Office of International Programs Course:

Asset-based Community Development to
Promote Social-Emotional Wellbeing for Youth in Malawi

Summer 2017

Instructors: Lisa V. Blitz, PhD, LCSW-R
Youjung Lee, PhD, LMSW

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Email: lblitz@binghamton.edu; yjlee@binghamton.edu

Class Meeting Dates
March 8, 2017 | 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm
March 22, 2017 | 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm
April 19, 2017 | 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm
May 10, 2017 | 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Travel to Malawi for 20 days, depart May 26, 2017, return June 15, 2017 (dates approximate)

Additional Independent Study required; See Appendix A

We will meet in the University Downtown Center, room 201

Course Description

This course provides an opportunity for students of diverse backgrounds and interests to learn about the dynamics of sustainable development with a focus on Malawi in the Southern Region of Africa. In addition to class time in Binghamton, the course involves approximately three weeks in Malawi working closely with a local non-governmental organization, the Malawi Children’s Mission (MCM), and the three rural communities it serves: M’bwana, Jamali, and Mwazama. Originally established as a feeding center for orphaned children, MCM has expanded to provide pre-school and primary education. Approximately 60 children go to school at MCM, receiving a quality of education that cannot be matched by overcrowded local government schools, and over 150 children rely on MCM for their most substantial meal of the day. The children served by MCM are largely those who have been orphaned by AIDS or other circumstances and have endured profound trauma and loss. Malawi is one of the world’s poorest countries, and the highest concentration of its poorest citizens live in the rural areas. Malaria, malnutrition, and HIV infection are endemic, and concerns about substance abuse among youth are prevalent.
While the needs are profound, the strengths of the communities are impressive. To support these strengths, the project uses an asset-based community development (ABCD) approach. ABCD was initially developed as an alternative to needs-based approaches in which universities, community-based organizations, aid foundations, or non-governmental organizations intervene on behalf of a community to define and address problems (Kretzman & McKnight, 1996). Needs-based approaches tend to over-emphasize deficits and problems, and can have the undesired effects of reducing motivation and self-agency and creating dependence on outside institutions. The ABCD approach positions outside institutions as facilitators to uncover internal strengths and assets that community members can use to address the problems they define as needing attention.

In the Binghamton classroom before the trip, students will learn about (a) international development, (b) the historical and current role of the United States and Europe in African development, (c) the nature and structure of non-governmental and non-profit organizations, (d) business planning and development for micro-financing and micro-enterprise, (e) strengths and needs of rural communities, (f) family and community systems functioning, and (g) child and adolescent development.

The course situates local ABCD practice within the intersections of social justice, economic viability, and cultural identity. The course is designed to help students develop knowledge and skills that enable them to reflect on local development, the role of the United States and Europe in African affairs and development, the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in promoting equity and development, and students’ own roles in international service. Students can take the course as credit as determined by their department or college.

Readings, discussions, and individual research will cover concepts and issues of social and economic justice and the roles of local and international governments in development. We will give particular attention to the region’s cultural and political history, its richness of natural resources and community strength, and its post-colonial economic, political, and social growth and struggles. We will discuss the current and critical debates around the services provided by local NGOs and international aid organizations and the functions that they serve in and for communities. We will also examine the relationships, parallels, and differences between American racial, social, and economic justice struggles and those of sub-Saharan Africa.

This course includes approximately three weeks on-site in Malawi leaving in late May and going into mid-June. The pre-departure course is designed to help students develop skills and knowledge that will enable you to get the most out of your international experience. It will provide you with information about service learning and the practical aspects of international travel. We will spend considerable time reflecting on our role in international service and discuss at length ethical implications of our time in Malawi. We will talk about how to maximize your learning experience during the course as well as your time abroad and when you return home.

The objectives of the course are to:

1. Investigate what local development looks like in practice by identifying key players which include local government, local community-based organizations, and NGOs;
2. Scrutinize and think critically about the roles of local government and civil society organizations in sub-Saharan African development generally and in the Southern African region in particular;
3. Explore the social, political, historical, cultural and ethical dimensions of international engagement;
4. Engage in personal and critical reflection on our practices as global citizens;
5. Develop skills and competencies to enable successful international travel and positive engagement in service learning that is mutually beneficial and which promotes greater cross-cultural understanding and learning.

**MSW Students**

This course meets the requirements of an elective.

**Other Undergraduate and Graduate Students**

Check with your department chair or advisor about how credit can be applied to your studies.

**You will need:**

- A valid passport that does not expire within six months of travel. You will need a visa for entry, and the BU Office of Study Abroad will assist with this.

- There is no risk of Yellow Fever in Malawi. To keep it that way, the government requires a Yellow Vaccination Card documenting that you have had a vaccination for Yellow Fever in the last 10 years if you are arriving from a country that does have yellow fever. Since we will need to change planes in South Africa, we recommend that travelers get a yellow fever vaccine to avoid any confusion going through customs. This card should be stapled to your passport. Check with your doctor for other possible vaccination recommendations, and visit the Health Information for Travelers on the CDC website: [http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/malawi](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/malawi)

- Medication to protect against malaria. Malaria is a potentially serious illness that is endemic throughout Africa. There are a few different medication options, so check with your doctor to decide the best for you. These medications need to be started before you travel, and continue for a few days or weeks (depending on which you choose) upon your return.

- The only credit card consistently accepted in Malawi is VISA. We will be staying near the city of Blantyre, the financial capital of Malawi. There are plenty of ATM machines in Blantyre but if your debit card is not linked to VISA you may not be able to get cash. You will need to plan accordingly.

**Assignments**

**Pre-Service/Preparation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation and Engagement</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engaging Social Media Assignment</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issue Briefs</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Afterschool Programming Ideas</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper Proposal</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creative Immersion</td>
<td>5%</td>
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**In-Service**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-site Service-learning and Reflection</td>
<td>35%</td>
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**Post-Trip**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
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**Class Participation and Engagement (10%)**: This course will meet in-person four times during the Spring 2017 semester prior to departure for Malawi. Before each in-person meeting you will be required to read class material and be prepared to discuss the readings. The instructors will help you prepare by providing several key discussion questions. While we will not collect these,
it is recommended that you write up your responses so you are fully prepared the class. This
preparation is intended to help you participate in class discussion and activities, give us a sense
of how well you understand and can apply course concepts, and give you a good foundation for
your final paper.

We will assess your participation and engagement based on the degree to which you
demonstrate (1) that you have read the material and (2) that you have thought critically about
the material (i.e., you go beyond summary and apply course concepts to your own practice, past
or current situations, or specific cases).

Engaging Social Media Assignment (10%): This is part of the pre-service preparation, in-
service, and post-service parts of the program. (see Appendix B for full description of
assignment)

Issue Brief (10%): During the first class, each student will choose an area of interest related to
the subject matter of the course. Using a minimum of four sources from primary research
(newspaper articles, historical documents, policy briefs, legislations, journal articles, tracking the
topic through Google Alert, etc.), you will write an Issue Brief on that topic. At least two sources
must be from African sources (e.g., newspapers from Malawi or the Southern African region).
The briefs must be typed, double space, and be 2-3 pages long. Bullet points are fine. These
Issue Briefs will be emailed to Lisa Blitz by Monday, April 17, 2016 by 5:00 pm, and she will post
them to Blackboard so all students can review them before Class Meeting 2. We will discuss
these Issue Briefs as a class. Together these will form a packet of relevant, Malawi-specific
information to give a good contextual foundation before our travel.

Afterschool Programming Ideas (5%): Each student will contribute one idea for an afterschool
programming activity. This can be an interactive game, arts and crafts project, or something
involving music, dance, or drama. Afterschool participants at MCM include children as young as
4, and teens as old as 19. You will be asked to choose an age group and plan an activity that
can be conducted onsite. Together we will plan for daily activities, 4-5 days per week for 2
weeks, approximately 60-90 minutes each day.

Paper Proposal (5%): After meeting with one of the instructors, you will put together a one-
page paper proposal based on your interests, class material, and experiences in Malawi.
Meetings with the instructors will take place in Malawi so students do not need to commit to a
topic until they have had some experience in Malawi. Therefore, the paper proposal can be
handwritten. The paper proposal will include:
- Topic and focus of interest
- An outline of major areas to be covered in the Final Paper
- Plan for how you will research the topic
- Identification of how this topic relates to your area of study or professional development

On-site Service-learning Component and Reflection (35%): The time in Malawi will include
participation in:

(1) Microfinanced entrepreneurship. Work with MCM staff, community members, and village
chiefs to support their development of micro-financed entrepreneurial endeavors that benefit
their communities. This will include (a) providing information on micro-financing and what
has worked in similar sub-Saharan communities; (b) teach bookkeeping skills, business
management, and business development plans to the entrepreneurs; and (c) help the
entrepreneurs prepare business plans and annual reports to MCM board of directors.

(2) Afterschool programming for youth. Develop and conduct after-school programs with
children and youth who attend MCM, including (a) helping older youth explore vocational
and career possibilities; (b) supporting education and conversational English skills; and (c) engaging in social and recreational activities.

(3) Cultural immersion activities. This can include quiet time reading a book written by an African author, going to a venue to listen to music, going out to dinner at a local restaurant, shopping at stores frequented by locals, etc. – basically any activity that helps you see and experience Malawian and African culture as a visitor rather than tourist.

Faculty trip leaders (Professors Youjung Lee and Lisa Blitz) and students will meet as a class while on-site in Malawi to discuss and bridge what we covered in our class preparation and reflect on our service-learning experiences on the ground. Active and engaged participation in these reflection sessions is an expectation of all students and critical to successful completion of the course. Students are also required to meet with faculty leaders at least once during the trip to check in and discuss their experiences on the trip.

Final Paper (20%): Students will be required to prepare a final paper linking the readings and course concepts to experiences in Malawi. All work must be completed and submitted no later than July 15, 2017. All final papers must be in APA format and need to include a title, an abstract of 120-150 words, and 3-5 keywords. Undergraduates: Cite a minimum of six sources (4 from assigned readings, 2 that you find on your own), paper length between 8-10 pages, including reference section. Graduate students: Cite a minimum of 10 sources (4 from assigned readings, 6 that you find on your own, including at least 2 from your professional discipline), paper length 10-15 pages, including reference section (see below for further details for graduate student assignments). Further details about the assignment will be discussed during our class meetings.

Creative Immersion Component (5%): During the course, immerse yourself in at least two creative or artistic aspects of African culture. This can include reading a novel, attending (or viewing online) a theater production, watching a movie, listening to a collection of music, or reading a collection of poetry. Other ideas are welcomed, and can link to your area of study, i.e., the creative aspects of technology, medical science, or marketing. In all cases, the creative product(s) must be developed (written, produced, directed, etc.) by an African person. As you write your final paper, weave in your thoughts and reflections on your creative immersion.

Graduate Students

This course is cross-listed for upper-class undergraduates and graduate students. Graduate students are required to have supplementary readings and work assignments. There are four areas of supplementary work for graduate students that will add to the richness of the coursework.

1. Supplementary Readings: Graduate students will be expected to identify at least one additional reading that relates course content to their profession (i.e., social work, business, nursing, etc.) for each class meeting. It is expected that your learning from these readings will be reflected on and shared in class discussions.

2. Class Reflection Session Leader: You will be required to lead a reflection session during our class seminar time in Malawi.

3. CCPA Blog Submission. Each graduate student will do one additional blog post for the CCPA blog or the blog for the BU Institute of Multigenerational Studies as part of the Malawi Program blogging series. This blog submissions should reflect on the mission and values of your profession and how your understanding of these are impacted by your experiences in the Malawi Program. Blog submissions are to be emailed to the instructor by the date you are assigned. They should be proofread, between 500-700
words and include at least one picture sent with the submission as a separate file. Please follow a “what, so what” reflection model:

**What?** First describe how you are feeling and what you are seeing and experiencing.

**So what?** What knowledge can or do you bring to the situation? What can you do or should do to make it better? Do you have a new understanding of the situation? What are some of the broader issues arise from the situation?

**Now what?** What should you consider as someone working in public service? What are some of the consequences? What should you consider for making it better?

**Remember you have blog entries for the social media assignment as well!**

4. **Final Paper:** Graduate students will be required to include not only class readings, but also scholarly journal articles from relevant professional fields and academic disciplines in their Final Paper. The Final Paper for graduate students should be 10-15 pages.

**Required Book:**


**Assigned Articles** (will be posted on Blackboard)


### COURSE SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Class Readings &amp; Assignment Due Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3/8/17</td>
<td>Review of course opportunities and expectations; Getting to know each other; What to expect in Malawi; Thoughts on our role at MCM and in the villages; What you need to do before you leave</td>
<td>The book “<em>The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind</em>” should be read at your own pace and completed by 5/10/17  Devereux &amp; White (2010) <em>Social Protection in Africa</em>  Health Workers (2014) <em>Honest Accounts</em>?  Mathie &amp; Cunningham (2005) <em>Who is driving development?</em></td>
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**ASSIGNMENTS DUE:**

Email Lisa a scanned, in-color image of your passport and Yellow Vaccination Card by **4/5/17**

Issue Brief due on **4/15/17**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion of expectations, questions,</td>
<td>ASSIGNMENTS DUE:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blog Entry #1 due by 5/24/17</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Social media post #1 due by 5/26/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/26/17</td>
<td>On-site service learning in Malawi through June 15, 2017 (dates tentative)</td>
<td>Bring a good book (or 2, or 3!) ☺ ASSIGNMENTS DUE:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blog Entries 2 &amp; 3 due while in Malawi</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Social media posts # 2 and 3 due while in Malawi</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Paper Proposal due while in Malawi</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/20/17</td>
<td>Post-trip reflection seminar (in person or remote, TBD)</td>
<td>ASSIGNMENTS DUE:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Final Social Media post due 6/18/17 (or within 48 hours of return);</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate students: Final Blog Entry due 6/20/17</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/20/17</td>
<td>Final paper due</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The instructors reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus. The instructor will notify students of any changes as soon as the changes are made.
Appendix A: Credit Allocation for the Malawi Program

This is a 6-credit course. Although the pre-trip seminars take place during the Spring 2017 semester, all credits are taken during the Summer 2016 session. Credits earned as follows:

### Credits earned in Malawi: 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th># of times</th>
<th># of hours</th>
<th>Total hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminar class meetings</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual meetings with faculty</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media assignments</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prep for service in the community and at MCM</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service in the community and at MCM</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural immersion activities</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Credits earned in Binghamton: 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th># of times</th>
<th># of hours</th>
<th>Total hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminar class meetings</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual meeting with faculty</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-trip seminar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Plus Independent work on assignments, including those due before and after travel.

Appendix B: Engaging Social Media Assignment (adapted from S. Appe, Local Development in the Andes course, summer 2015)

Your informed, analytical reflections are expressions of your experience. Publishing them through social media makes them accessible to your friends and family, and to the campus and academic communities in ways that a research paper cannot. Thus, you are charged to use opportunities during the course of the program to share a snapshot in real time (or as close to it as possible). All students will be expected to post at least four times to Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, or similar social media site. Undergraduate students will post three Blogs, and graduate students will post four Blogs, which will be posted on the BU Study Abroad, CCPA, and/or IMS websites. Blogs may also be posted on the MCM website.

Ten percent of your final course grade will be based on how well you develop appropriate and compelling content for each of the platforms: Blog and social media. You may consider creating a professional or scholarly Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, or blogger account, if you would like to keep your social media separate from your personal accounts. However, a central aspect of social media effectiveness is community building. Your experiences in Malawi can offer people in your networks a chance to think critically and seek information about Malawi and reflect on global interrelations. Your reactions should reflect and contextualize your impressions and experiences.

You will be graded on:
- Making social media entries and responses.
- Your ability to tailor your message to your medium.
- Demonstrating an understanding of your audience (professional, scholarly, peers, etc.)
NOTE: If you are seriously uncomfortable with social media, or if social media conflicts with spiritual, cultural, or other belief systems, you can submit your work to Lisa Blitz in the same required format, with the same considerations for audience, impact, etc., without publishing it.

Dates noted are the latest you can submit the assignments, but you may do them earlier. You may post more than the minimum, particularly on social media.

Blogs are to be emailed to Lisa Blitz who will forward them to the appropriate people at the University for posting. Blogs may also be posted on the MCM website. When you email your blogs, also list the date and platform of you social media messages.

### Assignment Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post Type</th>
<th>Due by</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Platform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blog Entry 1</td>
<td>5/24/17</td>
<td>300-500 words describing your anticipation, expectations, hopes, excitement, anxiety, or whatever you’re feeling about the trip!</td>
<td>Email to: <a href="mailto:lblitz@binghamton.edu">lblitz@binghamton.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>5/26/17 or within 24 hours of departure</td>
<td>100 – 140 characters with photo if possible</td>
<td>Tweet, Instagram, or Facebook</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Blog Entries 2 & 3  | During our time in Malawi     | 500 words each describing your experience, thoughts, and feelings, with photo if possible.  
  BLOG #2: What is the most surprising thing thus far? What have you seen that is different than you are accustom to? What have you seen that is similar?  
  BLOG #3: At one time during our trip, discuss you impressions about our MCM and/or community service partners: What have you most enjoyed about the projects? | Email to: lblitz@binghamton.edu               |
| Social Media 2 & 3  | During our time in Malawi     | 100 – 140 characters with photo if possible                                | Tweet, Instagram, or Facebook                 |
| Social Media 4      | 6/18/17 or within 48 hours of arriving home | 100 – 140 characters with photo if possible                                | Tweet, Instagram, or Facebook                 |
| CCPA Blog Entry 4   | 6/20/17 or within five days of returning home | 500-700 words describing how your experience has helped shape or inform your professional development | Email to: lblitz@binghamton.edu               |