Two generations ago we put a man on the moon. We’ve since experienced an information technology revolution. Information is transferred in real time. Virtual reality has become a lived reality. Medical technologies are better, smarter, faster and more effective. Physical infrastructures are modern and cheap to implement. Consequently, people live longer. Fewer children die each year. Work and labor have been revolutionized. Simply put, innovation and invention have transformed the world – or much of it anyway.

The truth is that this transformation has not been global in scope. Over a hundred and fifty years ago, industrializing London was awash in its own human filth and excrement, primitive sewers literally exploding, hastening the spread of water borne cholera; that was in 1850. The same conditions, tragically and inexplicably, continue to be experienced in many cities of the third world today. **Devastating fact: 2.6 billion people are without adequate sanitation today. Every 20 seconds a child dies because of inadequate sanitation.**

We have iPads. Hundreds of millions do not have clean water. This seminar course examines this tension. It is about invention, innovation, growth, development and *doing better*.

**Course Tasks**

In week 2, you will present to your colleagues a *devastating fact* – something you find disturbing, astounding, unbelievable, inhumane, and solvable. You will ‘live with’ this fact throughout the course. You will become an expert. You will learn everything you can about this fact – where it is; why it is so; how we have tried to mitigate it, to make things better; why we have failed thus far; and so on. You will experience this course through this devastating fact, making connections through the readings, discussion and your own writing.

You will produce a **5 minute video** about your devastating fact – the challenge itself and your proposed solution – and present it to your colleagues in the December 6 screening. In addition to the 5 minute video presentation, each student will write and submit a 1500 word (double-spaced) *feature story* (think New York Times Magazine) on the challenge and your proposed solution; this is due on December 4, before the video. In both the video pitch and the story, you will need to address the following questions:

1. What is the devastating fact?
2. What is your proposed solution?
3. Why is your solution viable?

You have to be convincing.
In addition, you will write and submit three one-page (single-spaced) reaction papers, addressing the assigned readings for a particular week. These are not to be reading summaries, but rather your ‘reactions’ to the readings: What did you like, not like? What did you find convincing or annoying? Why? These are to be submitted at the beginning of the seminar (for instance, if you want to write on The Ghost Map, you will need to submit your reaction paper at the start of the September 29 seminar). You choose which three weeks’ reading you’d like to react to (though one has to be handed in on or before October 11).

Evaluation

- reaction papers (3 X 10%) 30% due: any three weeks (one by October 11)
- video pitch - in-class presentation 25% due: screening December 6
- 1500 word feature story 20% due: Friday December 2
- seminar discussion 25%

Readings

This is a very intensive reading course. Have the readings prepared in advance of the seminar. Spread the reading throughout the previous week. The Ghost Map (by Steven Johnson) and Behind the Beautiful Forevers (by Katherine Boo) are available for purchase at the University Bookstore. All other readings are available on the course blackboard.

Course Schedule

September 13  Introduction

Andy Sumner, “The New Bottom Billion: What if most of the world’s poor live in middle income countries?” CGD Brief (March, 2011)

The Economist, “Toward the End of Poverty,” The Economist (June 1, 2013)

http://www.newrepublic.com/article/120178/problem-international-development-and-plan-fix-it?src=longreads&mc_cid=8d34ce744c&mc_eid=d53ec9c87d

September 20  Devastating Facts

- Each student will present to the class their ‘devastating fact’ – five-minute presentations.
- begin reading The Ghost Map

September 27  Missteps and Mistakes


**October 4**  
Coping


**October 11**  
Reach


Lindsey Kingston et al., “Limitations on Universality: the “right to health” and the necessity of legal nationality,” *BMC International Health and Human Rights* (Vol. 10, No. 11, 2010).


**October 18**  
Telling the Story

*Workshop with Robert Steiner, Director, Munk Global Journalism Lab*

**October 25**  
Wicked Problems


**November 1**  
Behind the Beautiful Forevers


**November 15**  
Planners and Searchers

William Easterly, *The White Man’s Burden: Why the west’s efforts to aid the rest have done so much ill and so little good* (Penguin, 2006)

---“Planners Versus Searchers,” pp. 3-30
---“You Can’t Plan a Market,” pp. 60-108
---“Bailing Out the Poor,” pp. 210-236
November 22 Frugal Innovation


James Ferguson, “The Uses of Neoliberalism,” Antipode (Vol. 41, 2010), pp. 166-184

November 29 Poor Economics

Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty (Public Affairs, 2011)

--“Think Again, Again,” pp. 1-16
--“Low-Hanging Fruit for Better (Global) Health?” pp. 41-70
--“Barefoot Hedge-Fund Managers,” pp. 133-156
--“The (Not So) Simple Economics of Lending to the Poor,” pp. 157-182


Optional readings:


Nicole Angotti et al., “Increasing the Acceptability of HIV Counselling and Testing with Three C's: Convenience, Confidentiality and Credibility,” Social Science and Medicine (Vol. 68, 2009), pp. 2263-2270

December 6 Video Pitches – Room 108N, 1 Devonshire Place