



Syllabus for Online Course  
**THE HUMAN RIGHT TO ADEQUATE FOOD**  
(Draft of May 7, 2009)

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### **Course Description**

The challenge of caring for others and the planet is placed in clear relief when we face the issue of hunger. While some of our methods of food production are not sustainable, with today's technology we already produce more than enough food for every person in the world. Yet about a billion people are hungry. At its root, the problem is not one of technology, but caring. This class asks how the humanistic vision can be taken to a global scale. The exercise focuses on hunger, but the principles and the approach can be adapted to other issues as well.

Ending hunger is a deeply political issue, involving the play of power and conflicting interests. Remedies must involve much more than the delivery of particular goods or services. It requires recognition and respect for human rights, and it may require some sort of reconfiguration of the social order, locally, nationally, and globally. Ending hunger requires serious planning, and it requires formulation of, and agreement on, a guiding vision. This class is designed to help us figure out how to do that, in the contexts that interest us.

### **Course Approach and Learning Experiences**

The course is based on ten core Topics:

1. Nutrition Problems
2. Trade Follies
3. Food Trade

4. Rights-based Social Systems
5. The Human Right to Adequate Food
6. Global Obligations
7. Nutritional Safety Nets
8. Homestead Food Production
9. Community-based Nutrition Security
10. Globalization from Below

One week will be devoted to each of these topics. Following that, the last two weeks of the course will be devoted to finishing participants' studies on particular nutrition problems in specific regions of interest.

The course will be conducted entirely online, using the Moodle software. Moodle requires the Firefox browser; it does not work properly with Safari. Participants will need regular access to computers with good Internet connections. Some of our work will be conducted through keyboard discussions in Moodle Forums. Separate Forums will be set up for each of the Learning Objectives. These Forums will be used asynchronously, which means that we do not all have to be at our computers at the same time. Participants can use the Forums to write their questions and concerns about the issues at any time during the week.

We will also use Moodle for weekly keyboard chats. These will be synchronous, which means that all participants in a chat will have to be at their computers at the same time. Schedules will be worked out.

## **Course Learning Goals**

Broadly, the purpose of this course is to prepare students to become actively engaged with large-scale social issues such as poverty, hunger, environmental depletion and pollution, climate change, and armed conflict. They have technical dimensions, but they are also social issues that require new thinking about governance. The problem of hunger is used to explore possible approaches to such issues. While a dietitian or a social worker might be able to provide good advice to an individual, our Assignment is to zoom out, and think about how to address issues at the societal level, whether locally, nationally, or globally. Our particular concern in this course is the question: how is it possible to achieve social transformation that will benefit those who are politically weak, especially when those who are politically strong are likely to resist change?

## **Learning Objectives and Assessment of Student Learning**

The specific Learning Objectives (LO) are described here in relation to the core topics. Participants should . . .

(LO1) Learn that one's approach to social issues and the remedies that one proposes will depend on how the problem is formulated (Assessed through participant's Commentary on Topic 1. Nutrition Problems).

(LO2) Recognize that one's understanding of social issues should be informed by critical analysis of remedies that have been offered by others, illustrated here by examination of the role of international trade in relation to hunger (Assessed through participant's Commentary on Topic 2. Trade Follies and Topic 3. Food Trade).

(LO3) Become familiar with the roles that can be played by rights in general, and human rights in particular, in addressing major social problems (Assessed through participant's Commentary on Topic 4. Rights-based Social Systems, Topic 5. The Human Right to Adequate Food, and Topic 6. Global Obligations).

(LO4) Recognize how and why some remedies may be effective even if they are conceptually simple and do not directly address the roots of the problem (Assessed through participant's Commentary on Topic 7. Nutritional Safety Nets and Topic 8. Homestead Food Production).

(LO5) Develop skill in formulating and applying basic principles in dealing with major social issues, and showing how they can be applied concretely (Assessed through participant's Commentary on Topic 9. Community-based Nutrition Security and Topic 10. Globalization from Below, and also the Project on Reducing Malnutrition).

Learning on these dimensions will be demonstrated through weekly commentaries and chats on the core topics, and the final project.

## **Course Requirements**

The course will cover one core Topic each week. Participants are expected to carefully study the resource materials provided through the Course Calendar on the Moodle website, including both the learning modules and the documents.

There are four types of written assignments: Profile, Commentaries, Project on Reducing Malnutrition, and Course Evaluation. Assignments must be uploaded by 11:55 PM at the end of the day on which they are due. Assignments will not be accepted more than a

week after their due dates. Late assignments, submitted within a week of their due dates, will have their grades reduced by half.

### ***Profile***

Each participant in the class is to provide a personal Profile in the Moodle space provided for that purpose. It may be accessed through People/Participants at the top of the left panel on the front page of the Moodle website.

Participants should write a few paragraphs about themselves, discussing their schooling, their work, and their interests. Participants should also say what name they would like to use during the course, and where they will be located while taking this course.

### ***Commentaries***

Participants are to write Commentaries in accordance with the schedule indicated below, in the Assignment Overview. Each Commentary is to include five distinctly labeled sections: Summary, My Views, Question, Chat Report, and Bibliography.

The Summary should briefly recapitulate what was covered in the source materials for that topic.

My Views is the space for presenting personal opinions about the material.

The Question should be one that is likely to be of interest for discussion by the entire group. In addition to appearing in the Commentary, these questions should be brought into the Chats.

The Chat Report provides a brief summary of the chat, beginning with a list of the participants and the name of the host.

The Commentaries should look at least roughly like the model available at <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~kent/Commentary%20Model.doc>

### ***Projects on Reducing Malnutrition***

Each participant's final project for the course should propose a plan of action to deal with a particular nutrition problem in a specific region of interest. For example, these projects could address issues of undernutrition generally, stunting in young children, the need to reduce dependence on imported food, preparation to deal with food issues in disasters, food safety, overweight, etc. The titles of these projects should indicate the nutrition issue and the place in which it is to be addressed, e.g., "Reducing Stunting of Young Children in Paraguay" or "Reducing Obesity Among School Children in Tasmania. The project should be designed to be useful to a specifically identified person or agency concerned with the issue that is addressed.

Participants will be encouraged to exchange drafts and ideas during the final two weeks of the course, whether through Moodle Forums, online group chats, or direct discussions via skype or other means. While this project is to be finished in the last weeks of the course, it will have to be started much earlier than that. Focusing on these specific issues early in the course will help participants in formulating their reflections in the Commentaries.

This work is to be presented in three stages, as indicated in the Assignment Overview below. Early in the course, participants should submit a one-page plan that describes the place on which they will focus and the nature of the nutrition problem that is of interest. It should also include a tentative outline, to show the structure of the paper. A rough draft should be submitted later in the course. The final paper is to be submitted at the end of the course.

### ***Course Assessment***

Near the end, each participant will be asked to complete a questionnaire to assess the course. Credit will be given for responding to the questionnaire, with no regard for the content of the responses.

## **Required Texts**

A detailed Course Calendar and resource list will be provided on the course website. All resources used for the course will be available online, through Internet links.

The instructor will provide an essay on each core Topic, to serve as the lecture for the week. In addition, the core text will be the instructor's *Freedom from Want: The Human Right to Adequate Food*, published in 2005 by Georgetown University Press. It is available from the publisher and also through online booksellers such as Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and Addall.com It is also available as a no-cost file through the publisher's website at <http://press.georgetown.edu/pdfs/9781589010550.pdf>

We will use seven interactive learning modules prepared by the Right to Food Unit of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. They are available at no cost at [http://www.fao.org/righttofood/kc/dl\\_en.htm](http://www.fao.org/righttofood/kc/dl_en.htm) Other resources from the Right to Food Unit are also provided through the Course Calendar at the course website.

## **Assignment Overview**

The following chart summarizes the major assignments for the course.

<b>ASSIGN- MENT</b>	<b>ASSIGNMENT NAME</b>	<b>DUE MONDAY</b>	<b>MINI- MUM PAGES</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
A	Profile	Sep 7	1	100
B	Commentary on Topic 1	Sep 14	4	100
C	Commentary on Topics 2 and 3	Sep 28	4	100
D	Plan for Project	Oct 5	1	100
E	Commentary on Topics 4, 5 and 6	Oct 19	5	100
F	Commentary on Topics 7 and 8	Nov 2	5	100
G	Draft Project	Nov 9	4	100
H	Commentary on Topics 9 and 10	Nov 16	5	100
I	Final Project	Nov 30	8	300
J	Course Assessment	Nov 30		100

If you wish to register for this course, please follow this link:

<http://www.transcend.org/tpu/new/HRAF.html>