

**POSC 479: Critical Issues in Political Thought - World Poverty
SPRING 2017**

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Tues/Thurs 8:00 – 9:20 a.m., VKC210
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This class provides an introduction to world poverty by addressing three main questions:

1. *What do we know about the causes of extreme poverty, particularly the approximately one billion people living on less than one dollar a day?*
2. *How should we go about fighting poverty? In particular, how do governments address poverty already, and what else should they do?*
3. *What roles and responsibilities do private and international actors have in mitigating poverty?*

In the first part of the course, we will begin with conceptual issues. What do we mean by poverty, inequality and vulnerability? How do we measure them? Who are the world's poor: where do they live, and what do they do? Is world poverty increasing or decreasing? In the next part, we explore some of the main causes of global poverty, including colonialism, civil war, geography, corruption, and globalization. Having identified some of the key causes, we will explore what is being done to fight poverty and, in particular, what we expect governments to do and whether those expectations are politically realistic. We also look into the roles and responsibilities of the international community, and will cover some of the debates over medicine, aid, trade, and the NGOs. The course will conclude with a discussion of some of the ethical issues surrounding world poverty: What, if anything, do we owe the poor of other countries and why?

This course has a moderate reading load. On average, students will be expected to read about thirty pages (one to two articles or chapters) for each class. Class lectures are designed to supplement the readings rather than summarize them, so students are expected to attend lectures having read the assigned materials. There will be ample opportunities for class discussion, and students are encouraged to ask questions and contribute.

Required books:

1. Sumner, Andy (2016). *Global Poverty: Deprivation, Distribution, and Development Since the Cold War*. Oxford University Press.
2. Banerjee, Abhijit Vinayak, Roland Benabou, and Dilip Mookherjee, Eds. (2006). *Understanding Poverty*. Oxford University Press.
3. Collier, Paul (2007). *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Falling and What Can Be Done About It*. Oxford University Press.