

Report on my Masters of Art in Development Studies at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), The University of Sussex.

Key aspects of the course

Studying International Development has been a challenging, yet rewarding experience. I have studied a wide variety of topics. The year started with a general module, titled 'Ideas in Development' for an overview of Development as a whole. Simultaneously, I studied 'Gender, Identity and Inclusion', which was a really eye-opening module. I learnt a great deal about the inherent bias many aspects of life entail, to which I was blind to before. For example, IA software used by Amazon for employment selection contains a programmes bias for white, male employees in CV selection due to computer programming. In my term paper I focused on the use of new media by journalists in the Argentine 'Ni Una Menos' feminist movement against alarmingly high femicide rates. New media was essential for these journalists to start an online exchange about the issue, to gather support for the movement, organise people for protests, gain the support of high-profile celebrities, and make demands of the government. It also provided a platform to produce an alternative narrative from what was in printed media, which depicted the victims as women with a lack of agency, rather than women organising themselves and demanding change. In my second term I studied 'Democracy and Public Policy'. I was exceptionally fascinated about the need for free media in the construction of a democracy. Further, I was intrigued by the importance of free media at times where the boundaries of democracy are contested, which is becoming ever more prevalent in an age of rising nationalism, and extreme politics.

I also undertook modules in Impact Evaluation (to understand the success or hindrance of a project) and Unruly Politics. In the latter module I explored the Extinction Rebellion movement, and the use of different news outlets and websites in their contrasting portrayals of the movement. This includes as a hindrance to daily life, as a radical needed movement to confront the consequences of capitalism, or as a structurally elite movement which excluded minorities. Part of this project involved going to observe Extinction Rebellion in London to understand the dynamics of the movement. Here I took the following picture:



I have just submitted my dissertation, which focuses on the presented progress of gender equality in Namibia, in comparison to the various statistical representations. The crux of this dissertation is that

single reports by themselves do not portray an accurate reflection of gender equality in the country, These reports have been harnessed by many media outlets in Namibia, and internationally (including in the UK) have been used to make extraordinary claims about gender equality in Namibia. Whereas, I argue that by using multiple reports and datasets it is clear that the situation is a lot more nuanced, and while Namibia has progressed towards gender equality in several aspects, many significant barriers remain, and several issues have worsened. Therefore, before journalists make these grand claims, several sources need to be looked at to portray an accurate reflection of the situation.

How it relates to my chosen industry

I believe many aspects relate to pursuing a career in journalism surrounding International Development. Firstly, I have built up my skills in writing in a variety of styles. I have been set assignments to write policy briefs, articles, as well as essays. This will help me with different writing assignments set. Secondly, I have learnt an incredible amount of information about the reality of charities and International Development in settings internationally. This is both within the politics of International Development (like in the UN), and how Development tends to work on the ground. This will give me a unique insight when covering stories, as I will be able to portray them in an authentic way, by understanding the situation to a greater degree than many others. Lastly, due to the heavily-international student body at the Institute of Development Studies, I have gained an insight into how situations and journalism stories about other countries are perceived by the people from them. This has led me to reflect of combatting portrayals of countries through a colonial lens. By portraying people around the world as our equals we can counter continuing colonial narratives in the media and portray an accurate reflection of events. Further, through these contacts I have learnt so much about societies and events around the world outside of my course. Therefore, I feel like I have a much greater understanding of so many societies and cultures. This will contribute to authentically portraying Development through my journalism.

What difference receiving the grant made to completion of the programme

This grant helped me pay for my fees for this course, which amounted to £8,500. Without this grant I would have struggled to pay these course fees, and would not have been able to attend or if so, would be working so much to pay for these I would not have been able to give the course enough attention to get the most out of it, as I have done.

How I feel this opportunity will benefit my future career prospects.

Having an MA in Development Studies will definitely increase the strength of my CV when applying to jobs surrounding Development journalism. By understanding the theories, and the contexts of International Development around the world I will be able to apply what I have learnt to completely understanding a situation before reporting on it. Additionally, I now have contacts now in most countries around the world. These will be vital when exploring news stories from all these countries, as I will be able to use my connections to gain insider information, and to get in contact with integral people for the stories.



To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to inform you that Annabel Cleak has completed the duration of the MA Development Studies course at IDS. Marks for the dissertation and the final marks for the MA have not been finalised or released, but Annabel has submitted all assignments and met all the requirements of the MA course.

Sincerely,

Eric Kasper
Research Fellow
Cities Cluster, IDS