



Philanthropy, Good Intentions & Global “Development”

GINS 4090



Global & International Studies
Carleton University Winter 2026
Prerequisite: 3rd year standing

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Course Description

Many students and scholars of Global and International Studies aspire to contribute to positive change, improve the lives of others, and foster a better world. But the question of *how* to engage in meaningful social change, “help” others, and reduce poverty, inequality, and suffering is not at all straightforward. Global development has a sordid history, and contemporary philanthropic efforts are fraught with contention. Does foreign aid work? Are NGOs good? Can social justice be achieved in social enterprise?

This class is divided into three sections: the first two sections focus on critique. We will first explore some problems with contemporary development solutions, including the allure and the snags of “big ideas”, the pitfalls of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and the problems with private philanthropy. The historic and persistent failures of international assistance demand that we understand them, but they also serve as tragic illustrations of how trenchant inequalities of the human condition persist in our time: their histories give us a window into the proliferation of private foundations and social entrepreneurship. In the second section of our class, we will dig deeper into private-sector-led poverty reduction by exploring the potential of innovation, venture capital, and food science to remedy the problems of hunger, food insecurity, and climate change. Together, our two “critique” sections shed light on how dominant historic and contemporary aid strategies, ideologies, and “solutions” offer us a window into the root causes of global inequality and suffering: they shed light on the pitfalls of the development paths we have trod and illuminate pathways forward. With this insight, we then ask: What is to be done? In the final section of our class, we will explore concrete examples of meaningful and lasting social change – civic action, policy reform, community organizing – equipping ourselves with new tools and ideas to imagine possibilities for change to create a more just and equitable world.

Learning Objectives

1. To recognize how many different, well-intentioned ideas about development have been pursued and failed, and to reflect on the root causes of the lack of success.
2. To explore the historical emergence of foreign aid, non-governmental organizations, foundations and private philanthropy.
3. To engage in active scholarly debate in the form of seminars, with a focus on peer-to-peer learning in preparation for graduate school.
4. To be able to critically analyze good intentions (both your own and those of other actors) in global development work.
5. To explore concrete examples of social change and to understand key tactics, strategies, and results of different social movements.

Readings

Giridharadas, A. 2019. *Winners Take All: the elite charade of changing the world*. (\$21)

Guthman, J. 2024. *The Problem with Solutions: Why Silicon Valley Can't Hack the Future of Food*. (\$46 on Amazon)

Solnik, R. 2016. *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities* (\$20).

Evaluation

<u>Following Communication Protocol</u>	5 %
<u>Seminar Attendance and Participation</u>	20 %
<u>Seminar Leadership</u>	15 %
<u>Reading & Film Critique Reflections</u>	25 %
<u>Final Research Project: Presentation (10%) and Paper (25%)</u>	35 %

Class Format

To begin each class, students will have 20 minutes to write their Reading and Film Critique Reflections, which are based on that week's course material. Next, I will offer a 20-25 minute lecture related to the course themes of foreign aid, philanthropy, and social change, which will be followed by a short period for questions and discussion. After a short break, selected students will lead the class in our weekly seminar period. Each week, we will wrap up class with an attendance and participation reflection activity.

Land Acknowledgement

As we learn together, we acknowledge that Carleton University is situated on the traditional, unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinàbeg Nation, and we honour the enduring relationship of Indigenous peoples with this land.

Course Schedule

Week 1, Jan. 7th: “To Hell with Good Intentions?” Rethinking Help in Global Development	
To Read/Watch	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prologue & Chapters, 1 and 2. Giridharadas, A. 2019. <i>Winners Take All: the elite charade of changing the world</i>. 2. <i>Savior Complex</i>. 2023. Episode 1, “God Doesn't Call the Qualified, He Qualifies the Called”.
Week 2, Jan 14th: “Does Aid Work?” Rethinking Big Pushes and Modest Fixes	
To Read/Watch	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chapters 3 & 4. Giridharadas, A. 2019. <i>Winners Take All: the elite charade of changing the world</i> 2. <i>Savior Complex</i>. 2023. Episode 2, “Cast the First Stone”
Week 3, Jan 21st: The Republic of NGOs: Commodifying Change	
To Read/Watch	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chapter 5. Giridharadas, A. 2019. <i>Winners Take All: the elite charade of changing the world</i> 2. <i>Savior Complex</i>. 2023. Episode 3, “Reap What You Sow”
Week 4, Jan 28th: The Gospel of Wealth Revisited: Philanthropy or Power Play?	
To Read/Watch	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chapter 6. Giridharadas, A. 2019. <i>Winners Take All: the elite charade of changing the world</i>. 2. <i>Uncharitable</i>. 2023. UnCharitable Film, LLC
Week 5, Feb 4th: Fair Trade or False Promise? Public–Private Partnerships in Post-Quake Haiti	
To Read/Watch	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chapter 7 & Epilogue. Giridharadas, A. 2019. <i>Winners Take All: the elite charade of changing the world</i>. 2. <i>Poverty Inc.</i> 2014. Acton Institute.
Week 6, Feb 11th: Food for Peace or Power? The Politics of Food Aid	
To Read/Watch	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preface, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2. Guthman, J. 2024. <i>The Problem with Solutions: Why Silicon Valley Can’t Hack the Future of Food</i> 2. <i>The Man Who Tried to Feed the World</i>. 2020. PBS.
Winter Break: February 16th-20th	
Week 7, Feb 25th: Robot Cows, Bt Cotton, and Vertical Dreams: Is Tech the Fix?	
To Read/Watch	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chapter 3, Chapter 4, and Chapter 5. Guthman, J. 2024. <i>The Problem with Solutions: Why Silicon Valley Can’t Hack the Future of Food</i> 2. CBC Ideas from the Trenches. 2016. Podcast Episode “<i>Just Trying to Help</i>”.
Week 8, March 4th: The Gates Effect: Big Tech Meets Global Agriculture	
To Read/Watch	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chapter 6, and Chapter 7. Guthman, J. 2024. <i>The Problem with Solutions: Why Silicon Valley Can’t Hack the Future of Food</i>. 2. <i>The New Corporation: The Unfortunately Necessary Sequel</i>. 2020. Grant Street Productions.
Week 9, March 11th: From Benevolence to Obligation: Toward Reparative Development	
To Read/Listen	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Solnit, R. 2016. <i>Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities</i>. 2. NPR. <i>This American Life</i> (Podcast). <i>Some Things We Don’t Do Anymore</i>.
Week 10, March 18th: Rich Societies, Not Rich People: Lessons from Mondragon	
To Read/Watch	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Solnit, R. 2016. <i>Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities</i>. 2. <i>Terra Vista: a Brazil de Fato documentary</i>
Week 11, March 25th: Land, Not Aid: Building Power from the Ground Up	
Week 12, April 1st: Final Presentations	

EVALUATION

Following Communication Protocol (5%)

To ensure effective communication in this class, here's how you should approach asking questions:

1. **Use the Q&A Forum on Brightspace:** This is your primary platform for course-related and logistical questions. Before posting, check if your question has already been asked.
2. **Personal Questions:** Schedule a phone or Zoom meeting with the instructor during office hours. Fill out your preferred time, name, and topic on the office hours calendar.
3. **Emergency or Urgent Questions:** If unable to use Brightspace, or the instructor's office hours, request a phone meeting via email. Use the subject line "GEOG4090 Meeting Request" and include available times, your phone number, and a brief purpose statement.

48-Hour Window Policy: To support effective communication and minimize stress, I strive to promptly address your assignment questions early in our course, ensuring thorough preparation for your assignments and tests. Rushed communication and potential frustrations are more likely just before assignments or tests are due, and after grades have been released. This policy is designed to foster optimal communication practices: Please refrain from emailing questions within 48 hours before or after assignment due dates or test periods. Emails sent during these periods will not receive a response until the window has passed, except in cases of illness. If you are unwell, you may still contact me following the guidelines outlined in No. 4 of our communication policy above.

Appeals Policy: If you wish to challenge a grade, you must do so within seven days of receiving your assignment. To appeal a grade, your first step is to draft a half-page appeal outlining the specific grading discrepancies you've identified. In this letter, you should identify the grading error specifically, and provide justification and evidence to substantiate your claim. Only valid appeals will be reviewed.

Attendance & Participation (20%)

Participating in discussions is one of the best ways to learn! Students are expected to share their insights through class participation. Punctuality, listening and engaging with other students' ideas is expected. Because participation is absolutely crucial to the success of seminars, I will expect full attendance at all sessions. You are allowed two absences per term, which should be reserved for illness or emergencies. Starting with your third absence, your final grade will be reduced by 2% per additional absence, regardless of the reason. Participation is an active process and will be judged on the basis of quality and frequency of contribution. Students who show up but fail to become involved in the discussions will be deemed not to have participated. Participation is also more than just talking: the quality of your contributions will bear heavily on your grade. To assess participation, you will complete a mandatory online self-assessment at the end of each class. Failure to complete the weekly self-assessments will hinder your participation grade. I will compare your self-assessment with my notes, and the attendance record to determine your final participation grade.

Seminar Leadership (15%)

Each student will work with a partner, or group of three to lead one seminar (50-60 minutes). Students are expected to offer an engaging, dynamic and creative seminar that includes: deep engagement with the week's material; demonstration of movement beyond the readings to dive into some of the concepts, case studies or historical roots of the central themes, author or place/site explored; an innovative and inclusive

teaching method that will foster participation. Seminar leaders, are encouraged to use supplementary sources to engage their peers (news media, comedy, stimulating questions, personal stories, quotations, case studies, photos). The leaders will be in charge of the seminar group for that session. In this respect, they will both lead, and be responsible for facilitating a meaningful class discussion. Leaders will need to demonstrate that they have done their best to engage all members of the group and that no person dominates. This will also mean they will need to have researched the topic in greater detail than the assigned reading will have allowed.

Reading and Film Critique & Reflection (10 x 2.5% = 25% total)

At the start of each class from weeks 2-11, students will engage in a 20-minute writing exercise (on paper) an overview of the assigned material, including readings and films. Students are expected to offer a summary of the work, raise key concepts, themes or arguments raised in the material, and offer a personal reflection on their learning. The primary goal of these reflections is to demonstrate an understanding of the readings and films, and to reflect on one's learning process: how did I react, what was surprising or fascinating? What questions arose? As above, in the "Participation" Grade, students are allowed two absences per term. If you are absent, your participation on the Reading and Film Reflection will be waived for that week, with no consequences for your grade. Starting with your third absence, you will receive a 0% grade on your Reading and Film Reflection, regardless of the reason. Given that student leaders will present on the weekly materials in the seminar period of each class, there will not be an opportunity for make-up or re-writes of the Reading and Film Critique and Reflections. Students who are late for class may be able to begin writing their reflection, but will be obliged to stop at the end of the timed writing period, and will not be given extra time.

Final Research Project: Presentation (15%) and Paper (25%) = 35 % total

Summary: Your final research project will explore one of the real-world examples of social change mentioned in Rebecca Solnik's book "Hope in the Dark". This could include acts of resistance, protest, civil disobedience, social movements policy change, or another collective struggle that led to meaningful shifts in our society. You might also choose to focus on one of the people mentioned in the book and to do a deep dive into their work, history, major contributions, and social influence.

Final Project Components:

Research Paper (25%)

- **Deadline:** April 1st, 2026, 4:30 pm **Length:** 2500 words, 35% of Final Grade
- Must be submitted on Brightspace, even if late. Please do not send your paper via email.
- Title page: captivating title, student name, course code, date, and a sentence or two outlining the chosen topic and the chapter/page number where it was discussed in "Hope in the Dark".
- Draw on at least 8 academic sources (course materials can be included)
- PDF, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, in 12 pt, Times New Roman font.
- Include your name, student number, and date on the first page of your assignment.

Instructions: You are encouraged to develop a research purpose or question(s) that you are most passionate about and interested in. As you explore potential topics, you might consider: what are the social, economic and political conditions that gave rise to this social change? Who are the actors, institutions or groups involved or of influence? What strategies, intentions, habits and behaviours impacted your case? What key injustices, power structures, or policies were being resisted or

reformed? What challenges did organizers face, and how were these overcome? What is the broader significance of your chosen topic, and how did it shape history for the better? Was the change long-lasting, partial, or symbolic? Consider the intended and unintended consequences. What can we learn from this case about how social change happens? You are encouraged to choose a case that speaks to your own interests, passions, or lived experience.

Format: While student papers may be organized slightly differently depending on the research topic, all papers should include an abstract (150-200 words), a compelling introduction and conclusion, engagement with literature, attention to historical background, and a compelling analysis/discussion. At the end of your paper, please also include a personal reflection (300-500 words). Students are expected to engage meaningfully with literature, provide context and key statistics, situate their case historically, and utilize punchy quotations to bolster their discussion.

Final Paper Policies

- AI tools can be used for your Final Research Project. If used, cite all AI-generated content properly. Do not copy, paraphrase or translate anything from anywhere (ChatGPT included) without using quotations and sourcing the AI used. Failure to cite non-original, externally sourced work can result in a violation of Carleton's **academic integrity policy**
- I encourage you to plan ahead and submit your Final Paper by the deadline. Keep in mind that timeliness is an important part of this class and our professional relationship. Still, I recognize that students often juggle multiple responsibilities and that emergencies can come up at inopportune times. In light of that, there is a five-day grace period for your Final Paper. In concrete terms, if your paper is submitted within five days of the deadline (date and time), it will be accepted, graded, and I will not apply deductions. In this case, there is no need to email me with an explanation or excuse; please just submit your assignment as you normally would on Brightspace. If a paper is submitted after the five-day grace period, students are expected to contact me detailing a legitimate explanation for their late paper. I will also likely ask you to submit the relevant short-term or long-term requests for academic consideration forms to the registrar's office. In the case of late papers, I will apply a 10% deduction per day for up to five days; I will still grade your paper, but will not offer comments. Students who submit assignments after both the five-day grace period and the five-day late period will not be accepted and will receive a grade of zero.

Final Paper Marking Guide /100:

Abstract (5 marks): Clear, concise summary of the project, including key research question, case study, and main argument or findings.

Introduction & Research Focus (10 marks): Compelling introduction, clarity of purpose, well-framed research question(s), and a preview of key arguments.

Literature (15 marks): Engagement with academic literature, synthesis of key debates and themes, use of at least 8 sources.

Historical Context (10 marks): Clear explanation of the conditions and context that gave rise to the case of social change.

Analysis/Discussion of Social Change (25 marks): In-depth discussion of your topic that could focus on actors, strategies, outcomes, power structures, and broader impact.

Structure, Clarity & Writing Style (10 marks): Organization, flow, grammar, coherence, and tone.

Conclusion & Broader Significance (5 marks): Strong conclusion tying ideas together, stating broader significance and implications.

Personal Reflection (10 marks): Thoughtful reflection (300–500 words) connecting topic to personal interest, values, or lived experience.

Use of Sources & Citations (5 marks): Proper referencing (in-text and bibliography), use of academic sources, citation of any AI tools if applicable.

Formatting & Submission Guidelines (5 marks): Follows formatting instructions, length requirement, and submission protocol.

Presentation (10 %)

- *In-class April 1st*
- *3 minutes to present + 5-7 minutes questions/feedback/discussion*

You will have 3 minutes to share your research. Tell us about your findings and your experience in an engaging way! Each student will develop a concise and compelling presentation that engages the audience with your research project. The aim here is to provide the opportunity for students to share their projects in a compelling, punchy and accessible way that makes information fun and engaging. Students will then get feedback from their peers and the instructor. As you prepare, think about what captivates you about a great presentation. How can you offer information in a compelling way, punchy, and engaging? Metaphors, story-telling, and verbal illustrations are often great tools. Aim for a conversational style and tone - unforced and ‘natural’. Use simple rather than ‘academic’ or complex sentence structure. It can be difficult to convey information in 3 minutes, but the trick here is to avoid seeming rushed and avoid cramming in words — 100 words per minute is a good rule of thumb. Great presentations are fun to watch and participate in, so have fun with it!

Presentation Marking Guide /20 → Convert to 10% of Final Grade

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1–0)
Clarity & Structure	Clear, well-organized, focused message	Mostly clear with some structure	Understandable but disorganized	Hard to follow or unclear
Engagement & Delivery	Natural tone, confident, captivating	Generally engaging, minor nerves	Some engagement but inconsistent	Monotone or hard to hear/follow
Content Quality	Deep insight, compelling ideas, well-chosen details	Clear ideas with moderate insight	Basic information, not very compelling	Lacks substance or relevance
Creativity & Style	Creative use of metaphors, stories, or visuals	Some originality or creative flair	Slightly creative but predictable	Lacks creativity or personal voice
Time Management	Perfectly timed (2:45–3:15), unrushed	Slightly over/under but still effective	Noticeably rushed or too short/long	Poorly timed or crammed/padded

Note that standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean. The system of grades used, with corresponding grade points is the following:

Percentage	Letter Grade	12-point scale	Percentage	Letter Grade	12-point scale
90-100	A+	12	67-69	C+	6
85-89	A	11	63-66	C	5
80-84	A-	10	60-62	C-	4
77-79	B+	9	57-59	D+	3
73-76	B	8	53-56	D	2
70-72	B-	7	50-52	D-	1

Mental Health: As a University student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you.

Emergency Resources (on and off campus): <https://carleton.ca/health/emergencies-and-crisis/emergency-numbers/>

Carleton Resources:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
- Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
- Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>
- Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>
- Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
- Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Off-Campus Resources:

- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Empower Me: 1-844-741-6389, <https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>
- Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: <https://walkincounselling.com>

Plagiarism: The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This can include: reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source; submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else; using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment; using another’s data or research findings; failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works

and/or failing to use quotation marks; handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs. Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course's instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They may include a mark of zero for the plagiarized work or a final grade of "F" for the course.

Academic Accommodation: You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to the instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For accommodation regarding a formally-scheduled final exam, you must complete the Pregnancy Accommodation Form ([click here](#)).

Religious obligation: write to the instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known.

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

Survivors of Sexual Violence: As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>.

Accommodation for Student Activities: Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

Communications: Carleton E-mail Accounts: All email communication to students from BGIInS will be via official Carleton University email accounts and/or cuLearn. As important course and University information is distributed this way, it is the student's responsibility to monitor their Carleton and cuLearn accounts.