HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

Through multidisciplinary coursework in subjects spanning the field of humanitarian affairs, the Institute of International Humanitarian Affairs (IIHA) equips students with the tools required to respond thoughtfully and effectively in humanitarian crises. IIHA combines the theoretical and practical aspects of humanitarian affairs to generate debate, initiate discourse, and encourage information sharing among participants and faculty.

For more information about graduate-level Humanitarian Affairs, please visit our page on the Fordham website.

Admissions

Master of Science in Humanitarian Studies (M.S.) Application Requirements

To apply to the M.S. in Humanitarian Studies program, you must submit the following:

- Statement of Interest: A statement (up to 500 words) connecting your goals with the expertise and activities offered by the degree
- Official Transcripts: Official degree transcripts confirming prior degree conferral are required from all applicants, regardless of matriculation status. Please order these at least one month prior to the application deadline.
- Resume/CV
- GRE Scores: Official GRE scores are not required but may be submitted (Graduate School of Arts and Sciences – Code #2259).
- Writing Sample (five to 20 pages)
- Letters of Recommendation: Three letters of recommendation (two of which must be academic) submitted directly by the people recommending you for the program
- English Proficiency: International applicants whose native language is not English must demonstrate English proficiency. Competitive applicants typically have TOEFL scores above 100 and/or IELTS scores of 7.5 or higher.
- GPA: A 3.0 or higher undergraduate GPA (based on a 4.0 scale) is expected.

How to Apply to the M.S. in Humanitarian Studies

1. Create an application account.
2. Select "Graduate School of Arts and Sciences."
3. Select "Master of Science in Humanitarian Studies."

International Diploma in Humanitarian Assistance (IDHA) Application Requirements

1. Resume/CV
2. Cover Letter (or Statement of Intent)
3. English Proficiency: International applicants whose native language is not English must demonstrate English proficiency. A lack of English proficiency may impact successful completion of the course.

International Diploma in Humanitarian Assistance (Advanced Certificate IDHA) Application

To apply to the International Diploma in Humanitarian Assistance (IDHA), please go to the GSAS application website.

1. Select "International Diploma in Humanitarian Assistance."
2. Select your desired term (Spring, Summer, or Fall).

IIHA Short Courses and Professional Training Application

To apply to an IIHA short course or professional training program, please go to the GSAS application website.

1. Select "Humanitarian Training Courses."
2. Indicate the desired course(s) on the form.

For more information about admissions to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, please visit their page on the Fordham website.

Programs

- Humanitarian Studies (M.S.)
  - Communities and Capacity Building Thematic Area
  - Human Rights Thematic Area
  - Livelihoods and Institutions Thematic Area
- International Diploma in Humanitarian Assistance (Adv Cert)

Courses

HUST 5005. NOHA Network on Humanitarian Action Study Abroad. (0.5 to 12 Credits)
This is an administrative registration for students participating in the NOHA Network on Humanitarian Action Study Abroad program.

HUST 5012. Contemporary Issues in Humanitarian Action. (0 to 3 Credits)
This course will introduce students to the pressing issues and acute challenges of contemporary humanitarian response through three modules on (1) Threats and Vulnerabilities, (2) Accountability in Humanitarian Response, and (3) Innovations in Humanitarian Response. The aim of the course is to examine how the international community forms consensus regarding best practices, and how this, in turn, informs humanitarian practice.
Attributes: CETH, PMMA, PSIC, PSJH.

HUST 5013. Fundamentals of Humanitarian Action. (0 to 3 Credits)
This course commences with an historical overview of modern humanitarian action, then links these international institutions to current crises and responses. Conflicts and the number of people affected are on the rise, yet the international humanitarian system is shrinking. This provides us with a unique opportunity to explore the challenges to humanitarian action today and understand how to make it robust and effective in a future that will be affected by climate change, AI, and troubling interstate relations. In a world with less humanitarian space, less respect for civilians, and states criminalizing the humanitarian ethos, what can humanitarian action hope to address or accomplish? What role is there for humanitarian institutions and actors? What changes need to be made to increase humanitarianism's relevance to alleviating suffering going forward?.
Attributes: PMMA, PSIC, PSJH, PSNM.

HUST 5014. Humanitarian Resource Management and Administration. (0 to 3 Credits)
This course provides an essential introduction to the management and administration of humanitarian responses, focusing on the operational realities of the sector. Students will gain a comprehensive understanding of how humanitarian organizations function, with an emphasis on: (i) Financial Management: Fundamentals of budget development, financial reporting, and accounting methods necessary for effective program oversight; (ii) Grant & Donor Relations: Skills for identifying funding opportunities, preparing successful proposals, and managing stakeholder expectations; (iii) Operational Planning: Tools for launching programs, establishing logistics/security, and planning for both headquarters and field-level implementation; and (iv) Human Resources: Staff management and addressing personnel challenges in emergency settings. By the end of the course, students will be equipped to apply these practical skills to navigate the complexities of humanitarian interventions effectively.
Attribute: GSSE.

HUST 5015. Information Management. (0 to 3 Credits)
In a world where timely, high-quality information is quite literally the difference between life and death, this course empowers you to turn your passion for global service into highly strategic, hands-on impact. By mastering the full life cycle of principled information management, you will learn to navigate the complex environments of both natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies using real-world, historic case studies. You will dive deep into global coordination networks, funding structures, and the vital roles played by diverse actors—including faith-based organizations—ultimately finishing the course with the practical, high-demand skills needed to make rapid, ethical, and data-driven decisions that save lives and alleviate suffering where it is needed most.
Attributes: CEET, PSIC, PSJH, PSNM.

HUST 5016. Monitoring and Evaluation in Humanitarian Response. (0 to 3 Credits)
This course will introduce students to the principles and theoretical frameworks behind data collection and analysis in the context of humanitarian response. It will cover qualitative and quantitative research methods used in humanitarian program monitoring and evaluation (M&E). The aim is to give students an overview of basic methodologies utilized in the field as well as the tools to determine appropriate M&e strategies in various humanitarian settings.
Attributes: CETH, PMMA.

HUST 5017. The International Humanitarian System: Principles and Practice. (0 to 3 Credits)
This course provides a critical, practice-oriented introduction to the international humanitarian system. Students will examine the historical evolution of humanitarian action, from early relief efforts and post–World War II institutions to today's complex network of United Nations (UN) agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), donor states and local actors, among others. The course explores the legal frameworks, normative foundations, and humanitarian principles that guide global action, while reviewing the dilemmas that shape response in crises. Special emphasis will be placed on contemporary challenges, such as protection of civilians, accountability to affected populations, climate-related crises, digital technologies, and the humanitarian–development–peace nexus – equipping students to engage critically with debates on the future of humanitarian aid. Guest practitioners from the UN system and NGOs may contribute, ensuring a direct connection to field realities and policy discussions. This course is intended for students and professionals seeking to work in humanitarian action, or in fields that work alongside humanitarian actors, as well as for those wishing to deepen their understanding of how the international system responds to crises worldwide.
Attributes: PSIC, PSJH, PSNM.

HUST 5025. Cash, Commodities, and Services in a Humanitarian Response. (0 to 3 Credits)
For decades, humanitarian assistance was delivered by the supply of commodities and services, often by international humanitarian organizations. More recently, technological advances have made it practical, and cost-effective, to provide humanitarian assistance through cash transfers. This development has both been welcomed as the new way forward and viewed with some suspicion by others who view it as lacking in accountability. This course will examine the roles played by cash transfers, commodities, and services in response to humanitarian crises, along with the advantages and disadvantages of each. The course will also examine the mechanisms now in place for the further development and regulation of cash transfers.
Attribute: HUCB.

HUST 5035. Forced Migration: The Humanitarian Challenge of the Decade. (0 to 3 Credits)
This course provides students with a thorough, practitioner-focused overview of issues relating to forced displacement and the migration of people around the world. Students will study the different types of forced migration and the international legal and other normative frameworks that define the status and rights of those impacted, as well as the frameworks that provide the basis for the international response. Students will study the impact that forced migration has had on individuals, families and communities. At a moment of significant change for the way the international community responds to humanitarian crises globally, the course will review the evolving humanitarian and development approaches to supporting people in need. Guest practitioners from the UN system and NGOs may contribute, ensuring a direct connection to field realities and policy discussions. Course material includes lectures, readings, and presentations.
Attributes: HUHR, PSIC, PSJH.

HUST 5045. Humanitarian Advocacy: Communicating the Need and Motivating the Response. (0 to 3 Credits)
This course will prepare students for the task of advocacy in humanitarian environments, with a focus on identifying and working with invisible and vulnerable populations. Introducing the concepts of advocacy, humanitarian negotiation, and humanitarian advocacy campaign creation, students will conduct a series of projects which culminate in the creation of a humanitarian advocacy campaign. This course introduces students to the tools required to assess and analyze a humanitarian crisis (including SMART goals, interviewing and being interviewed, messaging and prioritizing). Then students research, practice, and present using the advocacy tools for real-world solutions to influence real-world stakeholders. Students will also undertake self- and peer-evaluation to raise soft skills awareness and be able to interact and ask questions of current industry professionals. Examinations of recent advocacy initiatives will help the student situate advocacy in the humanitarian delivery system in current crises today, while practice of advocacy campaign building allows students to experience how to design successful real-world campaigns.
Attributes: HUCB, PMMA.

HUST 5055. Human Rights and Human Crises. (0 to 3 Credits)
Explore the legal, policy, and operational foundations of legal protection in situations of humanitarian crises. This course provides a practical understanding of the international protection regime, including international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and refugee law, and examines how these legal frameworks shape humanitarian action and protection practice in the field. Through case studies and practice-oriented learning, participants will explore special protection mandates, including the protection of children affected by armed conflict and responses to conflict-related sexual violence, alongside broader protection challenges such as the protection of civilians, humanitarian access, accountability for serious violations, and the protection needs of refugees, internally displaced persons, and other crisis-affected populations. The course also addresses protection mainstreaming, monitoring, advocacy, coordination, and integrated protection practice, equipping humanitarian professionals, practitioners, and students with the knowledge, analytical skills, and practical tools to assess protection risks, inform operational decision-making, and design, implement, and strengthen effective protection responses in complex humanitarian settings.
Attribute: IHUA.

HUST 5061. International Disaster Management. (0 to 3 Credits)
Covering the full spectrum of the disaster management cycle and, for the first time, integrating epidemiology, economics, behavioral psychology, and business administration into the curriculum, this course provides the fundamental insights needed to bridge the gap between national emergency planning, international humanitarian coordination, and global disaster risk reduction.
Attribute: HULI.

HUST 5075. Leadership and Management in Humanitarian Assistance. (0 to 3 Credits)
When responding to humanitarian emergencies, managers need the right skills to work in exceptional, rapidly changing, and sometimes dangerous situations. While some conventional techniques may be employed, having skills that take into account the environment and the emotional impact of emergencies on teams and individuals is crucial. This course will teach students the skills required to manage teams responding to humanitarian crises. For students planning to work in such environments, it is recommended that they reflect on whether they envisage being in leadership roles or might need to understand the role of those under whose management they will work. The course is also recommended for humanitarian practitioners at all levels who want to improve their leadership and management skills.
Attributes: HULI, PMMA, PSIC, PSJH.

HUST 5082. Integrity, Accountability and Transparency in Humanitarian Operations. (0 to 3 Credits)
This course will examine the values, principles, and ethical standards that humanitarian personnel must follow when engaged in humanitarian work. Adherence to these values, principles, and standards is critical in developing and maintaining beneficiary confidence, promoting a strong public image, cultivating an effective workforce, and nurturing accountability and transparency. At the end of this course, students will have a better understanding of the meaning of ethics in the context of humanitarian work; the standards of conduct applicable to humanitarian personnel; how to systematically approach ethical problem situations; key ethical and corruption risks pertaining to the humanitarian sector; how to report and deal with ethical breaches, including sexual and other interpersonal misconduct; how to make ethical decisions; and where to seek help.
Attributes: CETH, HUHR, PSIC, PSJH.

HUST 5085. Security Management: Delivering Aid in Potentially Dangerous Situations. (0 to 3 Credits)
This course will examine security management of humanitarian personnel working in high-risk environments. Students will analyze the most common security threats and trends and the ways to be proactive in order to reduce exposure to such threats. Students will also analyze organizational duty of care and learn to develop compliant security plans and to conduct security risk assessments. The concept of acceptable risk will be explored, as will the idea of balancing security risks with program delivery. Upon gaining an understanding of security planning, students will be introduced to techniques for critical incident management to reduce the impact of such events. In the final module, students will be taught how to better protect themselves during high-risk events to increase their chances of survival if deployed to work in high-risk environments.
Attribute: HULI.

HUST 5200. Human Rights Protections for Vulnerable Groups. (0 to 3 Credits)
This course will provide students with a comprehensive introduction to international practices and norms concerning the protection of vulnerable populations in humanitarian emergencies. The past 20 years of international humanitarian interventions has given rise to standardization of humanitarian activities, with a particular emphasis on protection practices. Students will gain an understanding of the landscape of organizations and entities involved in designing these frameworks and assess their efficacy and continued relevance to protecting vulnerable groups.
Attributes: CETH, GSSC, HUHR, PMMA.

HUST 5205. Children in Armed Conflict. (3 Credits)
This course will provide students with a comprehensive introduction to the impact of armed conflict on children. In the 21st century, armed conflict continues to put millions of children in harm's way, exposing them to human rights violations, including recruitment and use by armed forces and armed groups, military detention and ill treatment, rape and other forms of sexual violence, forced displacement, family separation, and physical injuries. Children also suffer from trauma and other serious and long-lasting psychological consequences resulting from the violence they have experienced. In addition to these direct violations, children are equally affected by indirect violations of their rights, including attacks on schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access. Students will examine the international legal framework for the protection of children in armed conflict and the international humanitarian response system designed to assist their physical and mental well-being. Students will critically assess these mechanisms for their efficacy and continued relevance for protecting children during war.
Attributes: GSSE, HUHR, PMMA, PSIC, PSJH.

HUST 5210. Access to Education During Crisis and Conflict. (3 Credits)
This course will provide students with an introduction to the growing field of education in emergencies. With as many as 40 million children living in countries affected by crisis and conflict it has become increasingly important for humanitarian practitioners to understand the complexities of planning and implementing educational programming in these settings. Building on the theoretical frameworks covered in the course courses, students will evaluate the relationship between education, international development and humanitarian aid through the use of theoretical texts and case studies from around the globe.
Attribute: HUHR.

HUST 5215. Accountability for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Settings. (3 Credits)
Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is a well-documented public health and human rights issue that is under-resourced and poorly responded to in most countries across the globe. In crisis settings, existing systems for physical and social protection are further destabilized or destroyed. SGBV is commonplace in many societies but can contribute to conflict, is exacerbated by conflict, is frequently used as a weapon of war, and is poorly responded to in post-conflict settings, despite having lasting consequences on individuals, families, and communities. In this course, students will consider why SGBV is such a challenging topic in the context of conflict and examine how the domestic and international communities have handled accusations of SGBV or documented cases of SGBV. In particular, we will identify how SGBV has been defined in domestic and international laws, and how it has been handled in post-conflict settings using a range of judicial and non-judicial approaches. This course will use a range of case studies and will emphasize the perspectives of affected populations.
Attributes: HCWL, HUHR, PJGS, PJST, PMMA, WGSS.

HUST 5300. International Responses to Migration. (3 Credits)
This course will provide students with an enhanced awareness and understanding of the complex interaction between migration and humanitarian interventions from the point of view of the migrant, national authorities, and the international humanitarian community. With the crisis in the MENA region, particularly in Syria, and the mass migration to southern Europe it is imperative for students to understand the different motivations and determinants of action from regional (EU), national and local stakeholders as well as the diverse circumstances of the migrating populations. Students will be encouraged to critique the influence and motivations of mass and social media on the understanding of the economic, political, legal, and cultural factors of migration.
Attributes: HULI, PMMA, PSIC, PSJH.

HUST 5310. Urban Humanitarian Operations. (0 to 3 Credits)
This course will examine the interconnected systems that make up today's urban contexts, the impact on urban populations when these systems are disrupted by conflict and disasters, and the programmatic models used by humanitarians to respond to the needs of conflict and disaster-affected populations. Students will analyze programmatic models that are specific to urban contexts, as well as those traditionally used in camp and rural settings that can be modified for use in urban areas. Through case studies, students will also analyze existing best practices and ways of increasing the resilience of affected populations in both formal and informal urban settlements. At the end of this course, students will be able to create a desk review summary and stakeholder analysis of an urban context, plan a multi-cluster/sector initial rapid assessment (MIRA) of a disaster- or conflict-affected urban setting, and develop a cluster- or sector-specific urban program plan.
Attribute: HULI.

HUST 5410. Feminist Critiques: Structural Violence and Gender in Complex Emergencies. (0 to 3 Credits)
Complex emergencies do not occur in a vacuum but develop from and shape preexisting landscapes of inequality, actively weaponizing and distorting social order. This course will use critical frameworks to interrogate how power asymmetries inform both the architecture of humanitarian crises and the subsequent humanitarian interventions. Feminist critiques will anchor our approach to examining how humanitarian crises expose legal, political, cultural, and economic frameworks that perpetuate structural violence. In this course we will: map humanitarian settings and examine how they reconfigure or reinforce existing power dynamics impacting marginalized groups (including women, children, LGBTQ+ individuals, persons with disabilities, and others); critically analyze the definition, weaponization, and use of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in conflict and post-conflict settings; and consider the interplay between international responses to crises and local realities on the ground. Throughout, we prioritize the lived experiences of affected individuals and communities. Case studies and student-driven reflection will inform our conversations as we unpack why responses to humanitarian crisis still fail to incorporate a holistic, gender-informed lens. We will dissect how domestic and international laws define SGBV and evaluate the extent to which SGBV has been adequately handled through judicial and nonjudicial approaches. Ultimately, students will grapple with the tension between idealized international guidelines and norms, real-world program implementation, and the unanticipated consequences of top-down gender programming.
Attributes: HUCB, PSIC, PSJH.

HUST 5500. Mental Health in Complex Emergencies. (0 to 3 Credits)
Over the past several years, the IIHA has run a popular 12-day course largely for mental health professionals. We will now be offering a distance learning course covering similar materials over a 15-week semester. This is a training course for mental health professionals and program staff who wish to establish mental health or psychosocial programs in a humanitarian context within conflict and post-conflict areas. This course is also open to Fordham graduate students in humanitarian studies or other relevant disciplines. It will aim to provide practical orientation and training, including how to conduct rapid assessments, designing and setting up mental health services or psychosocial programs (exploring the differences between them), and clinical work and therapeutic approaches in non-Western contexts. It will address the issues of cultural validity, conflict resolution and negotiation, taking care of oneself and dealing with burnout. This course will also introduce potential field workers to essentials such as personal security, logistics, and practical aspects of humanitarian work in the field.
Attributes: CETH, HUCB, PMMA.

HUST 5600. International Humanitarian Law: Policy and Practice. (0 to 3 Credits)
This course will explore the development and application of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), also known as the law of armed conflict. IHL is a set of rules that, in times of armed conflict, seeks to protect people who are not or are no longer participating in hostilities, and to restrict the means and methods of warfare. The rules of IHL aim to balance military necessity against fundamental principles of humanity. IHL also provides a normative framework to facilitate the delivery of aid by humanitarian organizations engaged in mitigating the suffering caused by armed conflict. Students will examine the rules of international customary law, as well as treaty law, which form the legal bases for IHL; in particular the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their two additional protocols of 1977, and the Hague Regulations of 1907. Students will also study the principles of proportionality and distinction between military objectives and civilian objects, as well as the prohibition against means of combat that lead to unnecessary suffering and superfluous injury, which underpin this body of law. Questions to consider throughout the course include: What is international humanitarian law? How is it created, interpreted, applied, and enforced, and how does it evolve? How does it intersect with other branches of public international law, mainly international criminal law and international human rights law? This course will use case studies to illustrate principles and concepts.
Attributes: CETH, HUHR.

HUST 5801. Humanitarian Internship. (1 Credit)
Students will have an opportunity to intern at prominent international humanitarian organizations, helping them gain the necessary exposure and understanding of the dynamics of such organizations and their mission. Our location enables students to pursue internships at and exposure to various United Nations agencies, diplomatic missions, international nongovernmental organizations, and prominent research and think-tank institutions. Students will complete an internship tutorial that matches their concentration area.

HUST 5990. Master's Thesis Research I. (2 Credits)
Students should develop a thesis topic with a Fordham faculty advisor and a reader who has significant practical experience in humanitarian affairs, ideally after completing Module 2. This project is the clminating demonstration of the knowledge and skilled gained throughout the MIHA coursework. The thesis will focus on practical examples of past mistakes, contributing possible solutions to the existing literature. The researh methods necessary to writing the thesis are taught within the context of each module. Thesis projects should incorporate learning from previous MIHA courses, followed by final editing, defense and approval.

HUST 5991. Master's Thesis Research II. (2 Credits)
This project is the culminating demonstration of the knowledge and skill gained throughout the MIHA coursework. The thesis will focus on practical examples of past mistakes, contributing possible solutions to the existing literature. The research methods necessary to writing that thesis are taught within the context of each module. Thesis projects should incorporate learning from previous MIHA courses, followed by final editing, defense and approval.

HUST 5992. MSHS Thesis. (2 Credits)
In order to successfully complete the M.S. in Humanitarian Studies, students will be expected to synthesize the cumulative knowledge gained from their coursework, additional research, and internship experience (if appropriate) to write an original, substantive, and academic final thesis. The subject will be agreed upon between the student and their faculty advisor in conjunction with a humanitarian aid professional recognized by the Institute for Humanitarian Affairs.

HUST 5993. MSHS Thesis Research. (0 Credits)
In order to successfully complete the M.S. in humanitarian studies, students will be expected to synthesize the cumulative knowledge gained from their coursework, additional research, and internship experience (if appropriate) to write an original, substantive, and academic final thesis. This course will allow students to complete research for their thesis.

HUST 6000. International Diploma in Humanitarian Assistance. (0 to 8 Credits)
The International Diploma in Humanitarian Assistance (IDHA), the flagship program of the Institute of International Humanitarian Affairs, prepares graduate students and mid-career professionals to lead in humanitarian settings. Through expert-led classes, simulations, case studies, and field visits, participants learn to understand humanitarian systems, policy, and legal frameworks; apply humanitarian standards and best practices across sectors; develop leadership, teamwork, and decision-making skills for complex operational environments; and critically examine the ethical and operational challenges shaping humanitarian action today.

HUST 8999. Independent Study. (1 Credit)
This is a graduate tutorial/independent study registration for humanitarian studies.