



Diploma of Advanced Studies in Humanitarian Action (DAS)

Credits	30 credits ECTS
Dates	1 September – 17 December 2024
Format	Residential course in Geneva <i>This DAS programme is intensive, with at least 4 days per week in class. Participants should invest full time for classes, self-learning activities, assignments and dissertation, as well as networking in Geneva.</i>
Language	English
Fees	CHF 8'000
DAS coordinator	Prof. Julie Billaud

Course overview

Short description

The Diploma of Advanced Studies (DAS) offers professionals a critical understanding of the humanitarian system and response and an ability to contextualize humanitarian action in today's world. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, it explores the role of humanitarianism in the way the world is governed today, as well as the political economy at play in relationships between States, non-State actors, international organisations, international and local non-governmental organizations and affected populations. Finally, the program addresses the postcolonial dynamics of past and present humanitarian interventions to identify new avenues for contemporary and future crises.

Learning outcomes of the course

At the end of the course, students will have developed a critical understanding of contemporary humanitarian action informed by academic scholarship, which will enable them to become better informed, and more aware and effective humanitarian practitioners, more autonomous in their decisions.

More specifically, at the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the politico-historical foundations of humanitarianism, the changing nature of humanitarian crises and the various forms of humanitarian action.
- Widen their conception of humanitarianism by acknowledging the existence of other philanthropic, charity and faith-based endeavours
- Understand the ethical, normative and legal aspects of humanitarianism including the overlap between humanitarianism, militarism and sanctions
- Identify the various actors of humanitarian action and understand the political economy of the field
- Conceptualize humanitarianism as a distinct mode of governing and understand its link with border control policies and security regimes

Workload

Around 750 hours of work for the whole Diploma, including:

- App. 200 hours of face-to-face teaching (lectures, group work, round tables, debates, visits)
- App. 425 hours of self-study time (e-learning modules, readings, assignments, videos, quizzes, etc.)
- App. 125 hours for the DAS dissertation

Structure of the course

Module 1: Humanitarianisms

This module traces the genealogy of secular humanitarianism since the 19th century, to explore historical and political dynamics and mechanics that led to the development of several forms of humanitarianism, including its visual, moral and political economy along the 20th century. It compares what has become the dominant form of humanitarianism with other forms of international solidarity, such as grassroots movements and advocacy networks, or State interventionism, in North-South and East-West perspectives. It also questions the links between faith-based humanitarianism, charity and philanthropy in Western and non-Western contexts.

Module 2: Contexts, Action and Consequences

This module describes the various forms humanitarian action has taken looking at different fields of expertise and disciplines. The module explores the existing silos between areas of interventions and possibilities of integration. The changing nature of humanitarian crises is examined looking at the consequences these changes have had on the humanitarian response, notably the humanitarian-development nexus, the narrative of populations' resilience and people-centered approaches. Applying concrete analytical tools for understanding risks, the module will offer an opportunity for students to value their experience and develop real-life solutions. Finally, the module will open discussions and debates on how to decolonize the humanitarian system.

Module 3: Revisiting Vulnerabilities and Needs

Using insights from various disciplines (anthropology, global health, international relations) this module asks: What does the principle of humanity mean in practice? What forms of selection, triage and exclusion does the preservation of such a principle entail? By introducing students to key theoretical texts on governmentality, this module revisits two taken for granted notions of humanitarian action ('needs' and 'vulnerabilities') so as to highlight the implicit representations that inform practices of categorization and the identification of 'target/key populations'. We explore the politics of indicators, examine emblematic figures of vulnerability and turn the gaze on humanitarian actors so as to understand their 'need to help' suffering others but also their need of security while on mission. Finally, we discuss the relationship

	<p>between violence and vulnerability, explore the dilemmas of triage and discourses of self-help and resilience that inform contemporary interventions.</p>
<p>Module 4: Humanitarian Normativity: Ethics, Norms and Principles</p>	<p>This module discusses the normative aspects of contemporary humanitarianism, using the insights of various disciplines (anthropology, international law, sociology and international relations) within the field of humanitarian studies as well as those of practitioners involved in protection work. It introduces students to the basic principles of international humanitarian law (IHL), Human Rights, refugee law as well as humanitarian ethics. It examines the tensions and contradictions that emerge when humanitarian actors seek to implement IHL in practice. It explores how the world has crossed into new humanitarian frontiers of ethical and legal problematics by analyzing the overlap between humanitarianism and militarism, the links between the politics of security and relief and the relationship between advocacy and transitional justice.</p>
<p>Module 5: The Humanitarians and the Social World of Aidland</p>	<p>This module focuses on the humanitarian milieu in its sociological dimension, on Aidland as a specific transnational field with its – not always explicit – codes of conduct, values and behaviours. It examines the everyday life of humanitarian workers, be they expatriates or local staff, but also the production of internal differences among various humanitarian identities and categories of practitioners. It also questions the boundaries and interactions between humanitarian organisations, as well as between humanitarian workers, affected populations and donors, or through technologies.</p>
<p>DAS dissertation</p>	<p>Throughout the DAS, participants will engage in a series of workshops designed to develop information-gathering and processing, ethnographic observation and visual analysis. These workshops will help participants write two assignments (film review and conference report) that constitute the core of the dissertation. The overall aim of the DAS dissertation is to stimulate a critical and original reflection on issues linked to humanitarian action through specific writing exercises. The submission deadline for the DAS dissertation is January 31, 2025.</p>

Audience

- Professionals in the humanitarian, development or social sector looking to increase their competencies as well as reflect and capitalise on their experiences
- Professionals from other sectors (health, military and peace-keeping, private sector, social services) who wish to develop their understanding of the humanitarian sector for a potential career change
- Graduate students with relevant volunteer or intern experience, looking to undertake a postgraduate course with a view to entering the humanitarian sector