

## **Seeing Like a Humanitarian Agency (S2010)**

Instructor: Prof. Ken MacLean  
Course Number: IDCE30243/ID243  
Location: Sackler 223  
Schedule: Friday, 9-11.50 am

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Office Hours: M (12.30-1.30), TH (12.30-2.30), or by appointment  
Room 109, Jefferson Hall (Basement of Geography Dept., c/o Prof. D. Angel)

### **Course Description**

Since World War II, several different but overlapping regimes have emerged to help structure humanitarian responses to large-scale forms of displacement. In what ways do these evolving regimes enable humanitarian agencies to “see,” and in what ways does their particular field of vision—to continue James Scott’s metaphor—differ from that of states, academics, policymakers and the displaced themselves? What kinds of blind-spots (theoretical, methodological, and ethical) inevitably result?

This seminar will explore these questions from three different vantage points, each composing one part of the course as a whole. Part one will provide a relevant overview of the literature and the main concepts of the course. Special attention is focused on the ways scholars and policymakers have historically constructed displacement as a “problem” either for analysis or action, and how these concerns have shifted over the past three decades. Part two will primarily consist of ethnographic studies of humanitarian interventions in different geographic settings. The studies are intended to highlight the relevance (and limits) of concepts and methods drawn from different philosophic traditions, academic disciplines, and technical sciences. Part three will address some of the methodological and ethical dilemmas humanitarian emergencies present for those who wish to study or to manage them, including: access to the “field,” research and writing amidst complex emergencies as well as critical forms of engagement with humanitarianism more generally.

### **Course Objectives**

The primary goal of the seminar is to develop an inter-disciplinary perspective regarding how humanitarian agencies “see” and thus “act” before, during, and after displacement occurs. Students who complete the course will be able to accurately and confidently convey to others relevant details on the following:

- How different social, political, economic, and natural processes interact with one another over time to produce complex “man-made” rather than “natural” emergencies;
- How “culture” is selectively invoked by different actors to explain conflicts and/or to justify certain kinds of interventions into those whose lives are affected by these emergencies;

- The strengths and weaknesses of the various legal regimes created to protect the rights of “refugees,” the “internally displaced,” and so on;
- The special issues / concerns humanitarian crises pose for individuals who wish to carry out research or carry out their professional duties in such settings.

### **Course Requirements**

This course is open to graduate students and advanced undergraduate students who have had previous coursework or professional experience in anthropology and/or related fields that are relevant here, e.g. political economy, international relations, development studies, humanitarian relief.

Students are required:

- To participate actively in seminar and to prepare a formal presentation as part of a small group (details TBA);
- To complete an open-book, take-home exam that will require the student to craft analytical essays that synthesize concepts drawn from course readings.
- To prepare a final research paper, literature review, research proposal, or equivalent project based on his/her interests *and* related to the course as a whole with prior permission of the instructor. (Undergraduates: 15-20 pages, Graduates: 20-25 pages.)

Additional Notes:

- Plagiarism will not be tolerated and students are expected at all times to abide by the terms of Clark University’s Academic Integrity Statement, a copy of which is available at: <http://www.clarku.edu/offices/aac/integrity.cfm>. If you have further questions, please raise them with me well *before* you submit any assignments and/or seek advice from the University Writing Center.
- Hard copies of all assignments are required by 4 p.m. on the date due. They should include your name, student ID number, be printed in black ink, stapled, and include page numbers. A failure to follow these instructions may, at the instructor’s discretion, result in a grade reduction.
- Late assignments will be penalized a half-grade per day unless there is prior permission. *No* extensions will be granted for technological reasons. For this reason, students should *always* keep one or more electronic backups of all assignments using flash drives, external hard disks, shared space on servers, etc.
- Qualified students with disabilities are requested to have Student Services provide details on what accommodation(s) they require via confidential letter.
- Email communications should include a descriptive header in the subject line and your full name. I will normally respond within 24 hours.
- Readings and deadlines may be changed at the instructor’s discretion with prior notice.

## Grading

Assignment	Percent of Grade	Date Due
Class Participation	30%	Regular
Class Presentation(s)	10%	Sign-Up TBA
Take-Home Mid-Term Essay Exam	30%	March 29
Final Paper(s)	30%	May 10

## Required Readings:

Rieff, David. *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003).

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

Andreas, Peter. *Blue Helmets and Black Markets: The Business of Survival in the Siege of Sarajevo* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

Malkki L. *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: University Press, 1995).

Peteet, J. *Landscape of Hope and Despair: Palestinian Refugee Camps* (The Ethnography of Political Violence). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

A copy of each text will be placed on reserve at the Goddard Library. However, students are urged to purchase copies from the Clark University bookstore or online vendors.

## Articles:

All articles will be made available electronically via the course Cicada site.

**Week 1: Introduction**

1/22

Course Overview

**Week 2: Seeing Like a Humanitarian Agency**

1/29

Scott, James. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 1-52.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph, "Anthropology of the State in the Age of Globalization: Close Encounters of the Deceptive Kind," *Current Anthropology* 2001 42(1): 125-138.

Orford, Anne. "The Constitution of the International Community: Colonial Stereotypes and Humanitarian Narratives." In *Reading Humanitarian Interventions: Human Rights and the Use of Forces in International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 158-185.

Calhoun, Craig. "The Imperative to Reduce Suffering: Charity, Progress, and Emergencies in the Field of Humanitarian Action," in *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, and Ethics*, Michael Barrett and Thomas Weiss, eds. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 73-98.

**Week 3: The Critical Turn**

2/5

Rieff, David. *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003).

For Additional Reading:

Barnett, Michael. "Humanitarianism Transformed," *Perspectives on Politics* 2005 3(4): 723-744.

Belloni, Robert. "The Trouble with Humanitarianism," *Review of International Studies* 2007 33(3): 451-474.

Terry, F. *Condemned to Repeat? The Paradox of Humanitarian Action* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

**Week 4: Refugees in Historical Perspective**

2/11

Sznaider, Natan. "The Sociology of Compassion: A Study in the Sociology of Morals," *Cultural Values* 1998 2(1): 117-139.

Asad, Talal. "What Do Human Rights Do? An Anthropological Inquiry," *Theory and Event* 2000 4(4): 1-33.

Malkii, L. "Refugees and Exile: From 'Refugee Studies' to the National Order of Things," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 1995 (24): 495-523.

Agamben, Giorgio. "The Paradox of Sovereignty." In *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 15-29.

Chimni, B.S. "From Resettlement to Involuntary Repatriation: Towards a Critical History of Durable Solutions to Refugee Problems," In UNHCR, *New Issues in Refugee Research, Working Paper No. 2* (Geneva: UNHCR, 1999).

For Additional Reading:

Geneva Conventions (1949)

<http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/genevaconventions>

Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951)

<http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b66c2aa10.pdf>

Protocol Relation to the Status of Refugees (1967)

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/protocolrefugees.htm>

Fassin, Didier. "Humanitarianism as a Politics of Life," *Public Culture* 2007 19(3): 499-520.

**Week 5: Internally Displaced Persons (Neither / Nor)**

2/19

Ferguson, J. and A. Gupta. "Spatializing States: Towards an Ethnography of Neoliberal Governmentality," *American Ethnologist* 2002 29(4): 981-1002.

Barutciski, M. "Tensions between the Refugee Concept and the IDP Debate?" *Forced Migration Review*, 1998 (December): 11-14.

Mooney, Erin. "The Concept of Internal Displacement and the Case for Internally Displaced Persons as a Category of Concern," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 2005 24(3): 9-26.

Brun, Cathrine. "Local Citizens or Internally Displaced Persons? Dilemmas of Long Term Displacement in Sri Lanka," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 2003 16(4): 376-397.

Muggah, Robert. "A Tale of Two Solitudes: Reconsidering Conflict and Development-Induced Displacement and Involuntary Resettlement." *International Migration Review* 2003 41(5): 5-31.

For Additional Reading:

UN Guiding Principles on Displacement (1998)

[http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha\\_ol/pub/idp\\_gp/idp.html](http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha_ol/pub/idp_gp/idp.html)

<http://www.law.georgetown.edu/idp/english/gp.html>

Seshadri, Kalpana Rahita. "When Home is a Camp: Global Sovereignty, Biopolitics, and Internally Displaced Persons," *Social Text* 2008 26(1): 29-58.

**Week 6: The Responsibility to Protect?**

2/26

Barnett, Michael, ed., *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, and Ethics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 1-48, 143-214.

Spearin, Christopher. "Private, Armed, and Humanitarian? States, NGOs, International Private Security Companies and Shifting Humanitarianism." *Security Dialogue* 2008 (39): 363-382.

Weiss, Thomas. "The Sunset of Humanitarian Intervention? The Responsibility to Protect in a Unipolar Era." 2004 (35): 135-153.

For Additional Reading:

International Development Research Center, *The Responsibility to Protect: Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty* (Ottawa: IDRC, 2001).

de Torrente, Nicolas. "Humanitarianism Action Under Attack: Reflections on the Iraq War," *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 2004 (17): 1-29.

O'Brien, Paul. "Politicized Humanitarianism: A Response to Nicolas de Torrente," *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 2004 (17): 31-39.

**Week 7: Case Study (1): Mythico-Histories and Identity Formation in Exile (Burundi)**  
3/5

Malkki, Liisa. *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: University Press, 1995).

For Additional Reading:

Fujii, Lee. *Killing Neighbors: Webs of Violence in Rwanda* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

Brounéus, Karen. "Truth-Telling as Talking Cure? Insecurity and Retraumatization in the Rwandan Gacaca Courts," *Security Dialogue* 2008 (39): 55-76.

**Week 8: Spring Break**  
3/12

No Class

**Week 9: Case Study (2): The False Promise of Humanitarian Spaces (Yugoslavia)**  
3/19

Andreas, Peter. *Blue Helmets and Black Markets: The Business of Survival in the Siege of Sarajevo* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

Nordstrom, Carolyn. "Shadows and Sovereigns," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 2000 17(4): 35-54.

Carpenter, R. Charli. "'Women and Children First': Gender, Norms, and Humanitarian Evacuation in the Balkans 1991-95," *International Organization* 2003 57(4): 661-694.

For Additional Reading:

Wesselingh, Isabelle and Arnaud Vaulerin. *Raw Memory Prijedor: An Ethnic Cleansing Laboratory* (London: The Bosnian Institute, 2005).

Lischer, Sarah. *Dangerous Sanctuaries: Refugee Camps, Civil War, and the Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 2005), 118-140.

Hayden, Robert. "Rape and Rape Avoidance in Ethno-National Conflicts: Sexual Violence in Liminalized States," *American Anthropologist* 2000 102(1): 1: 27-41.

**Week 10 Mid-term Take-Home Essay Exam/ AAS Annual Meetings**  
3/25

No Class

**Week 11 Case Study (3): Internal Displacement as Resistance? (Burma)**

4/1

Cusano, Chris. "Displaced Karens: Like Water on the *Khu* Leaf." In *Caught Between Borders: Response Strategies for the Internally Displaced*. (ed.) Marc Vincent and Birgette Sorensen. London: Pluto Press, 2001), 138-171.

Hull, Stephen. *The Everyday Politics of IDP Protection in Karen State* (Karen Human Rights Group Working Paper, 2008).

Grundy-Warr, Carl. "Lost in Sovereign Space: Forced Migrants in the Territorial Trap." *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 2002 11(4):437-61.

Laungaramsri, Pinkaew. "Women, Nation, and the Ambivalence of Subversive Identification along the Thai-Burmese Border," *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 2006 21(1): 68-89.

Scott, James. "Freedom and Freehold: Space, People, and State Simplification in Southeast Asia." In *Asian Freedoms: The Idea of Freedom in East and Southeast Asia*, eds. D. Kelly and A. Reid (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 37-64.

**Week 12: Case Study (4): Life in the Camps (Palestine)**

4/8

Peteet, Julia. *Landscape of Hope and Despair: Palestinian Refugee Camps and the Ethnography of Political Violence*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

For Additional Reading:

Bornstein, Avram. *Crossing the Green Line between the West Bank and Israel* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

**Week 13: Research/ Professional Issues (1): Geospatial Technologies (Darfur)**

4/16

Schimmer, Russell. 2008. *Tracking the Genocide in Darfur: Population as Displacement as Recorded by Remote Sensing* (New Haven: Yale Genocide Studies Program).

Parks, Lisa. "Digging into Google Earth: An Analysis of 'Crisis in Darfur'," *Geoforum* 2009 40(4): 535-545.

Campbell, David. "Geopolitics and Visuality: Sighting the Darfur Conflict," *Political Geography* 2007 26(4): 357-382.

Levinger, Matthew. "Geographical Information Systems Technology as a Tool for Genocide Prevention," *Space and Polity* 2009 13(1): 69-76.

For Additional Information:

Ushahidi Crowdsourcing, <http://www.ushahidi.com/work>

AAAS "Geospatial Technologies and Human Rights Project," <http://shr.aaas.org/geotech/>

Litfin, Karen. 2002. "Public Eyes: Satellite Imagery, the Globalization of Transparency, and New Networks of Surveillance," In *Information Technologies and Global Politics: The Changing Scope of Power and Governance*, eds. J. Rosenau and J.P. Singh, (New York: SUNY), 65-90.

**Week 14: Research/Professional Issues (2): The Politics and Ethics of Representation**

4/22

Farmer, Paul. "On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below." In *Social Suffering*, (ed.) A. Kleinman, V. Das, and M. Lock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 261-283.

Taussig, Michael. 1984. "Culture of Terror—Space of Death. Roger Casement's Putumayo Report and the Explanation of Torture." *Contemporary Studies in Society and History* 26: 466-497.

Rajaram, P.K., "Humanitarianism and Representations of the Refugee," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 2002 5(3):247-264.

Hopgood, Stephen, "Saying 'No' to Wal-Mart? Money and Morality in Professional Humanitarianisms," in *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, and Ethics*, Michael Barrett and Thomas Weiss, eds. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 98-123.

For Additional Reading:

Ross, S. *Toward New Understandings: Journalists and Humanitarian Relief Coverage* (Fritz Institute and Reuters Foundation, 2004).

**Week 15: Research/Professional Issues (3): Fieldwork amidst Violence**

4/29

Skidmore, Monique, "Darker Than Midnight: Fear, Vulnerability, and Terror Making in Urban Burma (Myanmar)." *American Ethnologist* 2003 30(1): 5-21.

Harrell-Bond, B. "Can Humanitarian Work with Refugees Be Humane?" *Human Rights Quarterly* 2002 24:51-85.

Kennedy, David. "Humanitarian Power." In *The Dark Sides of Virtue: Reassessing International Humanitarianism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 327-357.

Kovats-Bernat, J.C., "Negotiating Dangerous Fields: Pragmatic Strategies for Fieldwork amid Violence and Terror." *American Anthropologist* 2002 104(1): 1-15.

Hoffman, Peter and Thomas Weiss, "Humanitarianism and Practitioners: Social Science Matters," in *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, and Ethics*, Michael Barrett and Thomas Weiss, eds. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 264-285.

For Additional Reading:

"Humanitarian Engagement with Non-State Armed Actors: The Parameters of Negotiated Armed Access," *Humanitarian Practice Network Paper No. 51* (June 2005).

Duffield, Mark. *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security* (London: Zed, 2001).

Hoffman, D., and S. Lubkemann, "Warscape Ethnography in West Africa and the Anthropology of Events," *Anthropological Quarterly* 2005 7(2).