I181: Technology & Poverty Summer 2012

Janaki Srinivasan & Neha Kumar

**ASSIGNMENT 1. POVERTY AS PERSONAL EXPERIENCE (30%)**

Presentation: Thursday 6/14/12

This is a team assignment where you’ll be working with 3-4 students. You will receive a team grade. You’ll be selecting one life history from the list below and relating individual biographies with some of the macro-processes (political, economic, environmental, etc.) that shape these life courses. Along the way you will become better acquainted with how poverty is diversely and personally experienced.

(1) Micro-analysis: Write approx. 1500 words to address the following questions:

 a. How is poverty experienced, managed, and coped with by the people in this account?  What reasons (if any) do they provide for their poverty and do they pursue a pathway out of this condition?  What else matters and gives meaning to their lives beyond a base-level struggle to survive?

b. Identify two socio-economic development metrics (i.e. maternal mortality rates) that are relevant to the biography you’ve just read.  What purpose might these metrics serve in institutional approaches to poverty alleviation?  What do they fail to capture about the particular experience of poverty you’ve just read?

(2) Macro-analysis: Write approx. 1500 words providing some context for the life histories you’ve just read that explain at the macro-level key historical events, the political context, and/or economic conditions (as they are relevant) in the country/region where the biography takes place.  Some suggested questions are provided to go along with each life history.

In class presentation (6/14/2012) – One member of the team should be chosen to give an in-class presentation.  Their role is to present your group’s analysis, raise and answer questions, and help generate discussion.  We’ll have approximately 20 minutes to discuss each life history and the country context.

Sources for socio-economic development metrics:

* the World Bank databank is also organized well by country, with descriptions of indicators and trends for each.  http://data.worldbank.org/indicator?display=graph

It is also possible to map trends over time.

* United Nations Development Program

http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/default.html

* Sustainable Development Indicators – <http://www.hq.nasa.gov/iwgsdi/1997SDI.html>

This assignment is worth 30% of your overall grade. Each team will receive a single grade. We will be looking for:

1. Your understanding of poverty in the terms defined by “the poor”
2. How well you’ve honed in on and understood key relevant macro-structures and related them to the biography you’ve studied
3. Overall depth of analysis
4. Overall fluidity and coherence of write-up
5. Preparation of group as reflected in group discussion