THE POLITICS OF NGOS

What are nongovernmental organizations and what is their place in politics and policy? On the one hand, NGOs can advocate on behalf of poor and otherwise marginalized communities in government. And on the other hand, NGOs can provide important community services in areas where government programs are absent. Recent global transformations over the last twenty years have deepened each of these roles, as international NGOs and domestic grassroots groups have taken on new responsibilities once thought of as the domains of political parties and the state. What is the relationship between international and domestic nongovernmental organizations? What is the relationship between their roles as civic advocates and service providers? How has the expanded authority of nongovernmental organizations affected democratic development? What kinds of groups in society are more likely to organize, and what kinds of groups get left out? Drawing on literature from Political Science and Sociology, this course will develop a transnational understanding of emerging patterns of nongovernmental organizations and advocacy.

This course will also focus on developing students’ writing and research skills. After four weeks of exploring the scholarly literature, students will select for comparative analysis two nongovernmental organizations, two NGO projects, or two countries. Students will be responsible for turning in memos and annotated readings, and then draft sections of the paper on an assigned schedule so that they can get feedback from me about how to structure and organize an original research paper. Student participation in this course will culminate in an 18-25 page research paper addressing one particular dimension of the politics of NGOs. An expected outcome of this course, then, is that students will know how to conduct original research and to write an analytic paper for a social-science audience. This course is thus intended as a building block for students on their way to taking upper-division classes in the social sciences.

Course Objectives

Throughout the course of the semester, you should:

1. gain an understanding of the core debates about NGOs, how they connect to your cases, and how they connect to social-science theories;

2. develop the analytic tools to design and conduct a social-science research project; and

3. improve your writing ability.
Class Meetings

Students must be fully prepared at all times to discuss the readings and concepts from that day’s material, and that of previous classes. Because this class is a small seminar, I will not be lecturing to you. Instead, our classes will revolve around active group discussion of the reading materials. This means that every class period will require you to spend some non-reading time preparing for class. Create a habit of setting aside non-reading time to prepare your ideas. Several days before class, I will email you an overview of the readings and study questions; you should be prepared to discuss the answers to these questions every class.

Student Assessment

Your final grade for the course will be composed as follows:

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<td>Class engagement</td>
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<td>15%</td>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
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See the Assignment Schedule document for details.

Grading

The class is not curved; you will be evaluated on your own merits rather than on how you compare to your peers. Written assignments will be graded according to the following criteria:

- Mechanics: Overall quality of writing
- Structure of your argument
- Evidence: factual accuracy and appropriate use of course materials
- Argument: Conceptual clarity and analytical rigor
**Course Policies**

- **Attendance:**
  - Attendance: Attending class is mandatory. Should you have to miss a class, it is your responsibility to learn about any assignments, discussion, etc. from other students in the course. I will not send you summaries of lectures or classes, so please do not request them.
  - Note: Attending class is not the same as participating in class. Active engagement with the material we are covering in this class is critical to your success, and to your class participation grade. I expect you to ask questions in class and make informed contributions to discussion.

- **Respect:**
  - Respect for others: This course provides a forum for lively debate about competing visions of politics and society. Throughout the semester, we will be addressing some issues on which people may have strong and diverse opinions. Please respect one another by giving thoughtful consideration to the comments made by your peers, even if you disagree, and by addressing your comments at the ideas presented, not the person presenting them.

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• **Communication:**
  o Checking your email: I expect you to check your email regularly. I will typically send announcements to you via email. You are responsible for the material I send electronically, and you are responsible for ensuring that the email account listed on D2L is one you check regularly.
  o Sending email: I will dedicate some (necessarily limited) amount of time to answering emails from students, in the order that I receive them. Whether it takes me a day or three weeks to respond to your email depends upon the volume of email I receive. Before sending me an email, consider whether coming to see me during office hours may be a more efficient option.
  o Office hours: Please come visit! I welcome and encourage you to use my office hours to discuss the lectures, readings, and any other concerns or thoughts you might be having. (Keep in mind that there is generally a positive correlation between showing up for office hours and grades.)

• **Laptops and other electronic devices:**
  o Laptops may only be used by those with special learning needs that have consulted with me in advance. If you need advice on how to take notes effectively using paper and pen, you can come to office hours and I can suggest note-taking strategies.
  o Cell phones should be silenced during class.
    ▪ If the phone becomes distracting I will ask you to turn it off.
    ▪ If you have a special need to keep your cell phone on, such as to monitor a sick child, see me before class and I will make a special accommodation.

• **Students with learning differences:** If you anticipate needing any type of an academic accommodation in this course please (1) discuss this with me as soon as possible AND (2) consult the office of disability services to register your academic needs [http://www.marquette.edu/disability-services/](http://www.marquette.edu/disability-services/). In order for you to receive any type of academic accommodation, I will need to receive, from the Disability Services Center during the first few weeks of the semester, formal notification of the academic accommodation to which your disability entitles you.

• **Losing points for submitting assignments late:** You will lose one third of a letter grade (e.g. your grade will fall from A- to B+) for each day an assignment is late. Late penalty waivers will be granted only if you present me with written documentation of the legitimate circumstances that prevented you from completing the assignment on time within one week of the assignment’s due date.

• **Grade appeals:** If you want to appeal an assigned grade, you must submit to me a typed, one-page statement explaining why the grade should be changed. Note that doing so gives me license to adjust the questioned grade either upward or downward. At the same time, I am more than happy to discuss your papers and exams during office hours with the goal of helping you to improve your performance the next time.
• Under no circumstances will extra credit be offered.

• Academic dishonesty:
  You, as a Marquette student, have taken the Honor Pledge. This pledge states:
  
  I recognize the importance of personal integrity in all aspects of life and work.
  I commit myself to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, by which I earn the respect of others.
  I support the development of good character, and commit myself to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity as an important aspect of personal integrity.
  My commitment obliges me to conduct myself according to the Marquette University Honor Code.

  o University policy and unfortunate experiences compel the following statement of principle: Students who engage in plagiarism or cheating as defined by official university policy will automatically be referred to the Marquette University Honor Council. See http://www.marquette.edu/provost/integrity-index.php. No exceptions.

  o Additional note on plagiarism: in all of your writing, you must identify the nature and extent of your intellectual indebtedness to the authors whose work you have read, or to anyone else from whom you have gotten ideas (including classmates). Failure to acknowledge and properly attribute your reliance on someone else’s ideas, thoughts, words, research, theories, evidence, findings, or argument is PLAGIARISM. Failing to provide page numbers for quotations or paraphrasing in a paper, or paraphrasing or summarizing the work of others without acknowledging the source in the text of your paper IS PLAGIARISM. Plagiarism is wrong, unethical and dishonest.

Readings

There are TWO books that are required for this course.

  o Available for purchase at the bookstore.

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Most required readings are articles.
  • These articles are listed on the syllabus and available either through a direct online search or through the library’s website.
  • It is your job to find, download, and print these articles.

A few readings are posted on the course web site (See http://d2l.marquette.edu).
  • Readings posted on the course web site are followed by “D2L” in the list of required readings below.
Course Schedule

Week 1: Introductions  
September 1:
• No assigned reading

September 3: Class cancelled

PART I: SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Week 2: Who Does What and How?  
September 8, 10

September 8: Killing with Kindness

MEET IN LIBRARY

September 10: Resources

Week 3: NGOs and Governance  
September 15, 17

September 15: Causal Reasoning

September 17: Outcomes for Governance
PART II: ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

Week 4: Political Opportunities  
September 22, 24

September 22:
• No reading assigned

ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE IN CLASS

September 24: Participatory Governance

Week 5: Resources  
September 29, October 1

September 29: resource-mobilization theory

October 1: how resources affect strategies

Week 6: Resources and Frames  
October 6, 8

October 6: the Internet as a new resource?

October 8: framing as a strategy for advocacy

Week 7: Structure  
October 13, 15

October 13: how structure affects strategy
• No reading assigned

ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE IN CLASS—TWO PRINTED COPIES REQUIRED

October 15: The internal organization of NGOs

**Week 8:**

October 20: **Office hours appointments**
• Students will meet with me individually to discuss their theses instead of meeting in class.

October 22: **Midterm break**

**PART III: TRANSNATIONAL ADVOCACY**

**Week 9: Activists Beyond Borders**

October 27: No reading assigned.

**ASSIGNMENT 3 DUE IN CLASS**

October 29: The Boomerang Pattern I

**Week 10: The Boomerang Pattern in Action**

November 3: The Boomerang Pattern II

November 5: Frames

**Week 11: Tensions between the Global and the Local**

November 10:
• No reading assigned

**ASSIGNMENT 4 DUE IN CLASS**
November 12: framing for a global versus local audience

PART IV: NGOS AND GOVERNANCE

Week 12: Accountability

November 17: Societal Accountability

November 19: The neoliberal project

Week 13: The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly

November 24: What is corruption

ASSIGNMENT 5 DUE IN CLASS

November 26: Thanksgiving Break

Week 14: State Capacity

December 1: Displacing the state

December 3: State-society synergy

**Week 15: What We Have Learned**

December 8: student presentations
• No reading assigned

December 10: student presentations
• No reading assigned

**ASSIGNMENT 6 DUE IN CLASS**