

**University of Wisconsin-Madison  
HISTORY/INTERNATIONAL STUDIES 330  
Global History of Humanitarianism**



Professor: Emily Callaci  
ejcallaci@wisc.edu  
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30-3:30  
Class Time: Tuesday and Thursday 1:00-2:15  
Class Location: Humanities 1651

TA: E. Mintah Danquah  
Office hours: Tuesday 10am-12pm  
Office: 4274 Mosse Humanities Building

Course Requisite: Sophomore Standing

Level: Intermediate

Mode of Instruction: In Person

L&S Credit: Counts as Liberal Arts and Science credit in L&S

Course credits: 4

Credit Policy: The credit standard for this course is met by an expectation of a total of 180 hours of student engagement with the course learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit), which include regularly scheduled class meeting times (two 75 minute lectures and one 50 minute discussion section per week) reading, writing, field trips, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

What motivates us to try to alleviate the suffering of people in distant parts of the world? This is one of the questions that threads through this course on the global history of humanitarianism. Students in this course will examine the origins of humanitarian ideas and institutions, and how various humanitarian campaigns have been shaped by geopolitical processes, including the abolition of the slave trade, the spread of missionary Christianity, imperialism, the Cold War, and economic liberalization. Questions include: who has benefited from various humanitarian aid campaigns throughout history? How

have various humanitarian campaigns shaped, and been shaped by, patterns of global inequality? Why have some populations, and not others, been deemed worthy of the world's compassion? We will explore the worlds, perspectives and visions of humanitarians through a range of scholarly writings and primary sources, including diary entries, memoirs, journalistic reportage, photography, and documentary film.

This course will be divided into two modules. For the first nine weeks, up to spring break, we will explore a broad history of global humanitarianism, from the abolitionists through the present day. After spring break, we will spend the remaining weeks of the semester engaging in various debates and discussions in contemporary humanitarianism.

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Identify and discuss the ways in which modern humanitarianism has transformed over time
- Compare and contrast different traditions of humanitarian thought and practice
- Explain how humanitarianism is shaped by global histories of imperialism, geopolitics, capitalism
- Locate ourselves and our communities within the broader global history of humanitarian intervention. By identifying how we fit into this uneven global history, we deepen our sense of personal and social responsibility. (This aligns a key learning goal of the Wisconsin Idea).
- Apply the skills of historical research to any topic, in and beyond this class. These skills, which align with the goals of the History Major, include:
  - posing original research questions
  - analyzing primary sources
  - making evidence-based arguments
  - communicating research findings in a clear way

#### REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION:

##### **In-class Reading Responses: 20%**

Each class, students will receive a 4x6 notecard. During each class session, 5-10 minutes will be set aside for students to reflect on a question relevant to the theme of that day's class. Most often, the question will refer to the readings due for that class session.

Sometimes, students will be asked to respond to, or interpret, an image or quotation presented in class. They are ungraded. There are 24 in total, worth 1 point each. You may

miss 4 without penalty. If you complete 20, you will receive the full 20 points for this assignment.

### **Essays: 45%**

Over the course of the semester, you will complete 3 short writing assignments that will require you to analyze scholarly readings and/or primary sources.

#### **Essay #1, Primary Source Analysis: 15%**

In this essay, you will analyze, compare and contrast at least two humanitarian primary sources from the syllabus. We will discuss and analyze these sources in class and discussion sections, so in writing this paper, you will be building on work you have already done.

#### **Essay #2, Historical Essay: 15%**

Journalist David Rieff argues that humanitarianism in the contemporary world has lost its way, and can only be redeemed by returning to its original principles of independence and neutrality. Do you agree? Write an essay assessing and responding to his argument, drawing on various historical examples from our course materials.

#### **Essay #3, Op-Ed: Contemporary Humanitarianism 15%**

In this final essay, you will write a short opinion essay analyzing a contemporary humanitarian issue or event in historical perspective. Research for this essay will be based on your group projects. (see below)

### **Group Project: Research Group Work (15%)**

Near the end of module 1, we will form smaller working groups of 4-6 students to follow and study a current event related to humanitarianism. Groups will follow that topic across media sources, develop a shared set of historical questions about that topic, conduct some background research on that topic, and, at the end of the semester, teach the rest of the class about that topic. This group project has three components: the topic pitch, in which each student will “pitch” a potential topic to their group members, and group members will vote on which one to pursue (5%), annotated bibliography (5%) and class presentation (5%).

### **Participation: 20%**

This grade is based on student participation in discussion sections.

### **GRADING SCALE:**

A = 93-100%  
AB = 88-92%  
B = 83-87%  
BC = 78-82%  
C = 70-77  
F = -69

#### REQUIRED TEXTS:

All readings for this course will be available through the course website.

#### RESOURCES AND POLICIES

##### *Office Hours:*

I encourage you all to come to my office hours to discuss any aspect of the course or your academic program. These hours are set aside specifically for your benefit, and I really hope to see you there! I am available both in person in my office or remotely, via Zoom.

##### *Academic Honesty:*

The University of Wisconsin takes matters of academic honesty very seriously. Plagiarism in particular is a very serious offense that can pose a real threat to your success and to the integrity of our broader learning community. I will strictly enforce the university policies on academic honesty. The rules about plagiarism can sometimes be confusing. If you are unsure about them, please be on the safe side and check. You can start here:

[http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA\\_plagiarism.html](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html)

If you are still unsure about what constitutes plagiarism, and whether you are committing plagiarism, please come speak to me during office hours. Ignorance of the definition of plagiarism will not be an acceptable excuse. More detailed information about student codes of conduct may be found here:

<http://students.wisc.edu/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html#points>

#### **ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES STATEMENT**

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA. (See: [McBurney Disability Resource Center](#))

## DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STATEMENT

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals. The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.

As an historian, I recognize that my profession has privileged certain people and excluded others—both in terms of the people who gotten jobs as history professors, and in terms of the perspectives and experiences that have been deemed worthy of historical inquiry. I also acknowledge that the University of Wisconsin-Madison itself occupies the ancestral lands of the Ho-Chunk, a place their nation has called Teejop. In an 1832 treaty, the Ho-Chunk were forced to cede this territory. While we cannot undo all forms of historical injustice in a single seminar, we recognize our ongoing obligation to foster a more just and inclusive university, and within it, a more just and inclusive discipline of History.

We must start by educating ourselves about how our institution, UW Madison, fits into histories of exclusion. Towards that end, on October 3, we will take a class field trip to the Chazen Museum to view the Public History exhibit entitled “Sifting and Reckoning: UW Madison’s History of Exclusion and Resistance.”

As a professor, I take seriously my responsibility to create a safe learning environment where all students can participate in open and honest dialogue with one another. I expect all members of the seminar to contribute to a learning atmosphere that is respectful and inclusive and which recognizes the dignity of each member. I welcome disagreement and varying viewpoints as a productive and necessary part of intellectual inquiry, and I expect seminar members to express disagreement in a respectful way.

### Academic Resources for Students:

**DoIT Help Desk** – If you have questions about Canvas, BBCollaborate, Zoom or other platforms supported by UW, you can contact the DoIT Help Desk:  
<https://it.wisc.edu/services/help-desk/>

**History Lab** – The History Lab is a resource where expert PhD students work with you and your history/history of science projects 1-on-1. No matter your stage in the writing process—choosing a topic, conducting research, composing a thesis, outlining your argument, revising your drafts—the History Lab staff will help you sharpen your skills and become a more successful writer. Visit our website <http://go.wisc.edu/HLAB> early and often to schedule an appointment with a Lab TA or to find writing tips, guides, and resources.

SCHEDULE:

**Module 1: Histories of Humanitarianism**

Week 1:

Tues 1/21: Introductions

Read:

Thur 1/23: Tues: What is humanitarianism?

Read:

1. Teju Cole, "The White Savior Industrial Complex," *Known and Strange Things*, (2016), 340-349
2. Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: a History of Humanitarianism*, 1-46 (Introduction and Chapter 1)

Week 2:

Tues 1/28: Slavery, Abolition and Slave Redemption

Read:

1. Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa the African, Written by Himself* (London, 1789) (excerpts)

Peruse: [Brooks Slave Ship, British Museum](#)

*Recommended Reading:* Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, Chapter 3, 57-75

Thurs 1/30: Saving Women and Children: Imperial Feminism

Read:

1. Mrinalini Sinha, "Editor's Introduction," Katherine Mayo, *Selections from Mother India*, 1-39
2. Katherine Mayo, *Mother India*, 69-80
3. Responses to Miss Mayo, 88-92

*Listen (or Read transcript):* [How Afghanistan Became America's 'first feminist war.'](#)  
Wisconsin Public Radio

Week 3:

Tues 2/4: "Red Rubber" in the Congo Free State

Read:

1. E.D. Morel, *Red Rubber: The Story of the Rubber Slave trade that flourishes on the Congo for twenty years, 1890-1910*, (Manchester, UK: National Labour Press, 1919). (excerpts)
2. Adam Hochschild, "Leopold's Congo: A holocaust we have yet to comprehend" *Chronicle of Higher Education* 46 (36), 2000.

Thurs 2/6: Innocent Bystanders, Neutrality and the Rules of War

Read:

1. Henry Dunant, *A Memory of Solferino*, 1862, (13-48, 115-128)
2. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, Chapter 4 (76-94)

Week 4: Wisconsin Historical Society, Russian Relief Inc. (asynchronous)

Tues 2/11: Half the class goes to archive and completes handout

Thurs 2/13: Half of the class goes to archive and complete handout

Read:

Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, Chapters 5-6 (95-131)

Friday: discuss and synthesize archival findings in sections

Week 5:

Tues 2/18: World War II and the New International Order

Starting reading: Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*

Thur 2/20: Decolonization, "Development" and foreign aid

Finish reading: Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*

Due: Essay 1

Week 6:

Tues 2/25: New Media, Biafra and the Rise of Doctors Without Borders

Read:

1. Kurt Vonnegut, "Biafra: A People Betrayed"
2. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, Ch 7

Thur 2/27: Humanitarianism and The Cold War

Read:

1. Peter Redfield, "The Impossible Problem of Neutrality," in *Forces of Compassion: Humanitarianism between Ethics and Politics*, eds. Erica Bornstein and Peter Redfield, Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2011, 53-70.
2. David Rieff, "Humanitarianism in Crisis," *Foreign Affairs*, 2002, 678-700

Week 7:

Tues 3/4: Making War Against War?

Read:

1. Mariella Pandolfi, "Humanitarianism and its Discontents," in *Forces of Compassion: Humanitarianism Between Ethics and Politics*, 91-115
2. Optional: Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, Ch 9

Thur 3/6: Rwanda Genocide

Read:

1. Philip Gourevitch, "The Genocide Fax," *The New Yorker*, May 11, 1998.
2. Lars Waldorf, "Remnants and Remains: Narratives of Suffering in Post-Genocide Rwanda's *Gacaca* courts," *Humanitarianism and suffering: the mobilization of empathy*, 2008, (285-305)

Week 8:

Tues 3/11: HIV/AIDS and the Reconfiguration of Humanitarian Aid

Read:

Vinh-Kim Nguyen, *Republic of Therapy: Triage and Therapy in West Africa's Time of AIDS*, 2010, 1-33, 175-188

Thur 3/13: Give Us the Money! Live Aid and celebrity humanitarianism

Read:

Lisa Ann Richey, "Celebrity: a key concept for understanding the power of 'helping,'" in *Routledge International Handbook of Critical Philanthropy and Humanitarianism*, 209-222.

Week 9:

Tues 3/18: Refugees and Borders

*Read:*

Miriam Ticktin, "Where ethics and politics meet: The violence of humanitarianism in France," *American Ethnologist* 33(1), 2006, 33-39

Thur 3/20: Neutrality Revisited: Discussion

*Optional Reading:* Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, Chapter 10

Due Friday: Essay #2

SPRING BREAK, March 22-March 30

## **Module 2: Debates in Humanitarianism**

Week 10:

Tues 4/1: Do-Gooders

*Read:*

1. Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence and Morality," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1(3), 1972, 229-243
2. Larissa MacFarquhar, "The Kindest Cut: what sort of person gives a kidney to a stranger?" *The New Yorker*, 2009

Thur 4/3: Paul Farmer and Partners in Health

*Watch:* Bending the Arc (film)

Due Friday: Group Project Topic Pitch

Week 11:

Tues 4/8: Volunteering Abroad

*Read:*

Claire Wendland, Susan Erikson, and Noelle Sullivan. "Beneath the spin: moral complexity and rhetorical simplicity in global health volunteering," in *Volunteer Economies: The Politics and Ethics of Voluntary Labour in Africa*, eds. Ruth Prince and Hannah Brown, Rochester: James Currey, 2016, 164-182.

Thur 4/10: Can We Shop to Save the World?

*Read:*

Lisa Richey and Stefano Ponte, "Better (RED)™ Than Dead? Celebrities, Consumption and International Aid," *Third World Quarterly* 29 (4), 2008, 711-729.

Due Friday: group annotated bibliography

Week 12:

Tues 4/15: Can Billionaires Save the World?

*Read:*

1. Jason Cowley, "Bill Gates: The Optimists Dilemma," *The New Statesman*, November 2024
2. Joshua Yaffa, "How to Give Away a Fortune," *The New Yorker*, September 2024
3. Edouard Morena, "The Spirit of Climate Philanthropy," *Routledge International Handbook of Critical Philanthropy and Humanitarianism*, 248-256
4. Kenneth Saltman, "Political Economy of Education Philanthropy," in *Routledge International Handbook of Critical Philanthropy and Humanitarianism*, 59-68

Thur 4/17: Is there such thing as a "natural" disaster?

*Read:*

1. Theodore Steinberg, "What is a Natural Disaster?" *Literature and Medicine* 15(1), 1996, 1-14.
2. Dider Fassin, "The Predicament of Humanitarianism," *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences* 22(1), 2013, 33-48.
3. Paula Vasquez Lezama, "Compassionate Militarization: The Management of a Natural Disaster in Venezuela," *Contemporary States of Emergency*, 197-216

Week 13:

Tues 4/22: Class Visit

Thur 4/24: Group work

Week 14: Final Presentations

Tues 4/29: Presentations

Thur 5/1: Presentations

Due May 8: Essay #3