What does it mean to intervene? What drives the impulse to “care for others” and what rhetorics of persuasion are at work? Intervention in the name of development, human rights and humanitarianism now plays an increasingly important role in contemporary global governance. This course explores the ethics and politics of intervention in global perspective, and 'humanitarian imaginaries'. It addresses how humanitarianism has been theorized historically, and what makes charity a recognizable and culturally appropriate practice. While forms and scales of intervention can vary considerably—from the UN managed Syrian refugee camps in Jordan, through the US's militarized humanitarianism in Iraq, to more individuated forms of advocacy, like Amnesty's “Write for Rights” campaigns—all intervention is aimed at improving people's lives. Drawing on texts by anthropologists, media theorists, political scientists and humanitarian practitioners, we will explore how intervention shapes ideas about power, care, humanity, suffering and need. The aim is not to engage in “for” or “against” arguments, but rather to explore how the imperative act on vulnerable others has been conceptualized as a moral order of modernity and how human dignity has been represented in textual and visual form. To this end, course materials examine how anthropology has theorized charity, humanitarianism, human rights, and biopolitical orders of life alongside texts and visuals that are used for advocacy. We will ask: How do different cultural understandings of humanity affect humanitarian efforts that promote giving to strangers? How do certain bodies, populations and nations become subjects of intervention? How are human rights principles and ethical norms visualized? How are empathy, identification and recognition produced and mobilized? Case studies will be drawn from a variety of contexts and include: Calcutta's Red Light district; New Orleans in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina; digital militarism and photographic intervention in Palestine-Israel; migrant border interventions in the Mediterranean; and the 'domestic arts' of humanitarianism.

Course texts

There is no course reader for this class. Required texts are available at Paragraphe Books; additional readings will be available through MyCourses and are marked with an *asterisk*:

**Learning objectives**

*By the end of this course students should be able to:*

- Understand how anthropology and related disciplines approach humanitarian intervention
- Critically engage interdisciplinary, scholarly debates about intervention (broadly conceived)
- Analyze representations of human rights and humanitarianism in film, photography, ethnographic writing, as well as mainstream and social media
- Develop and present persuasive oral and written analyses of the topics under discussion
- Conduct independent research and writing that explores the themes of the course further

*The teaching methods used to achieve these objectives include:*

- Brief lectures to introduce key terms and theoretical debates
- Class discussions
- Student presentations
- Audiovisual materials
- Guest lectures
- Guided reading and independent research.

**Grading and Assessment**

- 10% Attendance and participation
- 16% Eight reading journal entries on MyCourses
- 14% Presentation and leading discussion
- 10% Critical viewing project
- 20% Group research project
- 5% Paper proposal and bibliography
- 25% Final research paper

**Important dates**

- 8 September Course begins
- 22 September No office hours or class
- 29 September Critical viewing project (due in class)
- 27 October Proposal for research paper topic (bring two copies to class)
- 1 December Final Class
- 4 December Final papers due

**Technology in class**

Please turn off cell phones and *use computers for coursework only*. I expect you to bring books and printouts of all assigned readings, and *notebooks with notes*. Students found to be using screens for other purposes in class (FaceBook, SnapChat, YikYak, Twitter, etc.) will be (politely) asked to leave, and technology privileges for all will be revoked. Please respect your classmates and your instructor.
Attendance and participation
Attendance is mandatory and active participation is expected of all students. This is a reading intensive course that is conducted as a seminar, rather than a lecture course. “Participation” entails deliberate, careful preparation, focused attention and is measured in quality not quantity. **Students are expected to come to class having read all the assigned texts and prepared to speak about them** (I will call on students if necessary). Identify striking passages that warrant deeper analysis, note questions that the texts raise, and come to class ready to engage in constructive debate. **Each student is permitted one unexcused absence. Additional unexcused absences will lower the class participation grade. Excused absences require a letter of explanation. Students are responsible for all work missed.**

Reading journal and discussion questions
Over the course of the semester students are required to write 8 short journal entries on assigned readings, which should be no more than 3 paragraphs. Students will be graded on the overall clarity of their writing; their critical engagement with the literature; and on the strength of their analytical skills. Journal entries should summarize the main points the authors are making and critically engage with their arguments. **Each entry should also include three questions for class discussion.** Use these questions to draw connections with previous readings and themes discussed in class. Are there things that appear confusing, compelling or contradictory? Are there ideas that seem particularly interesting? For weeks where there are three or more assigned readings, students should treat a minimum of three; where relevant, students may also draw on additional sources. **Journal entries must be posted on MyCourses by 9am on Friday morning. Students cannot post entries after the class in which the texts are discussed**

Leading Discussion
Each week several students will lead and facilitate discussion (the two exceptions are week 3 and 10). Students should work together in advance of class to plan how to lead discussion and what themes to address. Presenters are also expected to review all posts on MyCourses before class, and to identify key themes. **Presentations should not simply summarize the texts, but should use them as a starting point for synthetic and wide-ranging analysis of related topics.** Students are encouraged to draw on case studies beyond assigned readings and come up with creative strategies to generate discussion and debate. Presentations should run for approximately 45 minutes and should include at least 20 minutes of class discussion and/or small group activities. All group facilitators will receive the same grade. A laptop and power point projector will be provided.

Critical Viewing Project
Humanitarian cinema has become an established film genre. For this assignment students must write a 3-page critical analysis of one of the films listed below and relate it to Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others* and two additional course readings. These films are available in the McGill library, or can be found on Netflix.

- *Jenin, Jenin* (2003), dir. Muhammad Bakri (about the 2002 Israeli invasion of Jenin camp in the West Bank)
- *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), dir. Terry George
**Group research project**
Students will conduct a collective research project over the course of the semester in assigned groups on a particular case of humanitarian intervention or an organization. The thematic focus and critical analysis will be collectively developed over the course of the semester, and will draw on the readings and class discussion. In final weeks each group will present their case studies to the class, drawing connections to broader themes of the course. Presentations must be analytical and not simply descriptive and will be followed by a Q & A with other students. A laptop and projector will be provided, and presenters are encouraged to incorporate audiovisual materials in their presentations.

*Useful resource:* The Feinstein International Center at (Tufts U) Humanitarian Agenda 2015 country case studies are valuable resources. You may pick one case and use the Humanitarian Agenda 2015 case study as your starting point. See their Center Reports at [http://sites.tufts.edu/feinstein/research](http://sites.tufts.edu/feinstein/research).

**Final Paper**
Student will design, research, and write about a topic of their choice that engages the ideas of the course. Papers should not exceed 15 pages double spaced, 12 point font and should be not less than 10 pages. The paper must have a clear thesis, identify key terms, and draw on both empirical and theoretical materials from the course. Topics should involve independent research in related areas, and might focus on particular cases, debates, institutional actors or ethnographic studies of humanitarian intervention. **A hard copy of the final paper is due by noon Monday, December 4.** *Students must submit a 2-3 page paper proposal in class on October 27.* The proposal should include 1) a justification of how it relates to course themes; 2) an annotated bibliography of texts.

**Writing Guidelines**
*Format:* Hard copies of written work should be submitted to me during class. All written work should conform to these guidelines: one inch margins, double spacing, and 12-point, Times New Roman font. Include your name, date and title on the first page of your paper, and number and staple your pages. Proofread your drafts carefully before turning them in. Follow the standard format for citation set out in the American Anthropological Association style guide: [http://aaanet.org/publications/style_guide.pdf](http://aaanet.org/publications/style_guide.pdf).

*Academic Integrity:* The work you submit for this course must be written by you; all sources must be appropriately acknowledged. Please review McGill’s Academic Integrity Code: [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) for more information. The consequences of plagiarism are to be found under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures: [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest).

*L’Université McGill attach une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, pagiat, et autres infractions académiques. Pour plus renseignements veuillez consulter le site: [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest).*

*Special Needs:* Requests for academic accommodations for students with disabilities must be made **during the first three weeks of the semester**, so that arrangements can be made. For more information, please contact the McGill Student Disability Services.

*Late submission:* Late work will not be accepted unless arrangements have been made in advance.

*Language:* As per university policy, written assignments may be submitted in French or English. **Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’ Université McGill, Chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être note.**
WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 - 8 September
Introduction and course overview


PART I – THEORETICAL FRAMES

Week 2 – 15 September
The anthropology of intervention: Modes of knowledge, forms of practice

—Harri Englund, “The Anthropologist and His Poor.” In Forces of Compassion (ch4)


Week 3 - 22 September: NO CLASS - Instructor away

—Susan Sontag. 2003. Regarding the Pain of Others. (Short text, read in its entirety).

Week 4 - 29 September -- **Critical viewing project due in class*
“Make live, let die”: Moral economies of intervention


**Week 5 – 6 October**  
**Subjects of intervention**


**PART II – CASE STUDIES**

**Week 6 - 13 October**  
**Innocent victims: Calcutta's “endangered children”**


Screening: *Born into Brothels* (2004), dir. Zana Briski and Ross Kauffman

**Week 7 – 20 October**  
**Making Human Rights Visible in Palestine and Israel**

—*Rebecca Stein and Adi Kuntsman. 2015. “‘Another War Zone”: The Development of Digital militarism.” In *Digital Militarism: Israel's Occupation in the Social Media Age*, Stanford University Press.

Screening: Take my pictures for me (2016), dir. Amahl Bishara and Mohammed al-Azza
*Q & A with director Amahl Bishara.

Week 8 – 27 October
Marketing disaster: Poverty, inequity and affect economies


Screening: Trouble the Water (2008), dir. Tia Lessin, Carl Deal.

**Paper topic and tentative bibliography due -- Please bring two copies to class**

Week 9 – 3 November
Care for the self: The domestic arts of humanitarianism

Week 10 – 10 November
Unruly subjects: migrant border interventions


Week 11 – 17 November
Presentation of group research projects

Week 12 – 24 November
Presentation of group research projects

Week 13 – December 1
Concluding class

*Please note this syllabus may be subject to change