

NGO Politics
(POL S 403a/527a)
Aseem Prakash
Winter 2025

Class Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 1:30-3:20
Class Location: Loew 216
Office Hours: By appointment
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Course Objective

Non-governmental, non-profit organizations (NGNPOs) have emerged as important actors in local, national, and international politics. As units of collective action, they advocate policy positions and produce collective goods. They are often viewed as crucial building blocks for democracy and economic growth. NGNPOs compete and cooperate with governments and with firms. Importantly, they compete and cooperate with one another for membership, external funding, and media attention. Although they are termed as ‘non-governmental’ organizations, many of them rely on governments for much of their funding. And, some NGNPOs have highly questionable and normatively inappropriate goals. In sum, there is a scholarly need to systematically examine NGNPOs as units of collective action, and answer key questions such as under what conditions they emerge, how they structure their organization, how they function, and how they influence policy.

Several literatures study the advocacy and collective good provision functions of NGNPOs. These are:

- the NGO politics and civil society literatures in political science,
- the social movement literature in sociology, and
- the non-profit (NP) literature in public policy/administration/management.

This course will investigate key theoretical and empirical issues raised in these literatures pertaining to NGNPO goals, strategy, politics, and efficacy. We will focus on topics that are theoretically and empirically interesting and have attracted scholarly attention.

Readings

Readings are either uploaded on Canvas or I have provided the article URL.

This is a Device Free Class

Research suggests that the use of electronic devices in class can be distracting for you and for your colleagues. Therefore, to enhance your learning experience, during the class, you are not allowed to use phones, tablets, laptops or any Internet-connectable devices. Please take notes using a pen and a notebook.

Course Expectations

This course requires active student participation. You are expected to energetically and thoughtfully contribute to class discussions in the following ways.

Writing Memos

Article memos

For every session (except when we have guest speakers), students will be assigned an article to present and critique. The discussant-presenter should prepare a two-page (single-spaced) “Article Memo” that summarizes the article, examines its strengths and weaknesses, and identifies questions it raises for future research. Please email this memo to me by Monday **1200 noon for the Tuesday class and by Wednesday 1200 noon for the Thursday class**. The discussant-presenter should budget about 10 minutes for the in-class oral presentation (no PowerPoint).

Key questions memo

I expect seminar participants to review all the assigned readings prior to the class. Based on these readings for a given session, you will write a “Key questions” memo. In this memo, identify two or three questions or issues that emerge from the assigned readings, along with a rationale as to why these questions are important. Your “Key Questions Memo” should be about one-page (single-spaced) and reach me **by Monday 1200 noon for the Tuesday class, and by Wednesday 1200 noon for the Thursday class**.

I have divided the course into three modules with about seven class sessions for every module. You need to write 2 key question memos (for two different class sessions) from every module (this means, **6 key question memos in total**).

Think of Module 1. Suppose you like readings from session 3. After reading the articles assigned for this session, think of two or three overarching questions that you believe emerge from these readings and should be covered during class discussions.

Please note: If you are assigned to present a specific article for session 3 (and therefore are writing the article memo), you cannot write a key question memo for this session.

Research Paper

Identify two NGOs and compare them on their salient dimensions such as organizational structure, advocacy or service delivery strategies, fund raising, etc. course. A **one-page outline is due February 11** and a five-page (single-spaced; excluding

references and tables) **research paper is due** March 13. I recommend structuring your paper into sections and subsections.

Evaluation

In total, you can score 100 points. To convert this into a 4-point scale, I will simply divide it by 25.

Article Memos:	30 points (10 points per memo * 3 memos)
Key Questions Memos:	30 points (5 points per memo * 6 memos)
Class Participation:	20 points
Research Paper:	20 points
Total:	100 points

Class Schedule

Session 1

Tuesday, January 7

What is Civil Society?

1. Salamon. 1994. The Rise of the Nonprofit Sector. *Foreign Affairs*, 73, 109–122.
2. Chandhoke. 2002. The Limits of Global Civil Society
3. Johnson and Prakash. 2007. NGO Research Program: A Collective Action Perspective. *Policy Sciences*. 40(3): 221-240

Session 2

Thursday, January 9

The Spread of Civil Society

4. Reiman. 2006. A View from the Top: International Politics, Norms, and the Worldwide Growth of NGOs. *International Studies Quarterly*. 50: 45-57.
5. Salamon and Anheier. 1998. Social Origins of Civil Society. *Voluntas*. 9: 213-248.
6. Langohr. 2004. Too Much Civil Society, too Little Politics: Egypt and Liberalizing Arab Regimes. *Comparative Politics*: 181-204.

Session 3

Tuesday, January 14

Problematizing Civil Society

7. Chambers and Kopstein. 2001. Bad Civil Society. *Political Theory*. 29 (6): 837-865.
8. Morfit. 2011. "AIDS is Money": How Donor Preferences Reconfigure Local Realities. *World Development*, 39(1), 64-76. Makayla.

9. Hearn. 2007. African NGOs: the new compradors? *Development and Change*. 38(6): 1095-1110. Jared

Session 4

Thursday, January 16

Variations in Civil Society

10. Haddad, 2017. Analysing State–Civil Society Associations Relationship: The Case of Lebanon, *Voluntas*. 28:1742–1761.
11. Aiyede, 2017. Civil Society Efficacy, Citizenship and Empowerment in Africa, *Voluntas*. 28:1326–1345.
12. Jafar .2007. Engaging Fundmaentalism. The Case of Women's NGO in Pakistan. *Social Problems* 54(3): 256-273.

Session 5

Tuesday, January 21

National Styles of Civil Society

13. Rikmann and Keedus. 2013. Civic Sectors in Transformation and Beyond: Preliminaries for a Comparison of Six Central and Eastern European Societies. *Voluntas*. 24: 149-166.
14. Archambault, Priller, and Zimmer. 2014. European Civil Societies Compared: Typically German–Typically French?. *Voluntas*. 25: 514-537
15. Ahmad. 2007. Careers of NGO-field workers in Bangladesh. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*. 17(3): 349-365..

Session 6

Thursday, January 23

Guest Speaker: Christianna Paar

NGOs under Authoritarianism.

16. Vietnam’s environmental NGOs face uncertain status, shrinking civic space: <https://news.mongabay.com/2023/02/vietnams-environmental-ngos-face-uncertain-status-shrinking-civic-space/>
17. Georgia is sliding towards autocracy after government moves to force through bill on ‘foreign agents’: <https://theconversation.com/georgia-is-sliding-towards-autocracy-after-government-moves-to-force-through-bill-on-foreign-agents-228219>
18. NGOs and Authoritarianism, Andrew Heiss: <https://www.andrewheiss.com/research/chapters/heiss-ngo-ir-2019/heiss->

2019-ngos-authoritarianism.pdf

19. Authoritarianism Goes Global, Alexander Cooley:
<https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Cooley-26-3.pdf>

Session 7

Tuesday, January 28

Bottom Up or Top Down?

20. McFarland and Thomas. 2006. Bowling Young: How Youth Voluntary Associations Influence Adult Political Participation. *American Sociological Review*. 71(3): 401-425.
21. Brass. 2012. Blurring boundaries: The integration of NGOs into governance in Kenya. *Governance* 25.2 (2012): 209-235.
22. Reckhow, Downey, and Sapotichne .Governing Without Government: Nonprofit Governance in Detroit and Flint (October 26, 2018). Available at SSRN:
<https://ssrn.com/abstract=3273190> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3273190>

Part 2

Session 8

Thursday, January 30

Social Capital

23. Wollebaek and Selle. 2002. Does Participation in Voluntary Associations Contribute to Social Capital? *Non-Profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*. 31(1): 32-61.
24. Dolšak. 2017. Bowling Together: Mobilization of Collective Action by Environmental NGOs. *Non Profit Policy Forum*. 8(1): 25-44.
25. Brass, Harris, & MacLean. Does electricity demobilize citizens? Exploring access to the grid, political participation and democracy in Africa, *Energy Research & Social Science*, Volume 81, 2021,

Session 9

Tuesday, February 4

Advocacy Strategies

26. Weed. 1993. The MADD queen: Charisma and the Founder of Mothers against Drunk Driving. *The Leadership Quarterly*. 4(3): 329-346.
27. Ron, Ramos, and Rodgers. 2005. Transnational Informational Politics: NGO Human Rights Reporting. *International Studies Quarterly*. 49: 557-587.

28. Guo and Saxton. 2014. Tweeting Social Change: How Social Media Are Changing Nonprofit Advocacy. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*. 43(1): 57-79.

Session 10

Thursday, February 6

Enduring puzzles

29. MacLean, L.M. Exhaustion and Exclusion in the African Village: The Non-State Social Welfare of Informal Reciprocity in Rural Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. *St Comp Int Dev* 46, 118–136 (2011).
30. Scurlock, R., Dolsak, N. & Prakash, A. Recovering from Scandals: Twitter Coverage of Oxfam and Save the Children Scandals. *Voluntas* 31, 94–110 (2020).
31. Hwang, H., & Powell, W. W. (2009). The Rationalization of Charity: The Influences of Professionalism in the Nonprofit Sector. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 54(2), 268-298

One page outline is due

Session 11

Tuesday, February 11

NGOization

32. Nezhina and Ibrayeva. Functioning of Civil Society Organizations in Kazakhstan. *Voluntas*. 24(2): 335-358.
33. Chahim and Prakash. 2014. NGOization, Foreign Funding, and the Nicaraguan Civil Society. *Voluntas*. 25(2): 487–513.
34. Mohan. The disappointments of civil society: the politics of NGO intervention in northern Ghana. *Political Geography* 21.1 (2002): 125-154.

Session 12

Thursday, February 13

Faith-based Nonprofits

35. Bielefeld and Cleveland. 2013. Faith-based Organizations as Service Providers and their Relationship to Government. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 42(3): 468-494.
36. Amirkhanyan, Kim, and Lambright. 2009. Faith-based Assumptions about Performance: Does Church Affiliation matter for Service Quality and Access?. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*. 38(3): 490-521.

37. Borchgrevink. 2017. NGOization of Islamic Charity: Claiming Legitimacy in Changing Institutional. *Voluntas*; published online.

Session 13

Tuesday, February 18

Norm Conflict

38. Cloward, 2015. Elites, Exit Options, and Social Barriers to Norm Change: The Complex Case of Female Genital Mutilation. *Studies in Comparative and International Development*. 50(3): 378-407.
39. Dupuy, Ron, and Prakash. 2016. Hands Off My Regime! Governments' Restrictions on Foreign Aid to NonGovernmental Organizations in Poor and Middle-Income Countries. *World Development*. 84: 299–311.
40. Berry. 2014. Did We do Good? NGOs, Conflicts of Interest and the Evaluation of Short-term Medical Missions in Sololá, Guatemala. *Social Science & Medicine*. 120: 344-351.

Paper outline is due

Session 14

Thursday, February 20

Accountability

41. Prakash and Gugerty. 2010. Trust but Verify? Voluntary Regulation Programs in the Nonprofit Sector. *Regulation & Governance* 4(1): 22 – 47.
42. Hielscher, Winkin, Crack, and Pies. 2017. Saving the Moral Capital of NGOs: Identifying One-Sided and Many-Sided Social Dilemmas in NGO Accountability *Voluntas*. 28:1562–1594.
43. Sanzo-Pe´rez, Rey-Garcia, lvarez-Gonza´lez. 2017. The Drivers of Voluntary Transparency in Nonprofits: Professionalization and Partnerships with Firms as Determinants. *Voluntas*. 28:1595–1621.

Part 3

Session 15

Tuesday, February 25

Resource Dependence

44. Ostrander. 2007 The Growth of Donor Control: Revisiting the Social Relations of Philanthropy. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*. 36: 356.
45. Vincci. 2017. 'Shopping for Change': World Vision Canada and Consumption-Oriented Philanthropy in the Age of Philanthrocapitalism. *Voluntas*. 28:455–471.

46. Verbruggen, Christiaens, and Milis. 2011. Can Resource Dependence and Coercive Isomorphism Explain Nonprofit Organizations' Compliance with Reporting Standards?. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*. 40(1): 5-32.

Session 16

Thursday, February 27

Volunteering

47. Tonurist and Surva. 2017. Is Volunteering Always Voluntary? Between Compulsion and Coercion in Co-production. *Voluntas*. 28: 223–247.
48. Schwingel, Eran-Garcia, McCaffrey, Gálvez, and Hawn. 2017. More Than Help? Volunteerism in US Latino Culture. *Voluntas*. 28(1): 162–183.
49. Lee and Moon. 2011. Mainstream and Ethnic Volunteering by Korean Immigrants in the United States. *Voluntas*. 22(4): 811-830.

Session 17

Tuesday, March 4

Charity Markets

50. Stride and Lee. 2007. No Logo? No Way. Branding in the Non-Profit Sector. *Journal of Marketing Management*. 23 (1-2): 107-122.
51. Sargeant and Woodliffe. 2007. Building Donor Loyalty: The Antecedents and Role of Commitment in the Context of Charity Giving. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*. 18(2): 47-68.
52. Keller and Shaw. 2010. NPO Branding: Preliminary Lessons from Major Players. *International Journal of Nonprofit Voluntary Sector Marketing*. 15: 105–121.

Session 18

Thursday, March 6

Foundations

53. Anheier and Leat. 2013. Foundations; What Rationales.
54. Bartley, 2007. How Foundations Shape Social Movements. *Social Problems*. 54(3): 229-255.
55. Quinn, R., Tompkins-Stange, M., & Meyerson, D. (2014). Beyond Grantmaking: Philanthropic Foundations as Agents of Change and Institutional Entrepreneurs. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 43(6), 950-968.

Session 19

Tuesday, March 11

Foundations in International Context

56. Micinski. 2017. The Changing Role of the Ford Foundation in International Development, 1951–2001, *Voluntas*. 28:1301–1325
57. Shieh. 2017. Same Bed, Different Dreams? The Divergent Pathways of Foundations and Grassroots NGOs in China, *Voluntas*.
58. Hilton, 2018. Charity and the End of Empire: British Non-Governmental Organizations, Africa, and International Development in the 1960s. *The American Historical Review*, 123(2): 493–517.

Session 20

Thursday, March 13

NGOs and Climate Change

59. Coxcoon. 2024. Are local climate assemblies politically representative of the macro-public they represent, and does this matter? *Environmental Research Communication*
60. Foxe et al. 2024. Varieties of climate activism: assessing public support for mainstream and unorthodox climate action in the United Kingdom. *Environmental Research Communication*.
61. Ostareck et al., 2024. Radical climate protests linked to increases in public support for moderate organizations. *Nature Sustainability*.