

INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

Founded in 1860, Bard College is a liberal arts educational institution in New York's Hudson Valley—one that places a priority on service-learning and civic engagement. Founded in 2001 by a Bard undergraduate, the Bard Prison Initiative (BPI), for which I teach, is an outgrowth of that service-learning and civic engagement emphasis. BPI is a program that provides opportunities for inmates in New York state prisons to receive a liberal arts education and, more than that, to receive Bard degrees. The program is the largest of its kind in the country and currently enrolls 275 students across six satellite campuses in prisons throughout New York, offering over sixty courses each semester across a variety of disciplines. The students are usually first-generation students, many of whom earned high school diplomas or equivalents while incarcerated and who competed with hundreds of other students to gain access to the program. As such, they are keenly aware of the privilege of receiving a college education and highly motivated to perform. This motivation is further stoked by the fact that students are not automatically admitted to Bachelors of Arts or Bachelors of Science programs; in order to be admitted to Bachelors degree programs, they must first excel in the classes they take for their Associates and then apply anew to the Bachelors program. One might be tempted to assume that prison is a wonderful place for study—what else do inmates do all day? In reality, most of the students have prison jobs that pay much less than minimum wage and hardly find the crowded, noisy conditions conducive to studying. Thus, many wait until others in their housing unit have gone to sleep before working through the night. The discipline BPI students practice during their time in the program, in addition to support BPI offers upon release, yields tremendous benefits. Whereas the overall prison population has a recidivism rate of more than 40%, BPI graduates have a rate of 4% and have gone on to graduate school and careers in public health and social work, among other things.

CURRICULAR CONTEXT

BPI does not offer a major in Religious Studies, so most of the courses that I teach are offered as history courses or humanities electives. Like Bard College, BPI classes are formatted as smaller surveys and seminars. Most classes are capped at twenty students (which can seem like many more, given the students' levels of engagement and eagerness to participate in discussion). Also like Bard, BPI's curriculum begins with a year of preparatory classes that equip students to think critically and write clearly once enrolled in more specialized courses of interest or those related to their majors. This first year series of courses includes at least one class in social theory (usually anthropology, political theory, or sociology) that deals with notions of social constructs. As a result, students are often ready for more sophisticated work by the time they enroll in my classes.

METHODOLOGY

In almost every other course I teach, I begin with at least one reading or lecture that theorizes or historicizes the concept of "religion." I do not do that here because the "religion" in this course consists almost entirely of organized religious bodies and institutions. I have distributed a few readings throughout the course, however, that help students to think of religion in terms of practice as well as in terms of faith commitments and institutional affiliation. Moreover, in preparing media files, students must read an article that examines the diversity of organizational mission statements, funding sources, and staff commitments among humanitarian organizations, and thereby destabilizes the idea that one can readily categorize any organization as simply religious or secular. Nevertheless, most of the theoretical readings are designed to help students recognize that humanitarianism, charity, and religion are all political to some extent (i.e., that there is no pure humanitarianism or religion—or, at least, humanitarian or religious activity—outside of the realm of politics). I've organized the course as a writing course because BPI is

Young Scholars in American Religion, Fall 2014
Rosemary R. Corbett

Religion and Humanitarianism in America

constantly seeking to provide more of those, but the level is that of an upper division seminar. Importantly, because BPI students do not have access to the internet, I have also tailored this version of the syllabus for use in more traditional college and university contexts.

RELIGION AND HUMANITARIANISM IN AMERICA

DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

This class will look at the history of modern humanitarianism—an activity that is now a multi-million dollar industry and that the U.S. funds more than any other country in the world—and its origins in charity, philanthropy, and missions. By interspersing case studies of humanitarian endeavors with theoretical investigations into the nature of such work, we will explore the evolving relationships between private religious humanitarian groups and more public actors, forces, and institutions such as nation-states, international law, and the market. Our goals will be to dig past the fiction that humanitarianism is ever impartial (a seemingly necessary fiction that allows many institutions to do their work in conflict areas) to uncover the political dynamics of various humanitarian endeavors. In so doing, we will seek to understand how such work and the narratives we tell about it shapes our notions of the proper roles of religious groups and government, as well as how religious groups represent (and contest) U.S. power in the world.

REQUIREMENTS

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Because this is a small, discussion-based seminar, not a lecture course, it is a collective undertaking and your participation is essential. Missing class will seriously affect your learning experience and that of your colleagues. You are required to attend all classes, participate vigorously in discussions, and treat every perspective and the person expressing it (whether that is an author, a lecturer, or a classmate) with respect.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION BOARD POSTINGS [Due at midnight the day BEFORE class]

You must submit one posting each week. These are designed to help you work through your thoughts and prepare for class discussions. In one to two paragraphs, pose *two questions* about the readings that you found interesting, enlightening, or controversial and briefly elaborate on them with reference to a specific passage or passages. You may also write a brief response to one of your fellow students' questions that you find particularly provocative.

PRESENTATIONS [Sign up on Discussion Board, Due Weeks 8-10]

Every student will give a presentation on the history, work, and self-presentation (as derived from websites) of one of the religious humanitarian organizations not covered by our readings. Before evaluating an organization, students must read Helen Ebaugh, et. al., "Where's the Religion?: Distinguishing Faith-Based from Secular Social Service Agencies," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42.3 (2003): 411-426. In light of Ebaugh's findings, students must consider, among other things, how the organizations present their "mission" (language used, references to faith and practice, etc.), how they derive their funding (if this is disclosed), and whether they are staffed by professionals or religious volunteers. This should allow students to identify where, if at all, the organizations fit on Ebaugh's spectrum that spans from entirely secular organizations to entirely religious ones. Possible groups include (check with me if pursuing an alternative):

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| -Catholic Relief Services | -Southern Baptist Disaster Relief | -Jewish World Service |
| -Mennonite Voluntary Services | -Presbyterian Disaster Assistance | -Islamic Relief |

Young Scholars in American Religion, Fall 2014 Religion and Humanitarianism in America
Rosemary R. Corbett

- Lutheran Volunteer Corp -New York Disaster Interfaith Services -Islamic Relief, USA
- Lutheran World Relief -National Disaster Interfaiths Network -Jesuit Volunteer Corps
- Episcopal Relief & Developmnt -United Methodist Committee on Relief -United Sikhs
- Buddhist Churches of America Disaster Relief -Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
- Focus Humanitarian Assistance (Ismaili; affiliated with the Aga Khan Development Network)

MEDIA FILES

[Due Week 11]

These assignments are designed to expose you to the variety of voices within and about humanitarian organizations, and to assist you in navigating through contrasting opinions. **Collect and evaluate** three journalistic accounts on one particular theme (acceptable sources include the *Boston Globe*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Time*. If you would like to use another source, check with me first.) Compare each account with one or two others that cover the same topic or event. At least one of these secondary articles should be from within a religious humanitarian organization (newsletter, website, etc.) such as those listed above. **Answer the following questions:** How do the authors present the history of the issue, if at all? What does each emphasize? Has anything been left out? If so, how are they the same and/or different? Include the articles and **conclude your file with a 3-5 page essay that analyzes** your entries in light of class readings (particularly the Curtis, Hulttunen, and Winston pieces from Week Six).

RESEARCH PAPER

This assignment is designed to increase your awareness of some aspect of how religious humanitarian organizations operate or have operated in the U.S. It is also designed to increase your abilities to think critically, formulate an argument, and frame it in a compelling and consistent way. Thus, there are two parts of this assignment: the preliminary prospectus and the final product.

Prospectus: Topic, Theoretical Framework, Bibliography

[4-5 pgs, Due Week 7]

In addition to selecting a topic that interests you and compiling resources to support your *research* (not your conclusion – that comes later), you must wade through some of the many ways of thinking about the issue. That preliminary exercise is the goal of this prospectus. The prospectus thus involves three parts:

Topic: In **less than one page**, present why this project is interesting or important.

Theory: Facts do not present themselves. Rather, researchers make use of select materials to ask particular questions and come to certain conclusions. **Select at least one reading from the course list. Prepare a two-page discussion of the author's arguments.** Summarize the highlights and main points *and* pay attention to the overall structure of the argument. In other words, discuss the subject of the research and explore *how* the author presents the problem or topic and *what kinds* of resources s/he uses to investigate it. Why is the research segmented and presented in the way it is? What kinds of questions can the author ask/not ask due to the resources s/he uses and the way (method) s/he uses to explore them? Finally, discuss how you will utilize this work (in agreement and/or disagreement) to investigate your topic.

Bibliography: **One to two pages**, use of course readings is entirely acceptable and encouraged. Format according to **Chicago Manual of Style**.

Young Scholars in American Religion, Fall 2014
Rosemary R. Corbett

Religion and Humanitarianism in America

Final Product

[12-15 pgs total, Due Week 14]

Upon receiving my comments and suggestions on your prospectus (see me if you disagree with or do not understand them), commence with investigating your subject and developing your own conclusions. Keep in mind the logical and narrative structure of the work you analyzed as you construct the written presentation of your findings. You may integrate as much of your prospectus as is applicable to your final argument.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

Attendance and Participation	15%
Weekly Postings	20%
Media Review	20%
Presentation of Humanitarian Organization	15%
Research Paper	30%

REQUIRED TEXTS

Barnett, Michael. *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011.

Barnet, Michael, and Thomas G. Weiss, eds. *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008. (*Noted as B & W in course plan)

Davis, Thomas J. ed. *Religion in Philanthropic Organizations: Family, Friend, Foe?* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013.

Friedman, Lawrence, and Mark McGarvie, eds. *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. (*L & McG in course plan)

McCleary, Rachel M. *Global Compassion: Private Voluntary Organizations and U.S. Foreign Policy Since 1939*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

ARTICLES & BOOK CHAPTERS (in online course reader)

Abu-Lughod, Lila. "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others," *American Anthropologist* (2002): 783-90.

Curtis, Heather. "Depicting Distant Suffering: Evangelicals and the Politics of Pictorial Humanitarianism in the Age of American Empire," *Material Religion: the Journal of Objects, Art and Belief* 8.2 (June 2012): 154-183.

Ebaugh, Helen, et al, "Where's the Religion?: Distinguishing Faith-Based from Secular Social Service Agencies," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42.3 (2003): 411-426.

Frost, William J. "'Our Deeds Carry Our Message': The Early History of the American Friends Service Committee," *Quaker History* 81.1 (Spring 1992), 1-51.

RECOMMENDED READING

Bornstein, Erica, and Peter Redfield, eds. *Forces of Compassion: Humanitarianism Between Ethics and Politics*. Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research, 2010.

Young Scholars in American Religion, Fall 2014 Religion and Humanitarianism in America
Rosemary R. Corbett

Kennedy, David. *The Dark Sides of Virtue: Reassessing International Humanitarianism*.
Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Stamatov, Peter. *The Origins of Global Humanitarianism: Religion, Empires, Advocacy*.
Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Wuthnow, Robert. *Saving America? Faith-Based Services and the Future of Civil Society*.
Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Wuthnow, Robert, and Virginia A. Hodgkinson. *Faith and Philanthropy in America: Exploring
the Role of Religion in America's Voluntary Sector*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
Publishers, 1990.

COURSE PLAN

Week One: Introduction

Barnett, Michael, and Thomas G. Weiss. "Humanitarianism: A Brief History of the Present" (B & W, 1-48). ***Read before the first class**

Week Two: Definitions ~ What is Humanitarianism? What is it Not?

Calhoun, Craig. "The Imperative to Reduce Suffering: Charity, Progress, and Emergencies in the Field of Humanitarian Action" (B & W, 73-97).

Barnett, Michael, & Jack Snyder. "The Grand Strategies of Humanitarianism" (B & W, 143-171).

Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*. Introduction & Chapter One (1-48).

*Recommended:

Kennedy, *The Dark Side of Virtue*, "Preface" and Chapter One, "The International Human Rights Movement: Part of the Problem?" (xi-xiv and 3-36).

Week Three: Early Humanitarian History

Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*. Part I ("The Age of Imperial Humanitarianism" [1800-WWI]) and Part II ("The Age of Neo-Humanitarianism" [WWII-End of Cold War]), 49-160.

Week Four: Charity and Philanthropy (Pre-"Humanitarianism") in Early America

Gross, Robert A. "Giving in America: From Charity to Philanthropy" (F & McG, 29-48).

Porterfield, Amanda. "Protestant Missionaries: Pioneers of American Philanthropy" (F & McG, 49-70).

Gamber, Wendy. "Antebellum Reform: Salvation, Self-Control, and Social Transformation" (F & McG, 129-154).

*Recommended:

Barker-Benfield, G. J., "The Origins of Anglo-American Sensibility" (F & McG, 71-90).

Young Scholars in American Religion, Fall 2014 Religion and Humanitarianism in America
Rosemary R. Corbett

Warren, Stephen. "Rethinking Assimilation: American Indians and the Practice of Christianity, 1800-1861" (F & McG 107-128).

Jacobs Brumberg, Joan. "Zenanas and Girlless Villages: The Ethnology of American Evangelical Women, 1870-1910," *Journal of American History* 69:2 (Sept 1982): 347-371.

Week Five: Humanitarianism From the Civil War through the Great War

Finkenbine, Roy E. "Law, Reconstruction, and African American Education in the Post-Emancipation South" (F & McG, 161-178).

Sealander, Judith. "Curing Evils at Their Source: The Arrival of Scientific Giving" (F & McG, 217-240).

Rosenberg, Emily. "Missions to the World: Philanthropy Abroad" (F & McG, 241-258).

Kelner, Shaul. "Religious Ambivalence in Jewish American Philanthropy" (Davis, 28-49).

*Recommended:

McCarthy, Kathleen D. "Women and Political Culture" (F & McG, 179-199).

Week Six: Missions Reconsidered & Rebranded During WWI and the Depression

Oates, Mary J. "Faith and Good Works: Catholic Giving and Taking" (F & McG, 281-300).

Frost, William J. "'Our Deeds Carry Our Message': The Early History of the American Friends Service Committee," *Quaker History* 81, no. 1 (Spring 1992), 1-51.

Hammack, David C. "Failure and Resilience: Pushing the Limits in Depression and Wartime" (F & McG, 263-280).

Curtis, Heather. "Depicting Distant Suffering: Evangelicals and the Politics of Pictorial Humanitarianism in the Age of American Empire," *Material Religion: the Journal of Objects, Art and Belief* 8:2 (June 2012): 154-183.

*Recommended

Halttunen, Karen. "Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture," *The American Historical Review* 100:2 (April 1995): 303-334.

****Please note that this piece contains graphic descriptions of violence and sexuality****

Winston, Diane. "The Price of Success: The Impact of News on Religious Identity and Philanthropy" (Davis, 50-70).

Week Seven: Relations between Religious Organizations and Government During WWII

PROSPECTUS DUE

McCleary, *Global Compassion*, Chapters 2 and 3: "World War II: U.S. Federal Government Consolidation and Regulation of Humanitarian Assistance, 1939-45" (36-60) and "The Beginning of the Cold War and the Promotion of Economic Development, 1946-1959" (61-82).

Hall, Peter D. "The Welfare State and the Careers of Public and Private Institutions Since 1945" (F & McG, 363-383).

Young Scholars in American Religion, Fall 2014 Religion and Humanitarianism in America
Rosemary R. Corbett

Hess, Gary R. "Waging the Cold War in the Third World: The Foundations and Challenges of Development" (F & McG, 319-340).

Week Eight: "Development" as Duty During the Cold War and the Rise of Religious NGOs
STUDENT PRESENTATIONS BEGIN

McCleary, *Global Compassion*, Chapters 4 and 5: "The Internationalization of American Aid" (83-103) and "The Golden Age of PVO-State Relations" (104-122).

King, David P. "Heartbroken for God's World: The Story of Bob Pierce, Founder of World Vision and Samaritan's Purse" (Davis, 71-92).

McDonic, Susan. "Juggling the Religious and the Secular *World Visions*" (Davis, 168-181).

Week Nine: Professionalization of a Field in the 1970s and After
STUDENT PRESENTATIONS CONTINUE

Fearon, James D. "The Rise of Emergency Relief Aid" (B & W, 49-72).

Hopgood, Stephen. "Saying 'No' to Wal-Mart? Money and Morality in Professional Humanitarianism" (B & W, 98-123).

***Recommended:**

Redfield, Peter. "Sacrifice, Triage, and Global Humanitarianism" (B & W, 196-214).

Rubenstein, Jennifer C. "The Distributive Commitments of International NGOs" (B & W, 215-234).

Stein, Janice Gross. "Humanitarian Organizations: Accountable—Why, to Whom, for What, and How?" (B & W, 124-142).

Week Ten: Charitable Choice & Relations Between Religious Organizations & Government
STUDENT PRESENTATIONS CONTINUE

Sheila S. Kennedy, "Religious Philanthropies and Government Social Programs" (Davis, 144-167).

Kammer, Fred, S.J. "Catholic Charities, Religion, and Philanthropy" (Davis, 93-121).

Week Eleven: The Militarization of Humanitarianism
*** MEDIA FILES DUE***

McCleary, *Global Compassion*, Chapter 6: "Federal Decentralization and the Militarization of Foreign Humanitarian Aid" (123-141).

***Recommended:**

Kennedy, David. "Humanitarianism and Force" in *The Dark Sides of Virtue* (235-324).

Week Twelve: The Commercialization of Humanitarianism and the Liberal Humanitarian Order

Young Scholars in American Religion, Fall 2014 Religion and Humanitarianism in America
Rosemary R. Corbett

McCleary, *Global Compassion*, Chapter 7: “The Commercialization of Foreign Aid” (142-168).

Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, Part III: “The Age of Liberal Humanitarianism” (161-240).

Week Thirteen: Contemporary Humanitarianism: What’s at Stake Now

Ferris, Elizabeth G. “New Wineskins or New Wine? The Evolution of Ecumenical Humanitarian Assistance” (Davis, 1-27).

Abu-Lughod, Lila. “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others,” *American Anthropologist* (2002): 783-90.

Siddiqui, Shariq A. “Myth vs. Reality: Muslim American Philanthropy Since 9/11” (Davis, 203-214).

*Recommended:

Barnett, Michael. “Humanitarianism as a Scholarly Vocation” (B & W, 235-263).

Eichler-Levine, Jodi, and Rosemary R. Hicks, “As Americans Against Genocide”: The Crisis in Darfur and Interreligious Political Activism,” *American Quarterly* 59:3 (2007): 711-735.

Hicks, Rosemary. “Saving Darfur: Enacting Pluralism in Terms of Gender, Genocide, and Militarized Human Rights” in Courtney Bender and Pamela Klassen, eds. *After Pluralism: Reimagining Religious Engagement*, 252-276. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

Severson, Kin. “For Some, Helping with Disaster Relief Is Not Just Aid, It’s a Calling” in *The New York Times* (May 9, 2011)

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/09/us/09baptist.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

Week Fourteen: Your Turn

FINAL PAPERS DUE