

**PPOL 3295:
Global Humanitarian Crises: Dilemmas, Leadership, Action**

Course Location: McLeod Hall 1020

Course Times: TuTH 2:00-3:15pm

Course Instructor: Professor Kirsten Gelsdorf, kg8v@virginia.edu
Director of Global Humanitarian Policy

GTA: Haley Anderson, hma5sz@virginia.edu
GTA: Rachel Raycraft, rkd3mc@virginia.edu;
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Primary Contact and Office Hours:

1 st and 2 nd Year Students	(Lital Firestone)
3 rd Year Students	(Haley Anderson)
4 th and WISE Year Students	(Rachel Raycraft)
Graduate Students	(Kirsten Gelsdorf)

Why is this course important?

Today, humanitarian crises are one of the most gripping and complex challenges facing local communities, national governments and international leaders. The protracted war in Syria, the ineffective international response to Ebola in West Africa, the increasing number of climate-induced disasters, trends of rapid urbanization, and increased refugee flows all dominate media headlines and global policy dialogues.

Having worked for the United Nations for 20 years in crises all over the world, I have designed this course to give you the opportunity to dive into the critical ethical, operational and policy issues that define global humanitarian response. You will leave the semester with new insight on the complex work of humanitarian aid and a greater understanding of your personal views on how best to support vulnerable people around the world. I want you to feel ready to make decisions in difficult circumstances.

By analyzing the current system for aid delivery, comparing past and present crises, and evaluating the critiques of humanitarian assistance, together we will try to find answers to some of the most gripping questions debated by aid workers in NGOs and international organizations:

- *Is humanitarian aid still justified even when it is contributing to violence?*
- *How can new technologies be used to support the current refugee flows from Syria without threatening individual human rights?*
- *Why is it still so difficult to give people cash over food and tents when we know it is more efficient and dignified?*
- *Can the private sector be considered a humanitarian actor even if it makes a profit?*

- *Why are we still stuck providing short-term emergency assistance to refugees and IDPs when their average length of displacement is 17 years?*

In addition to examining some of the most important literature on humanitarian aid, this course will have a real-life focus by reviewing case studies and professional documents, giving you hands-on professional assignments, learning from guest lecturers, and when possible, skyping into current emergency response operations.

What will we learn?

By the end of this course you should be able to:

- Apply critical thinking skills to both the most influential past crises as well as the ongoing crises around the world;
- Compare the roles of the main humanitarian actors and explain how the humanitarian system is organized;
- Give examples of the practical realities in the delivery of humanitarian assistance;
- Reflect on the key humanitarian principles and decide where you stand in their application;
- Assess your ability to work under time pressure, make difficult decisions, and navigate complex environments;
- Define and communicate your personal views on how to best support the millions of people impacted by crises; and
- Envision the future skills and experiences you may wish to acquire in pursuing an international career.

What will we read?

To orient you to the true world of humanitarian assistance I have deliberately chosen a wide range of books and readings from journals, policy briefs, and media. These readings hope to: give you the perspective of affected populations; teach you the vocabulary and structure of operational language and standards that current aid workers and policy practitioners use; ground your thinking in the foundations of theory on humanitarian assistance; and better understand what a lifestyle in humanitarian aid looks like. In addition, we will most likely have guest lectures from 3 of the 4 authors of the texts!

Please see me or a GTA if you have financial difficulty and would like to borrow my books. In addition, there will be a lot of reading, so please see me or a GTA if you are still developing your skills in being a strategic reader.

Required texts

- Walker, Peter and Daniel Maxwell. 2009. *Shaping the Humanitarian World*. Series on Global Institutions. London, Routledge. (we will most likely get to hear a guest lecture from Dan Maxwell)

- Rawlence, Ben. 2016. *City of Thorns: Nine Lives in the World's Largest Refugee Camp*. Picador.
- The Sphere Project. 2011. *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*. Geneva, The Sphere Project, Geneva (also available online at <http://www.sphereproject.org/content/view/720/200/lang,english/>). (we will most likely get to hear a guest lecture from the sphere project staff)
- Alexander, Jessica. 2013. *Chasing Chaos, My Decade in and Out of Humanitarian Aid*. New York: Broadway Books. (we will most likely receive a guest lecture from Jessica Alexander)

Who else will we hear from?

Throughout the course students will have a chance to engage with various professionals in the international humanitarian aid industry. Some may participate in class lectures and some may be linked to assignments. To date, potential speakers include:

- Sarah Bailey: Overseas Development Group, UK (Cash transfer expert)
- Jenny McAvoy: Interaction, Washington, DC (Protection expert)
- Jessica Alexander: Author of 'Chasing Chaos' and Washington Post and Slate articles (Accountability expert)
- Mark Slezak: Rivanna Strategies, Charlottesville, VA (Uzbekistan, Earthquake security)
- Brooke Zobrist: Girl Determined, Founder; Yangon, Myanmar (Girls human rights expert)
- Daniel Maxwell: Tufts University (Expert on humanitarian food security response, and Somalia)
- Christine Knudsen: Sphere Project, Executive Director, Geneva, Switzerland (expertise??)
- Leith Baker: Norwegian Refugee Council, Jordan (Syria Crises)

How will we test our learning?

As the objectives of this course involve both developing your opinions through critical analysis as well as gaining confidence in your professional skills, there will be a series of assignments under three evaluation categories. The assignments will include opportunities to: reflect on your personal stance; practice working under time pressure; present positions in public speaking; work as a team; learn how to set objectives; and define audience needs; etc.

- **Self-reflection foundational assignments (10%):** You will have 2-3 short assignments (1-pg max) that will NOT be graded, but rather collected for completion (e.g. selecting a current crisis that you will track, choosing a humanitarian actor that you would want to work for, etc.). These assignments

are to help you ascertain your personal views and interests that motivate you in this topic. Additional details will be given in class.

- **Applied assignments (60%):** You will have 3 timed-professional applied task assignments (e.g. writing a situation report, preparing an internal policy briefing note, writing a press briefing, preparing a set of talking points, etc.). These assignments may include tasks given by our visiting lecturers. These assignments will allow you to become an ‘aid worker’ and give you a chance to apply lecture and reading material to in a crisis response scenario. They will also give you a chance to gain hard professional skills (working under time pressure, writing for a specific audience, setting objectives, being concise, etc.). In addition, by completing them I hope you evaluate whether you enjoy these kinds of tasks to give you insights into your professional path. Additional details will be given in class.
- **Group Policy Position Project (30%):** In teams of 4 you will research a current controversial question or dilemma in the humanitarian arena, take a position on that issue, and present that issue in a written and oral format. Topics could include such questions as ‘should the private sector be allowed to profit from humanitarian response; yes/no’, ‘should the United States admit more Syrian refugees; yes/no’; ‘are celebrities a good way to promote advocacy on crises; yes/no’, ‘does technology provide a major security risk to vulnerable people; yes/no’. This assignment will allow you to dive deep into a current issue being discussed in the humanitarian policy arena. It will also help you learn how to write and speak persuasively and practice skills in humanitarian advocacy. Plus, it will be fun. You will be assigned a group grade. The project will involve each team completing an:
 - **Advocacy Position Briefing Pack:** Preparing a briefing pack including; 1-pg internal private talking points, 1-pg public press statement, 1-pg infographic, and 1 snap-chat video.
 - **Debate:** Each team will also then debate another team who has been assigned the opposite position in a 20-min debate. These debates will be held in front of a sub-section of the class. Policy position report: A team of 5 students will prepare an ‘advocacy package’ presenting their position on an issue.

How will your work be evaluated?

- Papers and assignments are due at the start of class on the day they are due. Assignments should be printed and submitted. If absent, assignments should be emailed by the start of class to your GTA. Papers turned-in after the start time of class, but within 24 hours of the due-date, will receive a -5 on the grade. Assignments will not be accepted 24 hours after the due date and be given a 0 (this is because deadlines are extremely important in humanitarian crises; it is good to learn strategies to always meet them!).

- It is your responsibility to submit your work on time (even if your computer or printer experiences difficulty). Familiarize yourself with the locations of computers and printers on Grounds. If you need an extension, maintain open lines of communication with your GTA at least 2 weeks before the deadline.
- Letter grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

97.5 to 100 [A +]	93 to 97 [A]	90 to 92.5 [A-]	
87.5 to 89.5 [B +]	83 to 87 [B]	80 to 82.5 [B-]	
77.5 to 79.5 [C +]	73 to 77 [C]	70 to 72.5 [C-]	
65 to 69.5 [D +]	55 to 64.5 [D]	50 to 54.5 [D-]	below 50 [F]

What is our classroom environment?

While we are a large class, I would like us to work as a close community. I hope that you leave the semester having met other students who share your interests, feel as though you have had a chance to contribute and be heard, and that you have benefited from the wide range of knowledge in our class (this may be your only class where you are working along-side 1,2,3,4, graduate, and PhD students from schools all across grounds). To foster this, I would like us all to:

- Arrive on time. There is a lot we want to cover and we also often have guest speakers.
- Power Down. Release yourself from your laptop and other electronic devices. Please keep laptops closed and set your phone to silent or turn it off. The research shows that taking notes by hand will help you learn more!!!! It's also proven if you turn your phone off while you are doing your homework you will finish it 1/3 faster. That being said, there will be a few occasions where we ask to use laptops or phones for group activities, so please bring them with you and you will be instructed on when to have devices out and when to put them away.
- Attend class. We take attendance. You are allowed 2 absences but after that, you will lose 2 points on your full final semester grade for each absence. After today please always sit in your same seats. You will have name cards that I would like you to pick up at the start of each class and leave at your seats when you leave. The GTAs will explain.
- Take risks. This is not a course with 'right' answers - this is a course in which you need to critically assess what you think the right answers are. Be prepared to ask bold, challenging questions in our large class and in your assignments. My goal is to create a safe space in which you will be rewarded for going out on a limb - this can mean arguing a side you don't believe in, making a case for your own point of view, or posing a provocative question to the class.
- Find your optimism. We will be studying difficult and sometimes extremely devastating and incomprehensible topics. I will also on occasion need to show graphic material. To provide a mental break, we will try to also have fun and see

the beauty and humanity in the world. But please always reach out to your GTA or to me if you are having difficulty with the material.

Where can you find more information?

These are the main humanitarian websites you should become familiar with and use throughout the course.

World Humanitarian Summit	https://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/
Integrated Regional Information System	http://www.irinnews.org/
Relief Web	http://www.reliefweb.int/
Alert Net	http://www.alertnet.org/
FEWSNET	http://fewsn.net
The Humanitarian Policy Group	www.odi.org.uk/hpg/
The Humanitarian Practice Network	www.odihpn.org/
The Sphere Project	http://www.sphereproject.org/
Action Learning Network for Accountability And Performance (ALNAP)	http://www.alnap.org/
The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International (HAP-I)	www.hapinternational.org/
People in Aid	www.peopleinaid.org/
UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)	http://www.unocha.org/
International Committee of the Red Cross	http://www.icrc.org/
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies	http://www.ifrc.org/
Médecins sans Frontières	http://www.msf.org/
The World Food Programme	http://www.wfp.org/
Oxfam	http://www.oxfam.org/
World Vision	http://www.wvi.org/
CARE	http://www.care.org/

Who is your team?

Professor Gelsdorf: I have recently joined the Batten School as the Director of Global Humanitarian Policy after serving as the Chief of Policy Analysis and Innovation at the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. My career includes long-term field postings and operational deployments to numerous emergencies including the international responses to Hurricane Mitch in Honduras, the Ethiopian Famine, the South African Regional Food Crisis, the Liberian War, the Tsunami in Indonesia, Hurricane Katrina, the Pakistan Earthquake, the Timor-Leste Security Crisis, the Global Food Crisis and the Haiti Earthquake. I also served as a humanitarian advisor to President Clinton in his role as the UN Special Envoy for Haiti and as a policy advisor to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on the global food crisis in 2008. I have taught courses at UVA for the Global Studies program, Politics Department and Arts and Sciences Liberal Arts Seminars. I have also taught at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.

Haley Anderson:

Rachel Raycraft:
Lital Firestone:
What will the next 14 weeks look like?

	Date	Lecture	Speakers/Format	Assignments Due
F O U N D A T I O N S	19 Jan	What is this course about and what will we do?	Lecture	
	24 Jan	Definitions-Humanitarian or Development? What's the difference anyway?	Lecture	<i>Self-reflection</i>
	26 Jan	The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of Humanity	Lecture	
	31 Jan	History Tour-What is Biafra? Why does it matter?	Lecture	<i>Self-reflection</i>
	2 Feb	History Tour-What is Biafra? Why does it matter?	Lecture	
	7 Feb	Principles and Laws-What are they?	Lecture	
	9 Feb	Principles and Laws-Are they still relevant?	Jennifer Rubenstein	
	14 Feb	Principles and Laws-What do you think?	Discussion Sections	
	16 Feb	Who are the Actors?	From Stockholm	<i>Self-reflection</i>
	21 Feb	What are they Delivering?	Sarah Bailey	
	23 Feb	NO CLASS	No class	<i>Applied Assignment</i>
	28 Feb	How is the System Organized?	Lecture	
	2 Mar	How is the System Organized?	Lecture	
C A S E S T U D I E S	7-9 Mar	Spring Break	Spring Break	
	14 Mar	Policy Dilemmas: Accountability-What is it? Why does it Matter?	Lecture	
	16 Mar	Policy Dilemmas: What are the Sphere Standards? Can they be used?	Christine Knudsen	<i>Applied Assignment</i>
	21 Mar	Operational Dilemmas: Tsunami 2005	Lecture	
	23 Mar	Operational Dilemmas: Haiti Earthquake 2010	Lecture	
	28 Mar	Operational Dilemmas: TBD	Discussion Section	
	30 Mar	Operational Dilemmas: Syria Crises 2016-17	Leith Baker	
	4 Apr	Policy Dilemmas: Communication with Affected Populations	Lecture	
	6 Apr	Policy Dilemmas: Aid Worker Security	Lecture	
	11 Apr	Policy Dilemmas: TBD	Discussion Section	
	13 Apr	Policy Dilemmas: TBD	Lecture	
	18 Apr	Debates	Debate	<i>Advocacy Packs/Debate</i>
	20 Apr	Debates	Debate	<i>Debate</i>
	25 Apr	Being an Aid Worker (Jess Alexander)	Lecture	
	27 Apr	What is your position?	Lecture	

	2 May	Wrap-up	Last Class	<i>Applied Assignment</i>
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Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy Honor Statement

The Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy embraces and upholds the University’s Honor Code principles that mandate that students will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor tolerate the actions of those who do. Acting in a manner consistent with the principles of Honor benefits every member of the community while enrolled in the Batten School and in the future.

We expect every student to comply fully with all provisions of the UVa Honor System. By enrolling in this course, you agree to abide by and uphold the Honor Code System of the University of Virginia As applied to your Batten course work and requirements, and unless otherwise specified by your instructors:

- All graded assignments must be pledged.
- Students may not access any notes, study outlines, problem sets, old exams, answer keys, or collaborate with other students without explicit permission.
- When given permission to collaborate with others, students will not copy answers from another student.
- Students should always cite any resources or individuals they have consulted to complete an assignment. If in doubt, sources should be cited.
- Suspected violations will be forwarded to the Honor Committee, and, at the discretion of the instructor, students may receive “no credit” the assignment in question, independent of the actions taken by the Honor Committee.
- Any questions about what is or is not permitted on an assignment, should be clarified by students with their instructors prior to the completion of their work.

If you believe you may have committed an Honor Offense, you may wish to file a Conscientious Retraction (“CR”) by calling the Honor Offices at (434) 924-7602. According to Honor guidelines, for your retraction to be considered valid, it must, among other things, be filed with the Honor Committee before you are aware that the act in question has come under suspicion by anyone. More information can be found at www.virginia.edu/honor. If you have questions regarding the course honor policy, please contact your honor representatives.

Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy Wellbeing Statement

If you are feeling overwhelmed, stressed, or isolated, there are many individuals here who are ready and wanting to help. Both [Amanda Crombie](#), Director of Academic Programs and [Jill Rockwell](#), Assistant Dean for Student Services are available to help all Batten Students. They are readily accessible during walk in hours or by setting up an appointment.

Alternatively, there are also other University of Virginia resources available. The Student Health Center offers [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS) for its students. Call 434-243-5150 (or 434-972-7004 for after hours and weekend crisis assistance) to get started and schedule an appointment. If you prefer to speak anonymously and confidentially over the phone, call Madison House's [HELP Line](#) at any hour of any day: 434-295-8255.

If you or someone you know is struggling with gender, sexual, or domestic violence, there are many community and University of Virginia resources available. The [Office of the Dean of Students](#), [Sexual Assault Resource Agency](#) (SARA), [Shelter for Help in Emergency](#) (SHE), and [UVA Women's Center](#) are ready and eager to help.