NPLD 5820-001 202530 Ngos And International Development

NPLD 5820: NGO's and International Development

Fall 2025

School of Public Policy and Practice, University of Pennsylvania

Wednesdays 10:15 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.

Classroom: McNeil Building, Room 285

Instructor: James D. Thompson, PhD. (**jamestho@wharton.upenn.edu (mailto:jamestho@wharton.upenn.edu)**)

Course Description

The course will offer a broad perspective on international development, aid, and the roles of NGOs and social enterprises. Much of the course will focus on issues in NGO management: fundraising, staff (expatriate and local), monitoring and evaluation (including randomized controlled trials). The course is aimed at students with no to moderate experience in international development, but students with extensive work experience with NGOs or development work are also welcome.

This course is organized around two motivating questions:

1. How do we understand the process of development, and what is the NGOs' role to be in it?
2. If NGOs can meaningfully contribute to development, what are the exemplar and cutting-edge practices for NGO management?

Assignments and Evaluation

Participation and weekly posts: 20%

Class presentation/response paper: 20%

Midterm paper/proposal: 15%

Final project (shadow NGO paper): 45%

To minimize the free-rider problem with respect to project work, you will be asked to rate the contribution of each of the group members by assigning a percentage score to each member, using the GROUP

MEMBER EVALUATION FORM below. These scores will be used to calculate a weighting score that will be applied to the individual's group work as follows:

PERCENTAGE GIVEN TO:		**TO** A	**TO** B	**TO** C
PERCENTAGE GIVEN BY:	**BY** A	NA	100	65
	BY B	85	NA	55
	BY C	75	100	NA
AVERAGE		80	100	60

GRAND AVERAGE (80+ 100+ 60)/3 = **80**

WEIGHTING

= AVERAGE/GRAND AVERAGE =	80/80	100/80	60/80
	1.0	1.25	0.75

SO, IF THE GROUP REPORT SCORE WAS 75 POINTS:

A WOULD GET 1.0*75 = 75.0

B WOULD GET 1.25*75 = 93.5

C WOULD GET 0.75*75= 56.5

Readings

All course readings, with the exception of the *Social Entrepreneur's Playbook* (MacMillan and Thompson, 2013) will be available on Canvas. Please bring your printed or electronic copies to class.

For some weeks I have listed additional articles or chapters under "For further reading." We will not cover these in class, but that you might find them interesting for your final paper or your professional development.

Weekly Posts

Each week you will submit a 1-paragraph response to the readings via Canvas. This paragraph should *not* be merely a summary - it can explain what you found most useful or provocative in the readings; you can explain how you have seen the ideas in action in real organizations or why you think they are

problematic; you can ask questions about what seems unclear or troubling. The idea is to engage with the reading in some thoughtful if concise way. I will use these paragraphs to guide our class discussions but won't provide feedback (unless it's to tell you to up your game). These paragraphs should be submitted by **5pm the day before class** (though earlier is fine too). In total, you will submit ten paragraphs over the semester. (No paragraphs are due the first week or the week of midterm exam. You are also exempt on the week you do your class presentation (see below), and you can take one week off of your choosing.)

Class Meetings and Participation

Our class sessions will be a mix of student presentations, short lectures from me, discussions, guest speakers, and group activities. You - and your classmates - will benefit most when you are fully engaged. Please come to class well-prepared and minimize electronic distractions while we're in the classroom.

Class participation is an integral component of your learning experience as well as your grade. Your class participation score will be based on my assessment of the quality of your comments in class and the consistency of your attendance. It is an explicit condition of signing up for this class that you can expect to be cold called.

Attendance is mandatory. In the event of illness or tragedy please email me before class stating that you are unable to attend. Grades of students who miss one or two classes will be penalized. Should a student be absent from three classes they will be excused from the course and will not receive credit.

News Reports

We will start each class with NGO & international development "news flashes" from around the world. This will give us a sense of current events and of class interests. Each student should offer at least 3 news items during the semester. More are encouraged. Please post your items on Canvas & briefly state why you think it relevant to the course.

Class Presentations

Each student will be responsible for leading, as part of a pair, the discussion of the readings in one class session. On your week your team will submit an analytic memo on the readings (6-8 pages, double-spaced) by the **5pm on the Monday** preceding the class. During class on Wednesday your team will give a brief presentation on the readings. **The goal here is not merely summary, but analysis**. E.g., what are the author's main points? In what contexts do these arguments apply? What assumptions are made? What are the barriers to these ideas being implemented, or what are the alternatives? Your presentation should conclude with several questions that you would like the class to discuss. In other

words, your presentation is meant to be the jumping off point for a thoughtful discussion by the whole class. Your team's presentation should last **15-20 minutes** and can use PowerPoint.

Shadow NGO Assignment (Final Project)

During the course you will choose a "shadow NGO" that will be a case study of the issues we discuss. Your final assignment will be to **analyze the existing practices of the NGO and to make recommendations for them based on our readings** in terms of **one or two** of the themes we discuss in the second half. These are accountability and participation, security and staff, monitoring and evaluation (including RCTs), organizational learning and planning, fundraising and finances, and donors and volunteers. During the semester it will be your responsibility to initiate contact with an NGO and to find a staff member who is willing to discuss with you the organization's practices in these areas (again, it need not be all of these themes - choose the ones that interest you most or that are the most relevant to the particular organization). It may be easiest to reach out to groups based around Philadelphia, but phone or Skype discussions with NGOs based elsewhere are fine. You may choose any organization that does international relief or development work, broadly defined (you can expand the scope to government or for-profit social enterprise organizations, if you discuss in your paper how that status shapes their work). You may choose an organization with which you have previously worked or have other connections, or one that you would like to work with in the future. More than one student may choose the same "shadow NGO" as long as you coordinate with one another and write about different themes. The final paper should be **12-18 double-spaced pages**.

Remember that NGOs are often overworked and understaffed, so access may be a challenge. In other words, even if organizations might like to help with your project, they may not have the time. For that reason, I suggest that you start your search at the beginning of the semester. By **September 13**, please submit the name of the NGO you hope to study along with the name of your point of contact. If you have NGO work experience or connections and are willing to help "connect" some of your classmates, please let me know in the early weeks of class. Students who have had trouble confirming a contact at an NGO by Sep 12 should see me.

Contact and Office Hours

Questions? Ideas? Provocations? Problems? Please contact me via email. Logistical questions that are not answered on the syllabus can be asked by email or in class. Substantive questions about course content or about your papers, projects etc. can be raised in class or with me directly as appropriate. Finally, remember your classmates as resources. A huge part of learning by development workers comes from professional networks and informal learning. This class is a great place to start.

Statement on Academic Integrity

Students are expected to conduct themselves consistent with the University of Pennsylvania's Code of Academic Integrity, which presents standards regarding plagiarism, multiple submissions, and other actions. Students are expected to be familiar with the Code, which can be found at http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/.

Schedule of Class Meetings and Reading Assignments

* *Note: The following schedule is subject to change*

I. INTRODUCTION AND THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT

Week 1 (Aug 27). Course Introduction & Overview

Week 2 (Sep 03).   What do NGOs do?

Eric Werker and Faisal Z. Ahmed "What Do Nongovernmental Organizations Do?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives,* 2008, 22(2): 73-92.

Korten, David. "From Relief to People's Movements." *Voluntary Organizations,* 1990: 113-132.

MacMillan, Ian C. and Thompson, James D. "The Social Entrepreneur's Playbook". Wharton Digital Press. Pages xi-14

Watkins, Susan Cotts, Ann Swidler, and Thomas Hannan. "Outsourcing Social Transformations: Development NGOs as Organizations." *Annual Review of Sociology,* 2012, 38: 285-315.

(First 6.5 pages required, the rest optional).

Week 3 (Sep 10). Theories of Development: Modernization and Dependency

Marshall Wolfe, "Development: Images, Conceptions, Criteria, Agents, Choices," CEPA Review, 1972.

W.W. Rostow, Ch. 2., *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto.* Cambridge University Press, 1960.

Andre Gunder Frank, "The Development of Underdevelopment," *The Monthly Review*, 1966.

William J. Baumol, "Entrepreneurship: Productive, Unproductive, and Destructive." *Journal of Business Venturing,* 1990, 11, 3-22

Week 4 (Sep 17): Innovations in Beneficiary Centricity

MacMillan, Ian C. and Thompson, James D. "The Social Entrepreneur's Playbook". Wharton Digital Press. Pages 29-34

Week 5 (Sep 24): Politics of Aid + Theories of Development: Washington Consensus and Beyond

George Ritzer, p. 110-119 in *Globalization: A Basic Text*

Dani Rodrik, "Goodbye Washington Consensus, Hello Washington Confusion? A Review of the World Bank's Economic Growth in the 1990s: Learning from a Decade of Reform" *Journal of Economic Literature*, 2006, 44(4): 973-987.

Simon Maxwell. "Heaven or Hubris? Reflections on the New Poverty Agenda." *Development Policy Review*, 2003, 21(1): 5-25

Jeffrey Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time* - chapter excerpts per course materials.

Angus Deaton, Ch. 7 of *The Great Escape: Health, Wealth, and the Origins of Inequality.* Princeton University Press, 2009.

William Easterly*, The White Man's Burden* (2006) - chapter excerpts per course materials

II. THE PLACE OF NGOS IN AID AND DEVELOPMENT

Week 6 (Oct 01). NGOs, Aid, and Relations with the State

Marc Lindenberg, "Declining State Capacity, Voluntarism and the Globalization of the Not-For-Profit Sector," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 1999, 28(4) (Supplement), pp. 147-167.

Michael Edwards and David Hulme "Too Close for Comfort? The Impact of Official Aid on Nongovernmental Organizations" *World Development*, 1996, 24(6): 961-973.

Uphoff, Norman Thomas, Milton J. Esman, and Anirudh Krishna. pp. "Dealing with Governments and Politics." *Reasons for Success.* 1998, pp. 175-192.

Week 7 (Oct 08). Social Entrepreneurship and NGO Relations with the Market

Sean Silverthorne, "Putting Entrepreneurship in the Social Sector," *Harvard Business School Working Knowledge*

Michael Lounsbury and David Strang, "Social entrepreneurship: Success Stories and Logic construction" in *Globalization, Philanthropy, and Civil Society: Projecting Institutional Logics Abroad*, 2009.

William Foster and Jeffery Bradach, "Should Nonprofits Seek Profits?" *Harvard Business Review*, February 2005.

Spend 10 minutes browsing kiva.org. (Under "About Us" tab, read at least "How Kiva Works" and "Social Performance")

Case Study: The Indego Africa Project, *Harvard Business Review*

MacMillan, Ian C. and Thompson, James D. "The Social Entrepreneur's Playbook". Wharton Digital Press. Pages 15-56

III. ISSUES IN NGO MANAGEMENT

Week 8 (Oct 15). Mid-term paper/proposal presentation; Accountability & Participation

L. David Brown and Mark H. Moore, "Accountability, Strategy and International Nongovernmental Organizations," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 2001, 30(3), pp. 569-587.

Localizing Development: Does Participation Work? The World Bank. 2012. Chapter 3 (87-116)

Sarah White. "Depoliticizing Development: The Uses and Abuses of Participation." *Development, NGOs and Civil Society.* (142-155)

MacMillan, Ian C. and Thompson, James D. "The Social Entrepreneur's Playbook". Wharton Digital Press. Pages 57-80

For further reading:

Localizing Development, Ch. 1

Week 09 (Oct 22):

i. Monitoring & Evaluation (Time permitting in-class: Logframe Exercise)

Basil Edward Cracknell, Evaluating Development Aid: Issues Problems and Solutions (2000) Sage Publications. Chapters 2, 5,

Sue Nancholas. (How to do (or not to do)…a logical framework. Health Policy and Planning, 1998, 13(2), 189-193.

For review:

Website: **http://mymande.org/** ⤷ **(http://mymande.org/)**

For further reading:

MacMillan, Ian C. and Thompson, James D. "The Social Entrepreneur's Playbook". Wharton Digital Press. Pages 83-121

ii. Impact Measurement / Randomized Controlled Trial

Esther Duflo & Michael Kremer. "Use of Randomization in the Evaluation of Development Effectiveness." Chapter 3 of Reinventing Foreign Aid, edited by William Easterly, MIT Press 2008.

Bauchet et al.. "Latest Findings from Randomized Evaluations of Microfinance." Access to Finance FORUM, Reports by CGAP and Its Partners #2, 2011.

Week 10 (Oct 29): Course/Project Progress Report Out; Group Meetings with Prof

MacMillan, Ian C. and Thompson, James D. "The Social Entrepreneur's Playbook". Wharton Digital Press. Pages 83-140

Week 11 (Nov 05). Managing Uncertainty: Organizational Learning and Planning

V. Kasturi Rangan, "Lofty Missions, Down-to-Earth Plans," *Harvard Business Review*, March 2004.

David Korten, "Community Development and Rural Development: A Learning Process Approach" *Public Administration Review*, 1980, 40(5):480-511.

David Ellerman. "Transforming International Development Agencies in Learning Organizations" *The Academy of Management Executives.* 13 (1): 25-35.

Week 12 (Nov 12). Staff and Security Issues

Sheppard Foreman and Abby Stoddard. 2002. pp. 240-263 in "International Assistance," in Lester Salamon, ed., *The State of Nonprofit America*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution. (Remaining pages of chapter optional.)

Sarah Mukasa. "Are Expatriate Staff Necessary in International Development NGOs? A Case Study of an International NGO in Uganda." CVO International Working Paper 4. 1999.

Bauer, Noel. "The Dangerous Business of Aid: A Report on the Risks to Aid Workers in the Field." 2009.

For further reading:

Eric James. Ch. 18, "Managing Security" in *Managing Humanitarian Relief: An Operational Guide for NGOs*. 2008.

Jon R Moris, "The Transferability of the Western Management Tradition to the Non-Western Public Service Sectors: An East African Perspective," *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, 20,4 (1976): 401-27.

Week 13 (Nov 19). Fundraising and Finances

Stanford Social Innovation Review, "Ten Nonprofit Fundraising Models."

Michael Norton. Chapter 3: Fundraising Strategy. In *The WorldWide Fundraiser's Handbook.* Directory of Social Change.

- Spend 10 minutes on website: givewell.org (Read at least "Our Approach" and "Research" sections)
- Nagy & Feinstein. Case Study: "Mercy Corps: Sustainable Innovation through Corporate Partnerships." Yale Case Studies.

Week 14 (Dec 04). Final Presentations (Donors and Volunteers readings; course recap)

 Final Project due (by email) at 9pm on Friday, December 05.