

Policy Topics: Sustainable Development
Carnegie Mellon University
Heinz College of Public Policy
444 North Capitol St., NW, Suite 399
Washington, DC 20001

Fall 2021 Mini-Course - 6 Units
October 18 – December 6, 2021
Mondays 6:00 pm to 8:50 pm EST
Consultation Hours: By Appointment

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Course Description

In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly approved the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which established an ambitious set of goals for achieving progress in human development, climate change, and social justice in a prescribed 15-year time frame. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the “Global Goals,” represent a new approach by the international community to encourage and facilitate broad-based progress across multiple sectors in every country, regardless of its socioeconomic status.



The SDGs reflect an optimistic perspective on development, informed by the inputs of millions of people worldwide. They highlight the tremendous progress made in improving the quality of human life during the past 200 years, and in particular since the end of World War II. Building on this record, achieving the SDGs would address the most serious inequities that exist across the globe, including extreme poverty, food insecurity, illiteracy, and inadequate health care.

The Global Goals should also matter to Heinz College students because Carnegie Mellon University has adopted them as a reference point for its own efforts to support a 21st Century approach to sustainable research, learning, and action. CMU’s recently completed [Voluntary University Review](#), the first of its kind anywhere in the world, gauges the extent to which the CMU community aligns education, research, and practice with the Global Goals. As this class will demonstrate, the SDGs were conceived at the global level and adopted by national governments, but can also provide a common framework and vocabulary for regions, cities, organizations, firms, and individuals to plan and take action on sustainable

development.

Since the SDGs' adoption in 2015, the world has experienced tremendous upheaval. President Donald Trump's presidency and "America First" approach to global leadership, the COVID-19 pandemic, the accompanying economic and social reverberations, and geopolitical trends such as the increasingly bitter U.S.-China competition, and insufficient action to address worsening climate change have dramatically complicated the SDG agenda, while simultaneously making it more urgent than ever.

By 2050, the global population will reach 9.6 billion people. To feed an increasingly affluent number of people, the international community will need 70 percent more food production and a doubling of available water and arable land, and some of these increases will come at the expense of existing natural systems. The availability of essential natural inputs is further complicated by the reality that the planet is undergoing vast biological and physical changes due to climate change and environmental degradation.

The SDGs are not well-known to most Americans. Yet, the problems and challenges they address resonate domestically and can provide a vocabulary and structure for showing how current trends and movements compare with others worldwide. Indeed, the primary issues dominating U.S. politics track closely with SDGs, from COVID-19 (SDG 3); infrastructure, water quality, and sustainable cities (SDGs 9, 6, and 11); the "green new deal" and other climate action (SDG 13); the #MeToo Movement and evolving concepts of gender identity (SDG 5); renewed attention to employment, automation, and the quality of work (SDG 8); persistent poverty and hunger (SDG 1 and 2) and the efforts to reduce inequalities (SDG 10); and perhaps most significantly, the ongoing struggle for social justice, political reconciliation, and institutional reform, particularly in the realm of law enforcement (SDG 16). Fundamentally, the SDGs' main value is in their applicability for all nations and societies – not just in the so-called "developing world" – to think, talk, and act on issues of common, global concern.

Why Take This Course?

This course examines a few critical questions for young leaders. What motivations drive the international development community to transfer billions of dollars' worth of aid each year? Why do ordinary Americans routinely give generously to better the lives of strangers on other continents? What role do history, economics, race, and politics play in sustainable development? Who gets to participate in determining the future of humanity, and the distribution and use of the planet's scarce resources? Who is excluded from those decisions and why? How do various leaders, advocates, spoilers, and opportunists wield and withhold power in the global system? And most importantly, is our highly intelligent yet fractious human species even capable of transcending our differences to achieve a handful of Global Goals?

The path we will take in exploring these questions is to analyze and interrogate the rapidly changing world of global development, with a focus on how to achieve **sustainable development** - that is, making sustainable and equitable improvements in human well-being without irreparable damage to the natural environment. Using the SDGs as a reference point, the course presents a journey through the historical legacy of development – both flawed and noble – to our contemporary world, and beyond to the year 2030. The challenge we will explore together is how

to design a 21st century strategy in an environment of competing priorities and paradigms, complex problems, diverse constituents, and multiple domestic and international stakeholders.

The course requires no previous experience in, or substantial prior knowledge of, the SDGs or global development. Upon completion, students should be able to demonstrate: 1) a much broader and deeper understanding of sustainable development issues and stakeholders; 2) analytical skills to serve more effectively as a policy-maker or influencer; 3) tools to engage as a global citizen activist; and 4) subject-matter expertise on one of the 17 SDGs.

Significantly, the mini-course time frame also overlaps entirely with the [2021 U.N. Climate Change Conference](#) (a.k.a. “COP 26”), a high-profile and potentially history-making event that relates directly to the SDGs. We will discuss COP 26 during the November 22 class.

Course Calendar

All class periods are in-person (as of this writing, and subject to change per CMU and/or DC policies regarding the COVID-19 pandemic), and will take place at the Heinz College Washington, DC Office on Monday evenings, 6:00 pm to 8:50 pm EST, with everyone wearing masks.

October 18 The SDGs in a Nutshell Select an SDG to track	October 25 Origins and Legacies of Global Development	November 1 Critical Thinking about Development: Power, Privilege, and Belonging Discussion of Policy Pitch and Memo Assignment	November 8 SDGs at the Local Level SDG briefing paper due before class
November 15 SDGs and U.S. Foreign Policy	November 22 SDGs and Activism + COP 26 After-Action Review	November 29 Imagining Planet Earth in 2030: Where Do We Go from Here? Discussion board blog posts due before class	December 6 POLICY PITCHES and Wrap-Up Final Policy Memo due December 9 @ 11:59pm

Tracking Individual SDGs

We will use the SDGs continuously throughout the course as a rubric for exploring sustainable development topics. However, keeping track of all 17 SDGs can be mind-boggling. Thus, during the first class session, students will select one of the 17 Goals to concentrate on for the remainder of the course. This will be “your Goal” to track, and the lens through which to focus your attention as we read, view, and discuss sustainable development in general. Come to class prepared to share your perspectives on readings, videos, and current events in the context of “your Goal.”

More Than Just Data

"They have the guns. We have the poets. Therefore, we will win." – Howard Zinn

Last but not least, you will discover, as we unpack the cerebral-sounding topic of "sustainable development," that we are likely to delve into issues that invite controversy, reveal differences of opinion, touch on our core beliefs, inspire art and poetry, stoke outrage, and excite passions among all of us. After all, development focuses on the human condition in 2021, with all its defects, opportunities, and vulnerabilities. This includes the historical forces and contemporary political, economic and social systems that determine the distribution of resources and power. These are life-or-death issues. They affect us all and shape our respective world views.

As students in a program that accentuates the use of data to inform and solve policy problems, it can seem that a sober, well-reasoned argument supported by accurate information is sufficient to carry the day. A moment of reflection about the shape and direction of our contemporary world reveals this to be untrue. To be influential in shaping policy, you must also keep in mind the power that abstract ideas, morals, emotions, and basic human psychology can have in persuading individuals, groups, movements, and entire nations to stake out positions on sustainable development challenges. In the margins of this brief survey course, we will explore the role that humor, data visualization, art, poetry, and social media play in shaping public opinion and communicating policy positions in memorable, often visceral ways.

Grading

Grades will be based on four elements:

1. Discussion Boards / Blog Posts – 20% of total

Before the first class session, I will establish some discussion boards on Canvas to invite conversation about various sustainable development related topics and themes. Each discussion board will have a set of instructions and an example of an appropriate post to emulate. Students should post a total of four brief submissions (400-800 words each) to any of the discussion boards during the first seven weeks of the mini-course time frame. **You can submit these posts one by one or all at once, but the final post is due by the beginning of class on November 29.**

Please include an embedded link to at least one outside source, and use your post to reflect your own thoughts and opinions in relation to that source material. Your post will be available for other students (and me, of course!) to review and add comments. The writing style need not be formal, but please use proper spelling, grammar and punctuation.

In my experience, students usually enjoy this type of assignment more – and suffer from less stress overall – when they provide posts methodically between class periods or "front-load" them in the first few weeks of class. However, you have the freedom to do whatever suits your learning style and allows you to achieve balance in other areas of your life.

Grading Rubric: I will grade each of the four posts at five points each (hence 25 points total), so long as they are

1) provided on time;

2) fall within the correct word length;

- 3) have relevance to the themes of the course;
- 4) include links to relevant content; and
- 5) have very few or no spelling and grammatical errors.

It is not unreasonable for students who go beyond these requirements to expect extra credit, although I would suggest a brief conversation with me first if you want to do that.

2. SDG Briefing Paper: 30%. This paper is due before the start of the November 8 class period. The assignment requires you:

- To describe the current state of global progress with respect to your assigned SDG, or a sub-element thereof;
- To examine how US policy tracks with respect to your assigned SDG; and
- To propose 3-4 steps that can be taken (by the US, other governments, civil society, private sector) to advance progress toward achievement of SDG.

The paper should be 3-5 pages, double-spaced and submitted in Word format. Please reach out to me if you have any questions or want to talk through any ideas before submitting the paper. Also, please see the “Grading, Writing and Citation Standards at a Glance” at the end of this syllabus for more information on writing standards and grading policies.

Rubric for Grading the Briefing Paper

Grading Elements	Excellent (100%)	Acceptable (75%)	Needs Improvement (50%)
Does the paper’s content meet the objective of the assignment? (12 points)	The paper adequately addresses the elements outlined in the bullets above within the page limit, using appropriate sources to bolster key arguments.	The paper omits or does not fully cover an element of the assigned scope, is less than a half-page too long or short, and/or fails to provide a citation to where needed to support a key argument.	The paper omits multiple major elements of the assigned content, is more than a half-page shorter or longer than required, and/or has a pattern of insufficient citations and evidence.
Is the paper’s style and perspective persuasive and authoritative? (12 points)	The author states key themes clearly and succinctly, leading readers logically from the summary statement through the key arguments to logical and relevant recommendations.	The author’s arguments do not follow a logical flow. Some points are redundant. There is an uneven quality among the summary, key arguments, and conclusions, but the paper communicates the main points.	The author’s writing style obscures key arguments. Information is presented repetitively or at random, without a logical flow. The paper does not reflect basic conventions for formal writing (summary, argument,

			conclusion).
Is the paper correct in terms of spelling, grammar, and citations? (6 points)	Spelling and grammar mistakes are minor or non-existent; citations follow proper format.	Occasional errors weaken the presentation of the material and create surmountable barriers to readers' attention and access to source data.	Significant or repeated errors distract readers' attention from the content or fail to cite sources accurately and accessibly.

3. Policy Pitch and Memo: 10+30 = 40%.

The Policy Pitch assignment involves two parts: a five-minute presentation to the class on **December 6** (10 percent of total grade), and the submission of another 3-5 page paper in the form of a policy memorandum to the White House and/or U.S. Congress to advocate for or against a position related to sustainable development and aligned with your specific SDG. The paper will be due by **11:59 pm on December 9**, which provides an opportunity to incorporate feedback on the in-class pitch, if desired.

I will provide more information about specific topics by no later than October 31, for discussion in the November 1 class. The reason for the delay has to do with assigning specific SDGs to students

Both the oral and written presentation should include:

- Background related to the issue;
- Significance of the issue;
- Rationale for position presented; and
- Assessment of potential political push-back.

In terms of **grading the Policy Pitch**, I will award two points for each element successfully covered during the five-minute period, plus one point for style of presentation (including length), and one point for Q&A. That equals 10 points total.

Rubric for Grading the Policy Memo

Grading Elements	Excellent (100%)	Acceptable (75%)	Needs Improvement (50%)
Does the paper's content meet the objective of the assignment? (12 points)	The paper adequately addresses the elements outlined in the bullets above within the page limit, using appropriate sources to bolster key arguments.	The paper omits or does not fully cover an element of the assigned scope, is less than a half-page too long or short, and/or fails to provide a citation to where	The paper omits multiple major elements of the assigned content, is more than a half-page shorter or longer than required, and/or has a pattern of insufficient

		needed to support a key argument.	citations and evidence.
Is the paper's style and perspective persuasive and authoritative? (12 points)	The author states key themes clearly and succinctly, leading readers logically from the summary statement through the key arguments to logical and relevant recommendations.	The author's arguments do not follow a logical flow. Some points are redundant. There is an uneven quality among the summary, key arguments, and conclusions, but the paper communicates the main points.	The author's writing style obscures key arguments. Information is presented repetitively or at random, without a logical flow. The paper does not reflect basic conventions for formal writing (summary, argument, conclusion).
Is the paper correct in terms of spelling, grammar, and citations? (6 points)	Spelling and grammar mistakes are minor or non-existent; citations follow proper format.	Occasional errors weaken the presentation of the material and create surmountable barriers to readers' attention and access to source data.	Significant or repeated errors distract readers' attention from the content or fail to cite sources accurately and accessibly.

4. Class Participation – 10% of total

You and your classmates (and your instructor!) will get the most out of the class if you come prepared and fully participate in the discussions. Think about the tough questions you want to discuss, the issues that are raised by the assigned readings, blog posts, and current events. As noted, there will also be some small-group work and a few outside speakers with whom to engage.

I hope that you will participate actively, but respectfully, in classroom discussions on these heady topics. In doing so, please do not take for granted that everyone in the class shares or supports your perspective. Everyone should feel safe and encouraged to share your truths and opinions as you experience them. I believe that much about our nation can be repaired if Americans re-learn the skills and advantages of civil discourse among those who may disagree, yet are willing to see the humanity and validity of others. Please use this class to practice those skills. The future of our country and the planet depends on them.

In terms of grading class participation, I will assign ten points to every student. I will only deduct points because of three factors:

- 1) Chronic attendance problems, taking into account reasonable accommodations, uncontrollable things like weather events, and the exigencies of the COVID-19 safety and wellness guidance;

- 2) If I sense you are regularly coming to class unprepared, having neglected readings and other requirements that are not graded in other rubrics; or
- 3) Any major conduct issues that disrupt the class or disrespect fellow students, staff, faculty, or guest speakers.

If I feel the need to deduct points, I will discuss it with you privately, as soon as possible, to try to resolve the issue without penalty.

Course Readings and Videos

Let's be honest. This course competes for your time and attention during a busy, exciting and sometimes stressful period of your academic career at Heinz College. Additionally, each of you brings unique skills and knowledge that will likely supplement or exceed the best-planned syllabus. For that reason, I have tried to be as selective as possible in the course readings and to integrate videos as appropriate alternatives. Part of this strategy is a recognition that sustainable development is evolving in real time – and that implies the need to add a few brief articles here and there to update information or enrich the class discussion.

In exchange, I ask you to please read, view, or listen to all the assigned materials, as they will enhance the quality of time together.

Readings as assigned in the syllabus will be posted on Canvas. Please check each week as the readings included in the syllabus may change; I will let you know if and when they do.

Guest Speakers, Lectures, and Small-Group Work During Class

Except for the first couple of class periods, which require laying some common foundation in the subject matter we are exploring, I intend to limit formal lectures in which I do most of the talking. Rather, my aim is to facilitate discussions with several guest speakers and among students, prompted by questions and comments on the guest speakers' presentations, as well as the assigned readings, videos, and current events. To keep things interesting and fun, we will break into small groups when possible to discuss the materials and share ideas collaboratively.

Class-by-Class Descriptions

Class 1: October 18 - The SDGs in a Nutshell

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

After student and faculty introductions and some initial housekeeping items, this class will introduce the Sustainable Development Goals and invite students to share what they know already from personal experience or other relevant coursework. Key questions include: Where did they come from? What were the politics associated with getting them approved? What progress has been made to date in terms of achieving the prescribed targets? What role are different actors playing in supporting and monitoring their progress? Why are "large-scale collective action problems" so easy to articulate, and so difficult to solve? How has COVID-19 impacted the outlook

for achieving the SDGs, and what does this bode for human development in the next 15 years and beyond?

Also during this class, each student will select or be assigned one of the SDGs to track during the remainder of the course. Naturally, this should be the focus of your policy memo.

I strongly recommend downloading - and even printing out! - this handy one-page [graphic of the SDGs](#). We will all refer to it often over the coming weeks.

Readings:

1. Nicolas Kristoff, "[This Has Been the Best Year Ever](#)," *New York Times*, December 28, 2019.
2. Stephanie Thomson, "[What are the Sustainable Development Goals?](#)," *World Economic Forum*, September 16, 2015.
3. Ian Urbina, "[The Smell of Money](#)," (print edition title; online version is titled "Fish Farming Is Feeding the Globe. What's the Cost for Locals?"), *New Yorker*, March 1, 2021. Note there is also an audio version available that takes about **30 minutes** to listen to. Both are available via the link.

Videos (20 minutes total viewing time):

4. Hans Rosling [200 Countries, 200 Years, 4 Minutes - The Joy of Stats](#), British Broadcasting Corporation, November 26, 2010, **(4:47 in length)**.
5. "[We the People for the Global Goals](#)", United Nations, September 2015, **(2:58)**.
6. Centre for Collective Action Research, Gothenburg, Sweden, [Collective Action 101](#), December 14, 2018, **(5:55)**.
7. "[Is War Over? — A Paradox Explained](#)" Kurzgesagt – In a Nutshell, October 9, 2014, **(5:45)**.

Class 2: October 25 – Motivations, Origins and Legacies of Global Development

The SDGs are both a reflection of and an evolution away from the historical context of global development, which has induced a complex mix of successes, missed opportunities, and unintended consequences as the field interacts with geopolitics and economics.

This lesson provides a crash course in the ends, ways, and means of international development.

The first half explores the most basic question about international development: why do we do it in the first place? The "we" in the previous sentence includes almost all of us. If you or your family have ever given funds to a religious organization, the International Red Cross, or other relief groups; paid taxes in the United States or another donor country; served in a humanitarian assistance or disaster relief operation; volunteered for a cause or advocacy group with links to developing countries; or even donated used clothing and other household goods, then most likely you have contributed to international development. What factors prompted you to do so?

By examining what motivates nations, organizations, and individuals to provide aid to societies outside their borders, this lesson gives strategic leaders insight into the culture of the international development industry and profession.

Over the course of the last 75 years, donors have tried out numerous approaches to implementing assistance programs with varying degrees of success. During the second half, I will discuss the history and legacy of international humanitarian and development assistance and some of the “ways and means” that development practitioners employ.

Readings:

1. Ryan McCannell, “[International Development 101 for Civil Affairs Personnel: Part One - Why Aid?](#)” Civil Affairs Association, 2019.
2. Oxfam, [Foreign Aid 101](#), read pp. 4-13, skim the rest.
3. [The Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), December 10, 1948.
4. Bill and Melinda French Gates Foundation, [Innovation and Inequity: The 2021 Goalkeepers Report](#), September 2021, pp. 1-27. Note: This is not as much reading as the page numbers might imply.

Videos (40 minutes total viewing time):

1. “[Tell ‘Em Joe Sent You](#),” The Truman Project and Truman Center, February 5, 2013 **(1:15)**.
2. “[Bono from U2 on Generosity](#),” September 24, 2015, **(2:16)**.
3. “[An Olive Peace](#),” USAID, May 25, 2016, **(3:01)**.
4. “[Africare Celebrates the Legacy of its Co-Founders C. Payne Lucas and Dr. Joseph C. Kennedy](#),” April 7, 2014, **(6:26)**.
5. “[An Introduction to Amartya Sen’s Development as Freedom](#),” Macat Multimedia Series, March 10, 2018, **(3:33)**.
6. “[Amarta Sen: Think and Act](#),” Fox International, **(2:58)**.
7. “[The Skate Brothers](#),” USAID, May 26, 2016, **(3:24)**.
8. “[Greta Thunberg's full speech to world leaders at UN Climate Action Summit](#),” September 23, 2019, **(5:19)**.
9. “[Shahara Knows Her Rights](#),” USAID, April 18, 2016 **(4:07)**.
10. Fox News: “[Fmr. Marine on Low-Cost Way to Break Cycle of Poverty](#),” FOX News, April 4, 2011, **(2:38)**.
11. “[Kids Discuss America's Global Leadership](#),” U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, n.d., **(1:50)**.

Class 3: November 1 - Critical Thinking about Development: Power, Privilege, and Belonging

The international development industry emerged from the colonial and Cold War period and has continued to be dominated by White, Western, predominantly male subject-matter experts, and a conceptual distinction between the “developed” and “developing” world. The SDGs invite us to think about how sustainable development challenges reflect power and privilege – from the global to the local level.

Like war and politics, international development is fundamentally a human endeavor, with its own sources of friction, fads, and failures. This lesson explores some of the imperfections of

international assistance as described by critics of the development line of effort. In general, aid skeptics tend not to question the need for international assistance, but rather the motivations of aid donors and recipients, as well as the ways and means that aid gets delivered. These critical voices exert pressure on aid officials to improve measures and effectiveness and performance, encourage aid reforms and innovations, and most recently and radically, to transform the power relationships that still reflect the attitudes, assumptions, and access conferred on aid providers since the colonial period.

To explore these areas with us, we are excited that **Shannon Paige** (she/her/hers) is joining us as a guest speaker to discuss the Decolonising Aid study she co-authored for a terrific non-governmental organization called PeaceDirect.

In addition, the policy memo due from each student will be outlined during this class.

Readings and Videos:

1. Shannon Paige, [*Time to Decolonise Aid: Insights and Lessons from a Global Consultation*](#) (London: Peace Direct, 2021). **Please read executive summary, as well as pp. 33-41.**
2. Sarika Bansal, [*"As travel opens up again, aid voluntourism needs to get real,"*](#) *The New Humanitarian*, June 14, 2021.
3. M.A. Williams, *Govern Like Us: U.S. Expectations of Poor Countries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015): Chapter 1, "Blind Spot," 1-20, available via <https://www.library.cmu.edu/> - specifically at <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cm/reader.action?docID=1974563>
4. Macat Multimedia Series, [*"An Introduction to Frantz Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth,"*](#) April 11, 2017, **(3:43)**.
5. Dambisa Moyo, *Dead Aid : Why Aid is Not Working and How There is a Better Way for Africa* (New York : Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 10-28.
6. Ross Coggins, "The Development Set," a poem in Graham Hancock, *Lords of Poverty: The Power, Prestige, and Corruption of the International Aid Business* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1989).
7. [*"39 Cents,"*](#) a humorous take on aid decolonization, courtesy of the cast of *Saturday Night Live*, **(3:00)**.

Class 4: November 8 – SDGs at the Local and University Level

One key innovation since 2015 has been the localization movement: using the SDGs as a framework for addressing sustainable development challenges at the subnational level.

Each summer since 2015, various U.N. member states present Voluntary Reviews as a formal part of the SDG process during an event known as the High Level Political Forum, convened by the United Nations. Drawing inspiration from this process, dozens of cities worldwide (led by New York City) have conducted Voluntary Local Reviews using the SDGs as a convenient framework for planning, civic engagement, accountability, and measuring progress on making urban areas more livable and equitable.

Most exciting, in September 2020, Carnegie Mellon University conducted the first-ever Voluntary University Review. These efforts demonstrate that the SDGs can serve as a useful vocabulary and a common agenda for action at any scale.

We are thrilled to welcome **Alex Hiniker** (she/her/hers), one of the key architects of both the New York City and CMU Voluntary Reviews, as a guest speaker to kick off a discussion in class about these developments.

Also, note that SDG briefing papers are due before class begins.

Readings:

- Skim the [New York City Voluntary Local Review](#) 2019 update and be prepared to answer a few key questions:
 - When was the VLR completed? What is the time horizon? (Hint: “NYC 20__”)
 - In the “Ownership of the Goals” section (p. 22), what unique aspect of NYC’s identity facilitates SDG 17?
 - Which of the SDGs are among the five priority goals, on page 29? If you’re tracking any of these SDGs, what strikes you as interesting as you read through the goal statements?
 - To what extent does NYC’s urban development plan relate to “sustainable development” in the traditional sense? In what ways might it be a new way of thinking about development in a globalized world?
- [Carnegie Mellon University Voluntary University Review](#) of the Sustainable Development Goals, September 2020, read pp. 6-13; skim pp. 32-65, with attention to the SDG you are tracking.
Note: There is a good chance that an updated VUR for CMU will be available by the time this class takes place, in which case I will update the assignment to focus on the newer version.
 - Again, what does this have to do with sustainable development?
 - How does your life as a Heinz School student relate to this VUR? Is it relevant? Does it motivate you (or confuse or discourage you)?

Class 5: November 15 – SDGs and U.S. Foreign Policy

The SDGs have not received a lot of attention in U.S. foreign policy since their adoption, but advocates are working to re-introduce them to policy makers in Washington (and beyond?).

As with any discussion involving the United Nations, the SDGs provoke a broad range of ideological reactions among American policy makers and ordinary citizens. During the Trump Administration, the Global Goals all but vanished as a point of reference, replaced almost entirely by an “America First” approach to U.S. foreign policy that stepped back from climate action and other multilateral commitments. The election of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris seemed to provide an opportunity to reintroduce Americans to the SDGs. However, the Biden/Harris Administration has rarely made explicit reference to the SDGs so far, despite significant policy shifts that restore U.S. support to the Global Goals as detailed in the Interim National Security Strategy released in March 2021.

Does this relative silence around the SDGs in U.S. foreign policy matter in practice? Is this approach deliberate or more of an oversight? Turning the lens back on the United States itself, to what extent do the SDGs shed light on America’s challenges and possibilities?

To examine these themes, we are pleased to welcome guest speaker **Kristen Cordell** (she/her/hers) to discuss her recent work at the Center for Strategic and International Studies on the SDGs and U.S. policy. We will also discuss how SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions – can serve as a lens through which to view U.S. and social justice movements.

Readings and Videos:

1. Kristen Cordell, Center for Strategic and International Studies, "[The Sustainable Development Goals: A Playbook for Reengagement](#)," September 24, 2021.
2. Ashley Quarcio, "[Can Biden Revive Democracy at Home and Abroad?](#)", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 27, 2021.
3. President Joe Biden, [Interim National Security Strategic Guidance](#), March 3, 2021. Skim and consider how you might link your SDG to the priorities and challenges identified in this document.
4. TWP Community of Practice, [The Case for Thinking and Working Politically: The Implications of Doing Development Differently](#), 2015.
5. [What's next in Nigeria's fight to #ENDSARS?](#) Youth in Power, June 3, 2021, (6:40).

Optional added background on #ENDSARS and its relationship to Black Lives Matter:

Trevor Noah, "[Nigerian End SARS Protests - If You Don't Know, Now You Know | The Daily Social Distancing Show](#)," October 20, 2020, (10:00).

Please also expect a few additional readings or short videos on the COP 26 climate conference that will inform our discussions for the next class period.

Class 6: November 22 – SDGs and Activism

The SDGs provide a menu that informs activism from grassroots to global arenas.

This class explores the essential role of political and social activism as a driving force behind sustainable development goals. Why do some social movements achieve transformative change, while others fail or fade away? What techniques favor or limit success in political activism? Is non-violence still relevant and even achievable in today's polarized domestic political climate and a world where authoritarian regimes seem to be gaining the upper hand? What is our responsibility as global citizens to lead, participate in, or become responsive to activism around sustainable development goals we care about?

We will also review the recently concluded [Global Climate Change Conference](#) in Glasgow, Scotland, and discuss the policy outcomes and shortfalls that will have resulted, and the role that climate activists and other stakeholders will have played in influencing the narratives surrounding the Conference.

Readings and Videos:

1. Marge Piercy, "[The Low Road](#)," a poem performed by Staceyann Chin, September 26, 2011, (1:52).

2. [“Three degrees of global warming is quite plausible and truly disastrous,”](#) *The Economist*, July 24, 2021.
3. Extinction Rebellion [press releases](#) since 2019.
4. National Resources Defense Council [“stories.”](#) Pick two or three that interest you; the point is to contrast NDRC’s approach with Extinction Rebellion’s.
5. Duncan Green, [How Change Happens](#), pp. 1-27 (2016). Note this is also covered in this TED-Talk-like video, [“How Change Happens \(and How to Make It Happen\) with Duncan Green,”](#) May 20, 2016, (39:49).
6. Erica Chenoweth, [“The success of nonviolent civil resistance: Erica Chenoweth at TEDxBoulder,”](#) November 4, 2013, (12:33).
7. Tom Baker, [“A toolkit for playing defensive advocacy,”](#) July 29, 2019.
8. Courtney Martin, [“The Reductive Seduction of Other People’s Problems,”](#) *Bright*, June 11, 2016.

Class 7: November 29 - Imagining Planet Earth in 2030: Where Do We Go from Here?

The SDGs invite us to envision the world in 2030 and choose a better future.

This class will provide an opportunity to bring multiple strands together of the issues that we have discussed throughout the course. We will also examine specific issues relating to the impacts of COVID-19, the future of development assistance, and the role of civil society in the transformation of society. Finally, we will look briefly at the emerging role of China as an international donor, and explore the challenges and opportunities its actions create for other aid donors and aid recipients alike.

Readings:

1. Anand Giridharadas. [“The Win-Win Fallacy,”](#) *The Atlantic*, September 9, 2018.
2. Thomas Dichter, [“Is There a Foreign Aid Industrial Complex?,”](#) *Medium*, August 8, 2016.
3. Michael Edwards, [Is there a role for NGOs in the transformation of society?,](#) *Open Democracy*, May 21, 2020.
4. Kate Hodal, [Aid sector forced into greater transparency by #MeToo movement,](#) *The Guardian*, October 14, 2019
5. Jessica Alexander, [COVID-19 changed the world. Can it change aid, too?,](#) *The New Humanitarian*, July 16, 2020.
6. Kristine Lee and Alexander Sullivan, [“People’s Republic of the United Nations: China’s Emerging Revisionism in International Organizations,”](#) Center for a New American Security, May 14, 2019. Read executive summary only.
7. Ammar A. Malik, et al., [“Banking on the Belt and Road: Insights from a New Global Dataset of 13,427 Chinese Development Projects: Executive Summary,”](#) AidData at William and Mary, September 29, 2021.

Class 8: December 6 – Class Presentations and Wrap-Up

We will devote this class to students' making their **policy pitches**, which will take the place of a final exam. Students should come prepared to make a five minute presentation followed by up to three minutes of question/answer. This presentation should ideally be based on your first draft of your **five-page memo** that will be due by 11:59 pm on December 9 (i.e., the Thursday following this final Monday class). Power Point presentations are encouraged but **only if they are sent to Robin Cole to upload by noon on December 6.**

Resource for Project Preparation:

1. Carmine Gallo, "[Richard Branson's 5 Elements of a Good Pitch](#)," *Forbes*, October 23, 2012.

Course Mechanics

Grading, Writing and Citation Standards at a Glance:

Grading Scale:

A, A- 100-90% (excellent)

B+, B, B- 89-80% (good)

C+, C, C- 79-70% (satisfactory)

D 69-60% (passing)

R 59% and below (not passing)

Use of Internet Sources: Please use common sense and look for reliable sources.

Citation guidance: If you are quoting someone, you must indicate that you are indeed quoting someone. Please use footnotes rather than end notes. Footnotes should be placed at the end of a sentence after the period.¹ For an article: First name last name, "Title of Article," *Journal*, volume, (Date), available at: add link here. For a book: First name last name, *Title of Book* (Place: Publisher, year), pages x-y. Make sure to use Chicago citation style. If you have any doubts about this citation style, please consult https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html.

Papers that do not properly quote or leave out citations will be penalized.

Writing Tips: Begin with a coherent topic sentence and avoid long paragraphs. (Policymakers are busy with little bandwidth; memos should be crisp, clear, precise, and concise.) Use adjectives sparingly. Avoid the passive tense when possible. Grammatical and spelling errors will negatively affect your grade. Support your arguments with evidence.

Format: 1-inch margins, 12 pt. font, double-spaced. Please include page numbers and spell-check your writing assignments before sending.

How to Submit: Please submit writing assignments on or before the due dates in Microsoft Word format. Late assignments will be penalized. Send me the document via email, with a subject line containing relevant information (first one pager, final paper, etc).

Emergencies and planned absences: Attending class and active student participation is essential to the success of the course. If for any reason, you anticipate missing a class, please contact me ahead of time. If you have an emergency and can alert me via email before or during class, please do so.

¹ Like this!

Cheating and Plagiarism: Do writing assignments alone. Collaboration—writing or editing someone else’s paper—is considered a violation of academic integrity, although I welcome any opportunity to discuss paper topics in advance to refine or reorient them toward success. Students who plagiarize will receive zero points for the assignment and consequently will fail the class. The instructor will make use of all available University policies. All cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Dean and Program Chair.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: If you require accommodation due to a disability, please inform me as early in the semester as possible. If you suspect that you may have a disability and would benefit from accommodations, but are not yet registered with the Office of Disability Resources, please contact them at access@andrew.cmu.edu.

We must treat every individual with respect. We are diverse in many ways, and this diversity is fundamental to building and maintaining an equitable and inclusive campus community. Diversity can refer to multiple ways that we identify ourselves, including but not limited to race, color, national origin, language, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, creed, ancestry, belief, veteran status, or genetic information. Each of these diverse identities, along with many others not mentioned here, shape the perspectives our students, faculty, and staff bring to our campus. We, at CMU, will work to promote diversity, equity and inclusion not only because diversity fuels excellence and innovation, but because we want to pursue justice. We acknowledge our imperfections while we also fully commit to the work, inside and outside of our classrooms, of building and sustaining a campus community that increasingly embraces these core values.

Each of us is responsible for creating a safer, more inclusive environment.

Unfortunately, incidents of bias or discrimination do occur, whether intentional or unintentional. They contribute to creating an unwelcoming environment for individuals and groups at the university. Therefore, the university encourages anyone who experiences or observes unfair or hostile treatment on the basis of identity to speak out for justice and support, within the moment of the incident or after the incident has passed. Anyone can share these experiences using the following resources:

Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion: csdi@andrew.cmu.edu, (412) 268-2150

Report-It online anonymous reporting platform: reportit.net username: tartans password: plaid

All reports will be documented and deliberated to determine if there should be any following actions. Regardless of incident type, the university will use all shared experiences to transform our campus climate to be more equitable and just.

Finally... please take care of yourself.

Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress.

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. There are many helpful

resources available and an important part of the graduate school experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is often helpful.

If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) is there to help: call 412-268-2922 and visit their website at <http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/> Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty or family member you trust for aid in getting connected to the support that can help.