Humanitarian Action in Complex Political Emergencies

Class Meetings: Monday afternoon, 3:15 – 6:15 pm, September 10 – December 10, 2018
(Total of 13 sessions, with an extra session on Friday, October 4, but no class on Monday, November 5 and Monday, November 12)

Tufts University Boston Campus. Jaharis 118
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Office hours: Friedman School: Monday 2:00 – 3:00 (by appointment)
Feinstein Center: Other times (by appointment)

Teaching Asst: Ana Marshak
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Office hours: By appointment

Graduate Credits: Three credit hours

Prerequisites: Graduate Student Status

Course Description:
The past two decades have witnessed a major transformation of humanitarian action. The geopolitical changes resulting from the end of the Cold and the global war on terror have profoundly changed the environment in which humanitarian action takes place. These changes—and proposed ways of responding to them—have triggered heated debates about philosophical, analytical and operational issues within the humanitarian community. The range of humanitarian actors has broadened to include the military and, increasingly, for-profit firms. A range of humanitarian actors and agencies has emerged from the Middle East and the global South, alongside or outside of the traditional Western, UN-led humanitarian system. The “complex emergencies” of the 1990s and early 2000s have seemingly metamorphosed into “protracted crises,” with some 70% of the humanitarian budget now spent on “emergencies” lasting five years or longer. Long-held principles are questioned or discarded, with humanitarian action no longer seen by many belligerents as either neutral or impartial, and the emergence of “counter-humanitarian” groups in some crises—such as Al Shabaab in Somalia or Boko Haram in Nigeria.
Despite the higher media attention to rapid-onset natural disasters such as Typhoon Haiyan or the Nepal earthquake, 70-80 percent of the actual humanitarian budget is devoted to conflict-related emergencies. *Conflict-related emergencies are the central focus of this class,* but it is increasingly clear that there are political and human-made elements to all crises, so some of the old categories (such as “complex emergencies” or “natural disasters”) are no longer very helpful descriptions.

Some observers contend that the role of humanitarian action has been reduced to that of a safety net against the most egregious impacts of the globalization and climate change, and suggest it is time to rethink the whole enterprise. Others assert that the present—with more higher levels of assessed humanitarian need than at any time in the past seventy years—is a time for action, not the time for reconsidering first principles. In 2016, the World Humanitarian Summit convened governments, donors, agencies and humanitarian actors to review the current situation, future threats, and commit to different ways of working. 2017, on the other hand, saw additional famines or countries on the famine-risk list, and the highest number of people requiring food assistance is recorded history, and the highest numbers of displaced people since at least the end of World War II. 2018 not only continues the trend, but adds the worrisome footnote that humanitarians themselves can also be predatory (ifs anyone was still unaware of that)

This class will challenge students to consider all of these—the principles, analytical perspectives, and the actions required—to protect the lives, livelihoods and dignity of crisis- and conflict-affected people. This class will introduce students to a broad range of research and evidence that constitutes our knowledge on humanitarian action in complex emergencies, to the key ethical and policy debates, and to the practical dilemmas that surround contemporary humanitarian action. The overall objective is to enable students to gain the ability to understand and keep abreast of a rapidly evolving field. This is not a “how-to” class, but there is a strong emphasis on the practical application of this knowledge. The course simultaneously treats humanitarian action as a phenomenon to be understood and as a practice that urgently needs to be improved.

**Course Objectives:**

This multi-disciplinary course will cover a broad range of subjects, and has a number of objectives. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Outline historical perspectives on humanitarian action;
- Describe the ethical framework of humanitarian action and be able to apply international humanitarian law, principles, and codes of conduct to humanitarian action in complex emergencies, and outline major debates surrounding these frameworks;
- Utilize the main analytical frameworks (conflict analysis, famine theory, livelihoods) to address the protection of life, livelihoods, rights and safety of people in complex emergencies;
- Critically and quickly read, interpret and apply research on humanitarian action;
- Analyze the political economy of conflict and humanitarian assistance;
- Describe the main critiques of humanitarian action;
- Outline the ethical/practical implications of a human rights-approach in humanitarian action;
- Utilize methods for improving quality, effectiveness and accountability in humanitarian action;
- Describe the evolving nature of conflict, crisis, and the architecture of the humanitarian system.

Specific session objectives are spelled out below.
**Texts or Materials:**
There are three required books for the course. Recommended books make more in-depth reading, but are not assigned. Because of copyright restrictions, most book readings are on the recommended list only. For each session, we will post required readings on Trunk. When books are assigned as required readings, copies of the texts will be put on reserve at both Hirsh and Ginn libraries.

**Required texts:**

Sphere Project. 2011 and 2018. *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response.* Geneva, The Sphere Project, Geneva. **Note:** this text is not intended to be read in its entirety. But the student is expected to know its contents and how to use it. The 2011 edition is available in hard copy; the handbook is being updated and the new 2018 edition (draft) is available on line: http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/revision-sphere-handbook/draft-ready-for-feedback/#download


**Other recommended books:**


**On Reserve in Ginn and Hirsch Libraries.**
Academic Conduct:
Each student is responsible for upholding the highest standards of academic integrity, as specified in the Friedman School’s Policies and Procedures manual (http://nutrition.tufts.edu/student/documents) and Tufts University policies (http://uss.tufts.edu/studentAffairs/documents/HandbookAcademicIntegrity.pdf).

It is the responsibility of each student to understand and comply with these standards, as violations will be sanctioned by penalties ranging from failure on an individual assignment, failure on the course to dismissal from the school.

Classroom Conduct:
There will be one three-hour class each week, led by Dan Maxwell and several guest lecturers. Course announcements, presentation notes, assigned readings, team assignments, case study assignments and exams are all provided on the course website on Canvas.

Evaluation and Grading:
The course grade will be a combination of the group thematic case studies (20%), the two written papers (20% each), class participation and small-group discussion (20%), and the presentation and paper of the final case study (20%). More information on all assignments and the criteria for grading is in “Course Assignment Notes” on Canvas. Each student is responsible for the following:

- **Readings:** Students should be prepared for each class by completing the required readings and reflecting on them in advance.
- **Group case studies:** Each student will participate in a group presentation in class of a case study related to one session of the course. Topics for the class presentations will be based on the course syllabus and the presentations will usually be presented the week after the related topic in class. Sign up for case studies will take place during Week 2. We will try our best to assign everyone to their first or second choice. Each student in the class is expected to participate in the preparation and presentation of group analysis.
- **Final case study.** There will also be a final in-class case study for the last class—focusing on a current crisis. This is also a groupwork project with each team responsible for two outputs: the first is an in-class presentation on the last day; the second is a short, team paper that outlines the presentation and provides the necessary background evidence, also due on the last day of class.
- **Brief papers:** Each student will write two brief papers during the course of the semester related to a theme of the course. These papers will be in the form of a “professional brief,” roughly 1,000-1,500 words in length. The first will be an exercise on principles and law: students will be asked to choose one of two cases and explore the issues arising regarding humanitarian action, humanitarian law, and humanitarian principles in given contexts. The second will be a choice of short essay questions that will challenge you to pull together some analysis across different sessions of the class. For that reason, it will be later in the semester.
- **Participation/group discussions:** Due to the anticipated size of the class, we will rely on discussion in groups of 5-6 students on various occasions throughout the semester. Students will explore the readings of the class in these groups, based on discussion questions.
● **Working in groups:** Note that a fair part of the final grade for this course is based on group work (40% of the total). We will make an attempt to get feedback from groups on the extent of participation and the equality of work sharing, *but the truth is that, going forward, much of how you will be judged in the professional world will be based on group outputs, not just individual outputs*. Hence there is some method to the madness here.

**A word about the assigned reading:**
This class requires a lot of reading, but the intent in assigning this reading is not that students commit to reading every word. Some of the reading comes from lengthy reports or documents that define important issues, or set important policy directions in the field of humanitarian action. The idea is to get a sense of what these documents say, where they come from, and how they influence the field of humanitarian action. This can and should be done without reading the entire document. Learning how to quickly digest documents is an important professional skill—in humanitarian action or some other field. Information overload is a constant fact of life, so learning how to quickly assess information overload and figuring out how to get the information you need is a critical skill, so again there is a bit of a method to the madness in this class! Readings in this course should require 7-8 hours per week. Students who are having trouble keeping up with the reading should speak to Dan or Ana, or attend one of the reading workshops available on campus. Recommended readings are for students who are particularly interested in the topic and would like to dig deeper.

**Assigned reading materials:**
The assignments, reading materials, and all announcements will be posted on Canvas [https://login.canvas.tufts.edu/](https://login.canvas.tufts.edu/). All students will have access to Canvas upon registration. If you have trouble accessing Canvas, please let Ana know.

**Assignments and Submission Instructions:**
Assignments received after their deadline will not be accepted or graded unless extension is approved in advance. Students who are unable to complete an assignment on time for any reason should notify the instructor prior to the deadline. Completing the short papers on time is absolutely mandatory, because we have shifted assignments around this year to be able to discuss these papers in class—so anyone not having completed the assignment on time would have a huge unfair advantage if they heard the in-class discussion before they submitted their papers.

**Laptop Use in Class:**
Given persistent complaints about the distraction of people using computers for non-class activities, **computers are not allowed in the classroom in 2018.**

**Accommodation of Disabilities:**
Students with documented disabilities are entitled to academic accommodation appropriate to their needs. In accordance with federal and state law, Tufts University provides reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. If you require an accommodation for this course (including the use of a laptop), please contact the instructor or TA confidentially prior to the end of the second week of classes, or contact, by e-mail: [accessiblity@tufts.edu](mailto:accessiblity@tufts.edu) or [Catherine.Flynn@tufts.edu](mailto:Catherine.Flynn@tufts.edu)
Recommended humanitarian websites with which students should become familiar

- Feinstein International Center, Tufts University  
  http://fic.tufts.edu
- The Humanitarian Policy Group/ODI  
  www.odi.org.uk/hpg
- The Humanitarian Practice Network  
  www.odihpn.org
- Integrated Regional Information Network  
  www.irinnews.org
- Relief Web  
  www.reliefweb.int
- Alert Net  
  www.alertnet.org
- FEWSNET  
  www.fews.net
- PHAP (Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance And Protection)  
  www.phap.org
- The Sphere Project  
  www.sphereproject.org
- Action Learning Network for Accountability And Performance (ALNAP)  
  www.alnap.org
- The Core Humanitarian Standard Alliance  
  http://www.chsalliance.org
- ACAPS Project  
  www.acaps.org

Websites of a few of the major humanitarian agencies

- UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)  
  www.unocha.org
- International Committee of the Red Cross  
  www.icrc.org
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
  www.ifrc.org
- Médecins sans Frontières/Doctors without Borders  
  www.msf.org
- The World Food Programme  
  www.wfp.org
- Oxfam  
  www.oxfam.org
- World Vision  
  www.wvi.org
- CARE  
  www.care.org
- Save the Children  
  www.savethechildren.org
- IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation  
  www.ihh.org.tr/en
- Adeso (African Development Solutions)  
  www.adesoafrica.org
- The Network for Empowered Aid Response  
  www.near.ngo

Students are encouraged to explore these websites (and look for others!) for information throughout the course.
**Course Schedule:**
Note. Subject to change due to scheduling conflicts or changes in fieldwork

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Session No. and Topic</th>
<th>Presenter</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 10</td>
<td>1. Introduction and case study</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Darfur Case study</td>
<td>Sign up for Nutrition Data Summit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 17</td>
<td>2. Historical foundations, and contemporary update *</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Personal views</td>
<td>Sign up for Group Case Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 24</td>
<td>3. Humanitarian principles</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Group Disc Activity</td>
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<td>Oct. 1</td>
<td>4. Food security and famine theory*</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Evidence/Info in HA*</td>
<td>View online presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 4 **</td>
<td>5. IPC Simulation Exercise * <em>(Builds on session 4)</em></td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Join Nutrition Data Summit</td>
<td>View online presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 9 ***</td>
<td>6. Structure, architecture, and reform of the “Humanitarian System”</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Group Discussion</td>
<td>Case Study Group #1</td>
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<td>Oct. 15</td>
<td>7. International Humanitarian Law</td>
<td>Tom Dannenbaum</td>
<td>Group Exercise</td>
<td>Case Study Group #2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 22</td>
<td>8. Conflict and conflict analysis</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Alex de Waal</td>
<td>Brief Paper #1 due</td>
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<td>Signup: Final Case</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 29</td>
<td>9. Overview of livelihoods analysis</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Group Discussion</td>
<td>Case Study Group #3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 5</td>
<td>No Class: Substitute for Oct 4 Mtg.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Work on final case Note: Send CS #4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 12</td>
<td>No Class: Veteran’s Day</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Brief Paper #2 due</td>
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<td>Nov. 19</td>
<td>10. Rights/humanitarian protection</td>
<td>Dan</td>
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<td>Case Study Group #4</td>
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<td>Nov. 26</td>
<td>11. Working in complex emergencies</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Head Count case study</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 3</td>
<td>12. The changing nature of crisis &amp; evolution of humanitarianism</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Grp. Discussion Discuss Paper #2</td>
<td>Case Study Group #5 and # 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 10</td>
<td>13. Final case study presentations</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>Final Case Study presentation and paper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Please view presentation prior to class

** Note a different day (Friday) and time (1:00 – 4:00 pm)

*** Note this class meets on TUESDAY!
Course Topics, Learning Objectives, and Assignments

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**Session 1: What is humanitarianism in the 21st century? An introduction to humanitarian action through a case study**
(September 10, 2018 – Dan Maxwell)

**Learning objectives:**
Upon completion of this session, students will be able to:
1. Outline the contents and expectations of the course
2. Know the administrative procedures for the course
3. Describe the confusion of working in a major complex emergency through a case study

**Preparation for class:**

**A. Required Reading:**
Bennett, Christina, Michael Foley, Sara Pantuliano 2016. “Time to let go: A three point proposal to change the humanitarian system.” London: HPG (Briefing version).


**B. Recommended Reading:**


Session 2: Historical foundations: Perspectives on humanitarian history.  
(September 17, 2018 – Dan Maxwell)

Learning objectives:  
Upon completion of this session, students will be able to:  
1. Describe the historical perspectives on humanitarian action  
2. Note the major epochs of humanitarian strategy and action  
3. Classify the different schools of thought on humanitarianism  

Assignment:  
1. Sign up for Group Thematic Case Studies  

Preparation for class:  

A. Online Presentation  

B. Required Reading:  

C. Recommended Reading:  

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Session 3: Humanitarian principles and codes of conduct  
(September 24, 2018 – Dan Maxwell)

Learning objectives:  
Upon completion of this session, students will be able to:  
1. Describe major perspectives on ethical conduct of humanitarian action  
2. Summarize humanitarian principles and codes of conduct
Preparation for class:

A. Required Reading:


B. Recommended Reading:


Session 4: Combined Session:
Food Security: Famine theory, entitlements, and complex emergencies
Evidence: The use of evidence in complex emergencies
(October 1, 2018 – Dan Maxwell)

Learning objectives:
Upon completion of this session, students will be able to:
1. Describe the history of definitions and explanations for famine
2. Summarize entitlement theory and the underpinning of contemporary famine theory
3. Apply famine theory to the analysis of contemporary famines and food security crises

Preparation for class:

A. Online Presentation:
   • Famine presentation
   • Evidence presentation

B. Required Reading:

Famine:

Evidence:

C. Recommended Reading:


Note: there is also a virtual volume on “Famine” released in 2011 by Disasters, after the famine in Somalia: http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/%28ISSN%29291467-7717/homepage/virtual_issue__refugees_and_the_displaced.htm


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Session 5: The application of evidence and information in humanitarian action: A simulated analysis
(October 4, 2018 – Ana Marshak and Dan Maxwell)

Note: for this session, class will join the Nutrition Data Summit. Note the Friday time and date.

Learning objectives:
Upon completion of this session, students will be able to:
1. Describe Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) analysis and be able to apply the basic concepts of IPC analysis to an actual case
2. Describe what evidence is and why humanitarian action has not always been based on evidence
3. Quickly read, digest, interpret, and apply research and assessment evidence on humanitarian action

Preparation for class:

A. Online Presentation

B. Required Reading:


C. Recommended Reading:

ALNAP webinar series: “Bridging the gap” http://www.alnap.org/evidence/bridging-the-gap

http://www.alnap.org/resource/9823


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Session 6: *The Structure, Architecture and Reform of the “Humanitarian System”*  
(October 9, 2018 – Dan Maxwell)  *Note Tuesday class (Monday is a public holiday)*

Learning objectives:
Upon completion of this session, students will be able to:
1. Describe the architecture of the formal “humanitarian system”
2. Discuss the history of humanitarian reforms since Rwanda and their impact on the “system”
3. Apply Sphere guidelines in a complex emergency
4. Relate the developments in the formal system to developments outside the formal system and describe the effects of the latter to the former.

Assignment:
Case Study Group #1 (Principles)

Preparation for class:

A. Required Reading:


B. Recommended Reading:


Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation with DARA. 2014. “Now or never: Making humanitarian aid more effective”


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Session 7: International Humanitarian Law
(October 15, 2018 – Professor Tom Dannenbaum)

Learning objectives:
Upon completion of this session, students will be able to:
1. Describe the application of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) to contemporary humanitarian action
2. Note the dilemmas of IHL in contemporary crises
Assignment:
Case Study Group #2 (Famine)

Preparation for class:

A. Required Reading:


International Committee of the Red Cross. 2015. “International Humanitarian Law and the challenges of contemporary armed conflicts”. Geneva, ICRC. Pages 26-33 (humanitarian access and protection) and 38-59 (means and methods of warfare.).


B. Recommended Reading:
Heba Aly. 2015. "No Deal to Strengthen the Geneva Conventions," IRIN. Available at: http://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2015/12/10/no-deal-strengthen-respect-geneva-conventions


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Session 8: Conflict analysis and the political economy of violence
(October 22, 2018 – Dan Maxwell & Alex de Waal)

Learning objectives:
Upon completion of this session, students will be able to:
1. Note the changing dynamics of conflict
2. Apply alternative means of analyzing conflict and understanding the impact of conflict
3. Describe the interaction of humanitarian programming and conflict
4. Describe conflict sensitive programming

Assignment:
1. Sign up for Final Case Study
2. Brief Paper #1 due

Preparation for class:

A. Required Reading:

Peruse several of the following “how to” documents on conflict analysis:
B. Recommended Reading:


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Session 9: *Protecting lives and livelihoods – the livelihoods framework and approach*  
(October 29, 2018 – Dan Maxwell)

Learning objectives:

Upon completion of this session, students will be able to:

1. Describe the livelihoods framework and the contemporary derivatives of the livelihoods framework
2. Apply the livelihoods framework to humanitarian action in complex emergencies

Assignment:

1. Case Study Group #3 (Conflict analysis)

Preparation for class:

A. Required Reading:


B. Recommended Reading:

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Note: Brief Paper #2 due November 12, but no class (Veteran’s Day)

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Session 10: Rights and humanitarian protection
(November 19, 2018 – Dan Maxwell)

Learning objectives:
Upon completion of this session, students will be able to:
1. Note the theme of human rights in humanitarian action and rights-based approaches (RBA)
2. Describe the “responsibility to protect” (R2P)
3. Describe and apply principles of humanitarian protection issues in complex emergencies

Assignment:
1. Case Study Group #4

Preparation for class:

A. Required Reading:

South, Ashley et al. 2012. “Local to Global Protection in Myanmar (Burma), Sudan, South Sudan and Zimbabwe. Network Paper No. 72. Humanitarian Practice Network. Read Chapters 1 & 3 and select a case study to review.


B. Recommended Reading:


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Session 11: Working in complex emergencies: Protecting lives, dignity, and livelihoods (November 26, 2018 – Dan Maxwell)

Learning objectives:
Upon completion of this session, students will be able to:
1. Apply the livelihoods framework to humanitarian action
2. Discuss the ethical and operational dilemmas of livelihoods applications in complex emergencies
3. Describe conflict sensitive approaches in programming

Preparation for class:

A. Required Reading:


Harvey, Paul and Sarah Bailey. 2015. Cash transfer programming and the humanitarian system: Background Note for the High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers. London: ODI.


B. Recommended Reading:


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Session 12: The changing nature of crisis and the evolving nature of humanitarian action
(December 3, 2018 – Dan Maxwell)

Learning objectives:
Upon completion of this session, students will be able to:
1. Note the changing nature of humanitarian crises
2. Describe the changing nature of humanitarianism
3. Discuss the implications for humanitarian action

**Assignment:**
1. Case Study Group #5
2. Case Study Group #6 (if needed)
3. Discuss Brief Paper #2

**Preparation for class:**

**A. Required Reading:**


**B. Recommended Reading:**


Young, Helen and Anastasia Marshak. 2018. Persistent Global Acute Malnutrition: a discussion paper on the scope of the problem, its drivers, and strategies for moving forward for policy, practice, and research. Feinstein International Center. January 2018. (There is a shorter brief available on the site as well)

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Session 13: Presentations: Case studies of crisis
(December 10, 2018– Dan Maxwell and Ana Marshak)

Learning objectives:
Upon completion of this session, students will be able to:
1. Demonstrate the ability to comprehensively analyze a complex humanitarian emergency and devise an appropriate policy and programmatic response to it.
2. Work effectively as a member of a team

Preparation for class:
Prepare team presentation and written report (6-8 pp. max)