Seminar on Ethics and Development

Two most important changes in ethics in recent years are the shift from theories of national justice to global justice, and the shift from a primary emphasis on rights to a greater emphasis on responsibilities.

This seminar is specifically designed for students interested in global justice and responsibility and the inter-disciplinary graduate specialization in Ethics and Development. Students will be expected to make one seminar presentation, comment on the presentations of two other students, and write a final essay on one of the major topics we have discussed.

Books required for purchase are:


All other required readings for the seminar will be on the ANGEL site for the course.

The seminar meetings and readings are divided into four overlapping sections: Global Justice, Development, Responsibility, and Recognition. All of the philosopher and social scientists we read will have views about these four concepts, but how they connect them and where they place the most emphasis varies. Consequently, there will be some backtracking as we move from one section to the next. The goal of the seminar is not to find the one right ordering of these concepts or neatly separate them from one another, but to gain a better understanding of the multiple and complex ways in which they are dependent upon one another.

I. Global Justice

The accounts of global justice in this section presuppose and take as their point of departure the work of John Rawls, arguably the most influential theory of justice for the contemporary liberal nation-state. The most relevant Rawls texts for our purposes are *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* and *The Law of Peoples*. Even where they disagree with Rawls, the philosophers we will be considering define their views on justice in some measure in response to his.
Selections (*) and Recommendations:

Articles:
- Richard J. Arneson, “Two Cheers for Capabilities”

II. Development

The concept of development, unlike justice, rights, or responsibilities, is not a commonly thought of as primarily a moral concept, at least not the same kind of moral concept. To the extent that philosophers have taken an interest in development, initially it was to point out the unargued moral assumptions underlying particular models of economic growth and political modernization associated with development. Thomas McCarthy reminds us that conceptions of development, enlightenment, progress, and civilization historically have been used to reconcile philosophical claims to universality with the reality of colonial and imperial practices.

However, with the work of Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum, and others, there is a growing desire to formulate a less dissonant ethical theory of development. For some philosophers, such a theory should be organized around human rights; for others such as Sen development should center around human freedom and political agency.

Selections(*) and Recommendations:
Articles:

- Sabina Alkire, “Structural Injustice and Democratic Practice: The Trajectory in Sen’s Writings,” in Deneulin, Nebel, and Sagovsky, eds., Capability and Justice, 2005
- Jay Drydyk, “When is Development more Democratic?” Journal of Human Development and Capabilities, Vol. 6, no.2, 2005

III. Responsibility

The concept of responsibility has been analyzed along several different axes. Philosophers distinguish between moral, legal, and political responsibilities; and also between individual, shared, collective, and institutional responsibilities. The discussions of responsibility in this section all presuppose in one way or another theories of justice and development. In some cases this means grounding an account of responsibility in a particular conception of global justice, in others it involves explaining how a particular type of ethical theory of development entails an account of individual or collective responsibility.
Selections(*) and Recommendations:

Articles:

IV. Recognition (depending upon time available)

Philosophers usually distinguish recognition from distributive justice by defining recognition as a particular kind of moral attitude toward disenfranchised, minority, sub-altern, or significantly different groups and cultures. However, in this section recognition refers to self-understanding and motivation, not the recognition or mis-recognition of the Other. How can and should individuals, groups, and organizations recognize their own responsibilities for past global injustices and the promotion of future ethical development?

Philosophers such as Peter Singer and Amartya Sen tend to put their faith in the power of rational argument and public reason. My inclination is to turn to additional sources in literature and the visual and performing arts through a process of democratic political education to prompt greater recognition of one’s responsibilities for global justice and ethical development.

- Anne Aghion, dir., *My Neighbor, My Killer*
• Claude Lanzmann, dir., *Shoah*
• W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*
• W.G. Sebald, *The Emigrants*
• Michael Slote, *The Ethics of Care and Empathy* (2007)