

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, PLAN 672, SPRING 2004

COURSE SYLLABUS

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With the remarkable trend towards increasingly frequent and severe disasters worldwide, humanitarian assistance has become a permanent and ongoing activity, and can no longer be viewed as an episodic anomaly to normal government and civil administration. When humanitarian emergencies occur, they lay claim to significant resources and the attention of world leaders, as well as to the sentiments of their constituents observing portrayals of the human impacts of disaster in the global media. Although the field of disaster relief has arisen with an aura of exceptionalism based upon the compelling human context of catastrophic events, there is an emerging consensus on the need to establish standards of practice, accountability and professionalism commensurate to the large scale of the commitments made by public and private aid providers.

The field of humanitarian assistance has undergone significant, some would say wrenching, change in recent years. The size and scope of recent humanitarian events, as well as the ethical and political questions embedded within them, have challenged the aid community to develop new operative responses. The value of humanitarian assistance worldwide is now in the tens of billions dollars annually and involves actors such as the United Nations and other Inter-Governmental Organizations, national and local governments and a large and increasing number of Non-Governmental Organizations. In the last decade the world has experienced several mega-disasters, which severely test the response capacity of the international humanitarian community. The International Committee of the Red Cross projects that the trend of increasing disaster occurrences in both the natural and man-made categories will continue in coming years. There is a growing recognition of the significance of assistance programs and the role that relief professionals play in delivering aid to those affected by disaster.

Course Schedule: January 15 – May 7, 2014

When: Wednesday evenings, 5:00-7:30 pm. NOTE: *There will be one exception to this schedule: Class will meet on Thursday, February 20, vice Wednesday, February 19.*

Where: Saunders Hall Rm 116

Who should take this course: This graduate level course is conducted in small group format with active participation by students. The course is oriented to provide graduate students who have an interest in becoming involved in humanitarian assistance programs and the theoretical basis for contemporary practice. Professional disciplines or specialties including sociology, medicine, psychology, diplomacy, engineering and logistics play active roles in humanitarian assistance. The course will also be of interest to students who wish to inquire more abstractly into the development of humanitarianism as an activity that cuts across disciplines from the perspectives of political science and economics as well as the frameworks of applied ethics and international law.

Grading:

Attendance and Participation - **33%**

Weekly Readings One-Page Synopses – **33%**

Five Page Capstone Paper – **33%**