UN1001-R51 Perspectives on Inquiry
Global Poverty

“History followed different courses for different peoples because of differences among peoples’ environments, not because of biological differences among peoples themselves.”

Jared Diamond (1937-

Room: 125 Fisher
Time: 3:35-4:50 TTh
Semester: Fall 2009

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Required Texts


Perspectives on Inquiry: General Description (from the course catalog)

UN1001 Perspectives on Inquiry Engages students in college level inquiry through which they develop fundamental intellectual habits, understand how to integrate perspectives on knowledge, and begin to learn how to meet the changing needs of a global, technological, diverse, and environmentally sensitive society.

Description of This Section: Global Poverty

We will use readings and both written and oral communication—in the form of class discussions, conferences, oral reports, in-class writing, and formal essays—to examine the causes of global disparities in wealth, why we should care about such disparities, and what, if anything, might be done about them.
Over the past several decades, much attention has been paid to multicultural literacy. Some have argued for such literacy in order to celebrate our diversity; others have done so in order to enhance America’s global competitiveness. However, in addition to celebrating our diversity, we should also foster a sense of community, for example, by exploring our common biological and cultural origins. This sense of community might then be appealed to in addressing such problems as global disparities in wealth, the most pressing problem facing the human family now and in the foreseeable future. From this problem derive a host of others, such as hunger, disease, illiteracy, population pressures, mass migrations, environmental destruction, terrorism, and war.

Joseph Stalin once said, “One death is a tragedy, a million is a statistic.” Nevertheless, here are a few tragic statistics:

- Over 1.5 billion of the world’s 6.4 billion people live in extreme poverty.
- In Niger, more than one-quarter of children will not live to see their fifth birthday.
- In Afghanistan, more than 80,000 children die every year of diarrhea.
- Worldwide, over 18 million children have lost one or both of their parents to AIDS.
- Every year, over 3 million children die due to lack of clean drinking water.
- Every day, over 30,000 children die of preventable diseases due to lack of vaccines.
- Every day, 18,000 children under age 5 die of starvation.
- Every year, over 600,000 women die from pregnancy-related causes.

Preliminary Thoughts and Questions to Guide Inquiry

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.”
Mahatma Ghandi (1869-1948)

“Never doubt that a small group of committed individuals can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”
Margaret Mead (1901-1978)

1. How has the human experience led to a situation in which part of the world’s population lives in great abundance while another part lives in abject poverty?
2. Why should we care about global poverty? What effects, if any, do global disparities in wealth have on other global problems, such as hunger, disease, illiteracy, population pressures, mass migrations, environmental destruction, terrorism, and war?

3. What, if anything, can we do about global poverty? Can broader exploration, discussion, and understanding of our common biological and cultural origins—and, hence, our common humanity—help to reduce the alienation that makes global disparities in wealth sufferable to the wealthy?

Reading and Class Discussion: Beginner’s Mind

“We don’t understand anything until we’ve discussed it.”

Russian Proverb

I assume that none of us have the political sophistication of a secretary of state or a U.N. ambassador. Nevertheless, as college-educated adults, we should be at least as well informed about world affairs as the majority of the world’s people, and, collectively, we should be able to engage in an insightful and constructive dialogue about causes and possible solutions to the problem of global inequities in wealth.

Sho-Shin is a Zen Buddhist concept of beginner’s mind, summarized by Zen Master Shunryu Suzuki Roshi as follows: “In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert’s there are few.” From this perspective, we might actually enjoy some advantage over seasoned diplomats because we should be able to address global poverty unencumbered by the dogmas that often accompany the thinking of more experienced people and limit their willingness to consider what can or cannot be done.

Evaluation

Your final grade will be determined approximately as follows:

Up to 75 points for each of 7 reading and discussion quizzes \hspace{10cm} 490 points
Up to 100 points for each of 3 essays \hspace{10cm} 300 points
Up to 110 points for participation in class \hspace{10cm} 110 points
Up to 100 points for participation in brainstorming and draft-review sessions \hspace{10cm} 100 points
Total \hspace{10cm} 1000 points

Extra credit: 25 points for bringing to class before the end of week 3 the required texts with your name permanently marked in or on them.

A: 930-1000 points (93-100%)
AB: 880-929 points (88-92.9%)
B: 830-879 points (83-87.9%)
BC: 780-829 points (78-82.9%)
C: 730-779 points (73-77.9%)
CD: 680-729 points (68-72.9%)
D: 600-679 points (60-67.9%)
F: 599 or fewer points (59.9% or less)

Format of Essay Assignments

Your three essays should be word processed and printed on 8.5” x 11” white paper in a 12-point font with one-inch margins on all four sides. Put your name in the upper right corner of the first page, skip one line (i.e., single space) and put the course title (Global Poverty); skip another line, and put the date; skip one more line and put your proposed headline (centered), then skip two lines and begin your double-spaced article. Number your pages, and staple your papers in the upper left corner.

Basic Modern Language Association (MLA) Documentation and Citation Style

Document and cite the sources you use in your essay with MLA documentation style. With the MLA system, documentation of works (sources) cited is provided by a list at the end of your essay, arranged alphabetically by the authors’ last names. Here are models for a book and an article, each by a single author:


You would then cite these sources parenthetically within the body of your text:

According to Diamond, “History followed different courses for different peoples because of differences among peoples’ environments, not because of biological differences among peoples themselves” (25).

Shortly thereafter, Quincy Howe, the senior editor of Simon and Schuster, wrote to Carson asking if she planned a book on this subject (Lear 88-90).

The MLA format for citing a lecture is as follows:

The MLA Format for citing an online scholarly project is as follows:


Within the body of your document, you would refer to this text by some easily identifiable but abbreviated form. For example, “According to ‘American Indian Issues,’ children attending Indian boarding schools who are forbidden to use their native language have significantly less self-esteem than do their peers who are not so forbidden.” If you don’t identify the source within the related sentence itself, identify it parenthetically at the end of the sentence or clause: “Children attending Indian boarding schools who are forbidden to use their native language have significantly less self-esteem than do their peers who are not so forbidden (‘American Indian Issues’).”

The MLA format for citing a videocassette or DVD of a television production is as follows:


The MLA format for other documentaries on VHS is as follows:


The MLA format for citing the DVD version of a feature film is as follows:


For detailed information on using MLA style, visit either of the following sites:

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_mla.html

http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/humanities-sample.html
Internet Resources for Academic Skills

One goal of Michigan Tech’s General Education program is to help you develop or enhance your academic skills, not only for these general education courses, but also for the rest of your college experience and for life-long learning. Please refer to the below sources to improve your academic skills:

1. Reading skills:
   “Study Skills Self-Help Information” (Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University)
   http://www.vt.edu/~educ/lsv/studyhelp.html

2. Note-taking skills:
   “Five Methods of Note Taking” (California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo)
   http://www.sps.edu/asc/ssl/notetaking/systems.html

3. Test-taking skills:
   “Basic Rules for Taking a Multiple-Choice Test” (University of Lethbridge, Canada)
   http://wwwuleth.ca/cte/sfr/tests/take/mc/how.html

4. Team-building skills for group presentations:
   “Building Group Presentations” (David Nowell, Professor, Sheridan College, Oakville, Ontario, Canada) http://www.sheridan.on.ca/~nowell/presentations/

Other essential academic skills include essay writing, time management, and presentation skills. We’ll discuss these further as the semester progresses.

The Michigan Tech Writing Center

Michigan Tech has an excellent Writing Center, which is located in Walker 107. I encourage you to schedule, regular weekly appointments with a writing coach. Establish a schedule early in the semester, because appointed times (as opposed to drop-in times) tend to get booked quickly. For more information, call 487-2007 or check the Center’s Web page at www.mt.edu/wc.

Late Assignments

I won’t accept any assignment that’s more than two days late. There’s no penalty for one late paper (as long as it’s not more than two days late); subsequent late papers, however, will be lowered by one part of a letter grade (e.g., from a BC to a C).
Attendance Policy

“Eighty percent of success is just showing up.” Woody Allen

Excused absences include (but are not limited to) a medical excuse signed by your physician or a personal emergency authorized in writing by the Dean of Students. For a more detailed description of what constitutes an excused absence, see the Michigan Tech Student Handbook http://www.admin.mtu.edu/urec/studenthandbook/policies.html#integrity

I keep a record of attendance for two reasons:

1. Because if you’re doing poorly in class, these records can help me to determine if poor attendance is part of the problem.

2. Every professor at Michigan Tech is required to submit attendance-verification rosters. These rosters are used for two purposes:
   a. To identify before it’s too late to make the appropriate corrections students who
      • think they are registered for a course, attend all semester and complete the work, but receive no grade at the end of the semester because they were never registered;
      • have never attended a class because they mistakenly think they have dropped the course and, hence, wind up receiving a failing grade at the end of the semester;
      • attend an incorrect section of a course and receive a failing grade at the end of the semester from the section for which they are registered but which they never attended.
   b. To comply with federal law that stipulates that universities must verify that students who receive Title IV financial aid are attending the classes in which they are enrolled. (Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended in 1998 establishes general rules that apply to student financial assistance programs, including Pell Grants, Academic Competitive Grants, National SMART Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, Federal Direct Loans, Federal Perkins Loans, and Federal PLUS Loans. Approximately 85% of Michigan Tech students receive some form of financial aid.)

Policy on Religious Observance (also from the Michigan Tech Student Handbook)

“Michigan Tech permits students to be excused from class on holidays observed by their religious faith. Students who wish to be absent for a religious holiday are responsible for making arrangements in advance with their instructors to make up classwork and exams. Instructors may expect a reasonable limit to the number of absences requested.”
Michigan Tech’s Academic Integrity Policy

“Academic integrity and honesty are central components of a student’s education, and the ethical conduct maintained in an academic context will be taken eventually into a student’s professional career. Academic honesty is essential in a community of scholars searching and learning to search for truth. Anything less than total commitment to honesty undermines the efforts of the entire academic community. Both students and faculty are responsible for insuring the academic integrity of the university.

This policy applies to the academic conduct of all persons at Michigan Technological University who have ever matriculated at the University, whether or not the person is enrolled at the time an allegation of academic dishonesty is made.

This policy addresses academic dishonesty in course work. Allegations of dishonesty in research or publication are addressed under the Scientific Misconduct Policy.

Procedures to ensure fairness and due process for all parties involved in any apparent violation of the Academic Integrity Policy will be developed, and periodically reviewed, by the Dean of Students Office in consultation with the members of the Academic Integrity Committee appointed by the University Senate.”

Definition of Academic Dishonesty

A. **Plagiarism**: Knowingly copying another’s work or ideas and calling them one’s own or not giving proper credit or citation. This includes but is not limited to reading or hearing another’s work or ideas and using them as one’s own; quoting, paraphrasing, or condensing another’s work without giving proper credit; purchasing or receiving another’s work and using, handling, or submitting it as one’s own work.

B. **Cheating**: Intentional, unauthorized use of any study aids, equipment, or another’s work during an academic exercise. This includes but is not limited to unauthorized use of notes, study aids, electronic or other equipment during an examination; copying or looking at another individual’s examination; taking or passing information to another individual during an examination; taking an examination for another individual; allowing another individual to take one’s examination; stealing examinations. All graded academic exercises are expected to be performed on an individual basis unless otherwise stated by the instructor. **An academic exercise may not be submitted by a student for course credit in more than one course without the permission of all instructors. [Note: This is known as self-plagiarism.]**

C. **Fabrication**: Intentional and/or unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation during an academic exercise. This includes but is not limited to changing or adding an answer on an examination and resubmitting it to change the grade; inventing data for a laboratory exercise or report.

D. **Facilitating Academic Dishonesty**: Knowingly or recklessly allowing or helping another
individual to plagiarize, cheat, or fabricate information.

Sanctions for academic dishonesty range from warnings to expulsion from Michigan Tech. For more information, visit http://www.studentaffairs.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/academic_integrity.html

The Americans with Disabilities Act

MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Dean of Students (7-2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, your department head, or the Affirmative Action Office (7-3310).

(Tentative) Schedule of Assignments and Class Activities

Dates indicate when reading and writing assignments are due, not when they are given. I’ve used the following abbreviations for our texts: GGS = Guns, Germs, and Steel; EOP = The End of Poverty. Please bring to class each day the book we are currently reading.

Week 1: Course Introduction; GGS Preface and Prologue
   TU 9/1: Overview of course and syllabus; self-introductions
   TH 9/3: GGS Preface and Prologue; Guns, Germs, and Steel DVD Episode 1 (55 minutes)

Week 2: GGS Part One: From Eden to Cajamarca
   TU 9/8: GGS Ch. 1: Up to the Starting Line; video
   TH 9/10: GGS Ch. 2: A Natural Experiment of History; GGS Ch. 3: Collision at Cajamarca; Reading and discussion quiz #1 including reflective piece

Week 3: GGS Part Two: The Rise and Spread of Food; meet this week to brainstorm for essay #1
   TU 9/15: GGS Ch. 4: Farmer Power; GGS Ch. 5: History’s Haves and Have-Not (Note: The section on pages 94-98 presents a detailed discussion of complexities of radiocarbon dating. This section might have been better presented as an endnote. I encourage you to read these few pages selectively.); GGS Ch. 6: To Farm or Not to Farm; Library Visit: Meet at the circulation desk in the library.
   TH 9/17: GGS Ch. 7: How to Make an Almond; schedule individual conferences; Guns, Germs, and Steel DVD Episode 2 (55 minutes)

Week 4: GGS Part Two: The Rise and Spread of Food (continued)
   TU 9/22: GGS Ch. 8: Apples or Indians
TH 9/24: GGS Ch. 9: Zebras, Unhappy Marriages, and the Anna Karenina Principle; Ch. 10: Spacious Skies and Tilted Axes; Reading and discussion quiz #2 including reflective piece

Week 5: GGS Part Three: From Food to Guns, Germs, and Steel
TU 9/29: GGS Ch. 11: Lethal Gift of Livestock; video
TH 10/1: GGS Ch. 12: Blueprints and Borrowed Letters; Guns, Germs, and Steel DVD Episode 3 (55 minutes)

Week 6: GGS Part Three: From Food to Guns, Germs, and Steel (continued); meet this week to review draft of essay #1
TU 10/6: GGS Ch. 13: Necessity’s Mother
TH 10/8: GGS Ch. 14: From Egalitarianism to Kleptocracy; Reading and discussion quiz #3 including reflective piece
Midterm Grades Due (S/U)

Week 7: GGS Part Four: Around the World in Five Chapters; meet this week to brainstorm for essay #2
TU 10/13: GGS Ch. 15: Yali’s People; essay #1 due (1000-1500 words)
TH 10/15: GGS Ch. 16: How China Became Chinese; Ch. 17: Speedboat to Polynesia.

Week 8: GGS Part Four: Around the World in Five Chapters (continued)
TU 10/20: GGS Ch. 18: Hemispheres Colliding
TH 10/22: GGS Ch. 19: How Africa Became Black and Epilogue; Reading and discussion quiz #4 including reflective piece

Week 9: The End of Poverty; meet this week to review draft of essay #2
TU 10/27: EOP Foreword, Introduction & Ch. 1 A Global Family Portrait; oral presentations
TH 10/29: EOP Ch. 2 The Spread of Economic Prosperity; oral presentations;

Week 10: The End of Poverty
TU 11/3: EOP Ch. 3 Why Some Countries Fail to Thrive and Ch. 4 Clinical Economics; essay #2 due (1000-1500 words)
TH 11/5: EOP Ch. 5 Bolivia’s High-Altitude Hyperinflation and Ch. 6 Poland’s Return to Europe; Reading and discussion quiz #5 including reflective piece

Week 11: The End of Poverty; meet this week to brainstorm for essay #3
TU 11/10: EOP Ch. 7 Raping the Whirlwind and Ch. 8 China
TH 11/12: EOP Ch. 9 India’s Market Reforms

Week 12: The End of Poverty
TU 11/17: EOP Ch. 10 The Voiceless Dying and Ch. 11 The Millennium, 9/11, and the United Nations; Reading and discussion quiz #6 including reflective piece
TH 11/19: EOP Ch. 12 On-the-Ground Solutions

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11/21-11/29 Thanksgiving Break

**Week 13:** *The End of Poverty; meet this week to review drafts of essay #3*
- TU 12/1: *EOP* Ch. 13 Making the Investments Needed to End Poverty and Ch. 14 A Global Compact to End Poverty
- TH 12/3: *EOP* Ch 15 Can the Rich Afford to Help the Poor?

**Week 14:** *The End of Poverty*
- TU 12/8: *EOP* Ch. 16 Myths and Magic Bullets and Ch. 17 Why We Should Do It;
  **Reading and discussion quiz # 7 including reflective piece**
- TH 12/10: *EOP* Ch. 18 Our Generation's Challenge; essay #3 due (1000-1500 words)