

**SYLLABUS:** The Dirt on Development  
Dr. Emily Wakild  
Tu/Th 1:30-2:45  
Tribble A305

**Fall 2008:** FYS 100 Section U  
Email: [wakildel@wfu.edu](mailto:wakildel@wfu.edu)  
Phone: x4517  
Office: Tribble B109  
Office Hours: T/Th 12-1:30

*“Never underestimate the ability of a small group of committed people to change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”* Margaret Mead

**Premise:**

In this class we will focus on how certain individuals have sought entrepreneurial solutions to major issues in global development. We will examine how they approached various issues and use case studies as source of inspiration and ideas. These individuals and cases will become the template for our own method. We will use two points of departure for this investigation—dirt and development.

*Development*, for the purposes of this class, refers to the methods and means through which individuals and societies strive for a better world. One that is more equitable, more sustainable, more livable, and more enjoyable for everyone. “Development,” or developed and underdeveloped countries is a discourse that has come to replace the cold war division of the world’s countries into first, second, and third worlds. It is often used as a synonym for wealth and poverty—wealthy countries are developed; poor countries undeveloped. But it is also a term denoting a process, one that indicates motion forward and potential for progress. While there is reason to be skeptical of this trajectory, it is the popular current parlance we will investigate. We will look at how this discourse is related to human rights and how inequality factors into the attainment of development but the class is not focused on the political side of development. Certainly war, governance and corruption, subsidies and trade barriers, even migration have deeply political causes and enormous effects on global development. Yet, politics too often becomes the proximate cause and the solution, overlooking the wide social front outside political regimes. Notably, the social entrepreneurs we’ll investigate do not see politics as their main vocation. While nothing is apolitical, most of our entrepreneurs solve problems creatively by seeking solutions beyond formal political engagement.

*Dirt* means the environmental ramifications. Despite our current behavior, humans do not live apart from the rest of nature. Skyscrapers, hog farms, and air conditioning all use the environment in important ways, but human connections to non-human nature appear distant. This distance, among other things, has provoked thoughtless and shortsighted habits and actions. For a relatively brief blip in history— perhaps the last 200 years— humans have entered into a new biological regime where the energy we use comes from sources other than just the sun. This shift meant that in their quest for development some societies exhausted the available resources of timber, coal, and oil at pace that compromised the added improvements. Looking at the environmental ramifications of development should provide insight into the always intertwined relationship between nature and culture. Furthermore, the focus on the environment reiterates the fact that any sort of human sustainability remains tied to how we treat our habitat—the earth.

### **Course Objectives:**

This course aims for students to:

1. Thoughtfully engage the dynamics of issues in international development and critically evaluate potential solutions.
2. Identify the attributes of successful social entrepreneurs through written exercises and oral discussions.
3. Develop and defend a concise and feasible written project plan to address an identified social need.

### **Methodology:**

Six topics, (poverty, disease, microfinance, environmental sustainability, climate change, and food) will be developed with two class periods devoted to each topic. In the first class period of a topic the instructor will guide a discussion of the history and background of a certain issue and individual. The goal of these sessions will be outlining the problem at hand and possible solutions. By noon (12:00pm), on the Wednesday between class sessions all students will have submitted a two page position paper responding to the week's reading, and posted it to the course Blackboard site. These papers then become required reading for the rest of the class. The discussion leaders will use the position papers to plan the discussion for Thursday's class. The second class period will then be led by two or three students and will address the issues and questions laid out in the position papers of their classmates.

### **Required Readings:**

As we investigate the *dirt on development*, we will read from a mixture of scientists, social scientists, humanists, and journalists who each have different writing styles and approaches to development. Pay attention to these nuances and adjust your reading accordingly. The first half of this course has a relatively heavy reading load, approximately 100-150 pages of assigned reading each a week. In the latter half you should be reading at least that much on your own as you engage in research for your project. While sometimes the readings are uneven, there is no time to lag behind and catch up. If you are unable to handle this reading load, this is not the course for you. Readings will consist of a mixture of books for purchase, online websites, and articles posted on Blackboard. Those materials found on Blackboard will be denoted by a **B** in the class schedule. Please familiarize yourself with the Blackboard site and utilize it regularly. The syllabus is a required reading for this course and it may change at any point, please pay attention to updates.

Available for purchase in the bookstore are the following **required books**:

Jeffrey D. Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*

Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*

Muhammad Yunus, *Banker to the Poor: Micro-lending and the Battle against World Poverty*

Wangari Maathai, *The Green Belt Movement: Sharing the Approach and the Experience*

**Evaluation and Assignments:**

Your performance in this course will be evaluated based on both the written and oral assignments as listed below. More detailed information on each component will be distributed shortly. All written assignments should be turned in electronically to the drop box on Blackboard, with the exception of the position papers which should also be posted to the forums. Please familiarize yourself with these functions. All assignments must be completed to earn credit for this course.

<b>Written Assignments</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>Grade Value</b>
Position papers (5)	2 pages	25%
Project proposal outlining problem	3 pages	10%
Project background	3 pages	10%
Final project paper	10 pages	25%

  

<b>Oral Assignments</b>		
Discussion leader (with partners)	1 Class	15%
Project presentation	15 minutes max	15%

**Participation and Attendance:**

Dynamic, engaged participation and attendance are required in every class. Participation includes active listening, asking questions about reading and lecture material, responding to the ideas of your classmates, taking notes, offering ideas and comments, completing reading assignments, engaging in intellectual debates, and considering alternative points of view. You must participate to succeed in this class.

Because of the nature of this seminar, we will not meet as a class throughout the entire semester. This makes our initial class meetings extremely vital. You will be permitted one (1) unexcused absence from the scheduled class meetings without a grade penalty, although that absence will be frowned upon. Beyond the one absence, missed classes will severely reduce your overall course grade. Without prior approval from the instructor, circumstances that excuse attendance include a student illness which requires the intervention of a physician or the death of a family member. Under such circumstances, please provide appropriate documentation. Students who believe that additional situations require similar consideration should discuss their concerns with the professor.

**Office Hours:**

I welcome visits to my office to discuss course material during the listed office hours. If you are unable to make it to my office during those hours, I am available a limited number of other hours by appointment. I much prefer in-person inquiries to email communication. I will not respond to emails that discuss absences, missed work, or grades. Appropriate uses of email include appointment scheduling and assignment clarification.

**Drafts and Grade Disputes:**

I am willing to look over paper drafts if I receive your draft (by email or hardcopy) at least 48 hours before the assignment is due. Please feel free to take your papers to the writing center for additional assistance. I also welcome discussions about comments on graded papers, particularly if you have a mind towards improvement. Such conversations will often help you improve on future assignments. In the very rare cases where a student wishes to dispute the grade he or she earned, I require a written statement of at least one page outlining the specific reasons for reconsidering the grade earned.

**Late Work Policy:**

Without prior approval, late papers are assessed a penalty of one letter grade per day late (an A- would become a B-, or a C+ would become a D+, and so on). Penalties start immediately after the time expires, meaning if the assignment is due at 1:30 and you turn it in at 1:34, the paper will lose one full letter grade.

**Special Needs:**

If you have a disability that may require an accommodation for taking this course, please contact the Learning Assistance Center (758-5929) within the first two weeks of the semester. Additionally, please meet with me as soon as possible.

**Academic Honesty:**

Plagiarism, or representing another person's ideas as your own, will not be tolerated regardless of circumstances. It will result in a failing course grade and possible disciplinary action. For questions about plagiarism and suggestions on how to avoid it, visit the library's guide at <http://zsr.wfu.edu/research/guides/plagiarism.html>

**Electronic Devices:**

Electronic devices of any sort are only allowed with my permission. The use of a computer is a privilege and is only permissible if you disable your wireless connection. Students found using the internet or instant messaging during class will forfeit a portion of their participation grade and their privilege of in-class computer use for the remainder of the semester.

**Emergencies:**

In the case of a natural disaster or pandemic crisis that prevents classes from meeting students should continue to follow the reading outlined on the syllabus and continue working on paper assignments. If the university closes during exam periods (midterm or final) those exams will be done at home and sent back to the professor. Participation will be graded on classes that did meet.

**Course Schedule:**

Readings should be completed by the week they are listed.

28 Aug

Week 1: The Moral Imperative:

Readings: Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Covenants on Civil

and Political Rights and on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights  
<http://www.hrweb.org/legal/undocs.html>  
Declaration of Right to Develop **B**  
Sachs, Ending Poverty: How Universities Can Help **B**

2-4 Sep

Week 2: Theoretical Underpinnings: Development and the Environment

Readings: Goodland, Concept of Environmental Sustainability **B**

Sen, Human Development and Economic Sustainability **B**

Martínez-Alier, Ecology of the Poor **B**

The Brundtland Commission Report “Our Common Future” Read 1-39 at

<http://www.worldinbalance.net/agreements/1987-brundtland.html>

9-11 Sep Discussion Leaders:

Week 3: The Big Picture and Poverty

Readings: Jeffrey Sachs, *The End of Poverty*, preface- p. 73; 226-265; 347-368

Websites: Earth Institute at Columbia <http://www.earth.columbia.edu>

Heifer International <http://www.heifer.org>

16-18 Sep Discussion Leaders:

Week 4: Disease

Readings: Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power* preface, 1-50 and 213-256

Tracy Kidder, *Mountains beyond Mountains* Part I p. 1-44 **B**

Websites: Doctors without borders <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/>

Yéle Haiti <http://www.yele.org/>

Soft Power Health <http://www.softpowerhealth.org/home.htm>

23-25 Sep Discussion Leaders:

Week 5: Microfinance

Readings: Muhammad Yunus, *Banker of the Poor*, p. vii-83 and p. 117-192

Websites: Grameen Bank <http://www.grameen-info.org/>

Kiva <http://kiva.org/>

30 Sep - 2 Oct Discussion Leaders:

Week 6: Environmental sustainability

Readings: Wangari Maathai, *The Greenbelt Movement* p. 1-92

Websites: Greenbelt Movement <http://greenbeltmovement.org/>

American Farmland Trust <http://www.farmland.org/default.asp>

7-9 Oct Discussion Leaders:

Week 7: Climate Change and Energy

Film: *Inconvenient Truth*

Readings: Andrew Revkin, “Climate Change as News: Challenges in  
Communicating Environmental Science” **B**

Vitousek, Beyond Global Warming **B**

National geographic biofuels **B**

Websites: Voluntary Carbon Offsets <http://www.tufts.edu/tie/tci/carbonoffsets/>  
Focus the Nation <http://www.focusthenation.org/>

14 -16 Oct Discussion Leaders:

Week 8: Agribusiness and Local Food

Readings: Martínez-Alier, “Mangroves Versus Shrimps” **B**

Pollan, “Mass Natural” & “The (Agri)Cultural Contradictions...” **B**

Kingsolver, “A Good Farmer” **B**

Newsweek Forum: How to Feed the World

<http://www.newsweek.com/id/136360/output/print>

How Much Fossil Fuel Did You Eat Today?

<http://www.organicconsumers.org/btc/fossilfuel060326.cfm>

Websites: Navdanya <http://www.navdanya.org/>

Locavores <http://www.locavores.com/>

Food First <http://www.foodfirst.org/>

21-23 Oct

Week 9: Organizational approaches – a wide social front

No Readings—In-class evaluation of foundations

Website: Wiser Earth [www.wiserearth.org](http://www.wiserearth.org)

**Project Proposal Due Oct 23**

28-30 Oct

Week 10: Project Development

Individual and group meetings with instructor about project plans

4-6 Nov

Week 11: Project Development

Optional Film: *The New Heroes*

**Project Background and Feasibility Due Nov 6**

11 -13 Nov

Week 12: Project Development

Possible Guest Speaker or Field Trip

18 -20 Nov

Week 13: Project Development

**Final Project Due Nov 20**

25 Nov

Week 14: Project Development

No Class—independent meetings with instructor

2-4 Dec

Week 15: Student Presentations

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