong with Humanitarian Aid?* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010), p. 13-35.

**Asynchronous Film Screening – Mar 21, 23****Development Aid – Mar 28, 30**

- Tu • Peter Singer, “Common Objections to Giving,” in *The Life You Can Save: How to Do Your Part to End World Poverty* (New York: Random House, 2010), p. 23-44.
- NPR, “What Do African Aid Recipients Think Of Charity Ads?,” [www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2018/11/29/671879547/what-do-african-aid-recipients-think-of-charity-ads](http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2018/11/29/671879547/what-do-african-aid-recipients-think-of-charity-ads) (November 29, 2018).

- Th
- *Listen to* Jacob Goldstein and Dave Kestenbaum, “I Was Just Trying to Help: Act One (Money for Nothing and Your Cows for Free),” in *This American Life Podcast*, [www.thisamericanlife.org/503/i-was-just-trying-to-help](http://www.thisamericanlife.org/503/i-was-just-trying-to-help) (August 16, 2013).
  - *Listen to* Dave Kestenbaum, “What Happens When You Just Give Money To Poor People?,” in *NPR Morning Edition*, [www.npr.org/sections/money/2013/10/25/240590433/what-happens-when-you-just-give-money-to-poor-people](http://www.npr.org/sections/money/2013/10/25/240590433/what-happens-when-you-just-give-money-to-poor-people) (October 25, 2013).

### Peer Review Workshop – Apr 4

(Draft due in class at 12:30pm)

### Military Intervention – Apr 6, 11

- Th
- Aidan Hehir, “What is ‘Humanitarian Intervention’?,” in *Humanitarian Intervention: An Introduction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 15–26.
  - Nathan Hodge, “Foreign Policy Out of Balance,” in *Armed Humanitarians: The Rise of Nation Builders* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2011), p. 285–300.
- Tu
- Aidan Hehir, “The Permanence of Inconsistency: Libya, the Security Council, and the Responsibility to Protect,” *International Security* 38, no. 1 (2013): 137–159.

### No Class – Apr 13

### Research Panels – Apr 18, 20, 25

### Conclusions – Apr 27

- Th
- *Listen to* Heba Aly and Degan Ali, “Is ‘Decolonised Aid’ an Oxymoron?,” in *Rethinking Humanitarianism*, [www.thenewhumanitarian.org/podcast/2022/10/19/Degan-Ali-decolonising-aid](http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/podcast/2022/10/19/Degan-Ali-decolonising-aid) (October 19, 2022).
  - B&W: Peter J. Hoffman and Thomas G. Weiss, “Humanitarianism and Practitioners: Social Science Matters,” p. 264-286.

**May 5: Research paper due by 12:30pm on Blackboard**