

**UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH**  
**College of Social and Applied Human Sciences**  
**International Development Studies**  
**IDEV 4600**  
**ADVOCATING / EFFECTING CHANGE**  
**0.5 Credits**

Course Instructor: Dr. Jasmin Hristov

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

At a time when humanity is at a crossroads, facing unprecedented social and environmental crises, understanding what it means to be a global citizen and what roles we can play in effecting change, is of paramount importance.

This course is premised upon two main ideas. First, change in development policy and practice is inseparable from broader structural social change. The latter in turn, is a product of the ongoing conflictual dynamics between the collective agency of dominant groups and that of subaltern classes. Second, the process of promoting human development that counteracts social and global inequalities, requires an understanding of the different mechanisms (including legislative, ideological, and violent ones) employed by those who obstruct such efforts.

In the first part of the course, we trace the historical emergence of major structures of inequality as the product of human agency, up to and including the current era of neoliberalism. Next, we explore contemporary cases representing different pathways to policy change aimed at promoting human development ranging from large-scale popular mobilizations to localized struggles, spanning across different regions of the world. Here we reflect on the role of different actors such as states, NGOs, community organizations, and social movements. In particular, we examine the achievements and challenges in the cases of states that have rejected the neoliberal model. The final part of the course will consist of group presentations on the impacts of large sustained social movements.

In order to engage in some experiential learning, throughout the course we will take part in solidarity actions to support Honduran and/or Mexican land and environmental defenders who are facing violence, persecution, criminalization, forced displacement and environmental destruction. We will also work with and learn from social justice oriented collective efforts in Canada such as the Justice for Workers movement.

As part of this course's broader aim to globalize, diversify, indigenize, and decolonize education, efforts have been made to balance content and sources in a way that embraces perspectives, authors, issues, and approaches emerging from the Global

South, indigenous peoples, marginalized and/or underrepresented groups. Students are strongly encouraged to contribute to this ongoing effort by sharing knowledge, experiences, and resources that can nourish our collective learning. The course is intended as an infrastructure of empowerment where learning, development, and social change are seen as mutually reinforcing. The classroom is a community of learners where students do not simply learn *about* development and change, but rather become global citizens prepared to *shape* development processes in ways that are ecologically balanced and centred upon human well-being.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

### Conceptual Knowledge

1. Conceptualize the relationship between mechanisms that generate conditions for the reproduction of global capitalism and impediments to human development.
2. Identify and explain how legislative, ideological, and violent mechanisms managed by powerful actors serve as barriers to socially and environmentally just development.
3. Evaluate the impacts and limitations of micro-level 'solutions' to development problems promoted by dominant institutions.
4. Assess the potential for effecting change among different forms of collective action ranging from popular mobilizations to sustained social movements to NGOs advocacy.
5. Reflect on the potential impacts as well as limitations of international solidarity actions.
6. Analyze the importance of the state in facilitating or obstructing social change.

### Procedural Knowledge / Skills

1. Synthesize key ideas, concepts, and arguments (effective reading and communication).
2. Demonstrate ability to identify areas for debate and discussion by posing critical questions (critical thinking).
3. Work as part of a team to communicate knowledge creatively and effectively to a wider audience.
4. Engage in direct action/advocacy work.

## COURSE FORMAT

Early in the course, there will be a few lectures and guest-speaker presentations. Subsequently, there will be weekly discussion questions presented by several students. The questions will be answered in small-groups, followed by a whole-class discussion. The last two weeks of the course will consist of group presentations. The

pedagogical approach in this course rests on the idea that learning is a collective process and thus, the classroom should be a community of learners.

To this end, *consistent attendance as well as active and thoughtful participation is required*. Students are expected to come to class with a completed written commentary on the assigned readings and documentary(ies) and be prepared to engage in discussion. During small-group discussions students will always be asked to have a notetaker spokesperson. This individual will be responsible for sharing with the class the highlights from the group discussion and may be asked to submit their notes in an online folder on behalf of the group.

In accordance with the transformative approach of this course as well as its subject matter of bringing about change, the course entails a practical component where, as a class, we will engage in solidarity work to support the struggles for social justice in the Global South and in Canada.

#### REQUIRED READINGS

- Selection of academic articles, book chapters, and documentaries available electronically through the Guelph McLaughlin Library Ares Course Reserve System (ARES).

#### EVALUATION

| Type of Assessment                                       | Percentage of Final Grade |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Weekly Commentaries on assigned readings                 | 15                        |
| Discussion Question and Subsequent Reflection            | 15                        |
| Social Movement Group Presentation                       | 20                        |
| Solidarity work                                          | 10                        |
| Participation                                            | 10                        |
| Contribution to Group Project (based on peer evaluation) | 5                         |
| Analytical Paper                                         | 25                        |