

# HEALTH, DEVELOPMENT & HUMAN RIGHTS

## Capabilities & Human Rights

### Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, it is *information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible position on an issue, rather than another.

### Reading

Nussbaum, M. (1999, September). Women and Equality: The Capabilities Approach. *International Labor Review*, 138(3), 227–245.

### Questions

1. Martha Nussbaum is concerned about the treatment of women across all cultures.  
What three arguments purport to challenge universal or cross-cultural norms concerning women's rights? What are Nussbaum's arguments for rejecting these arguments?
2. What are the two traditional economic approaches in measuring quality of life Nussbaum mentions? Why does she reject them both, especially as assessments for the quality of women's lives?
3. How is the capabilities approach different from those traditional economic approaches? What capabilities do people have that exert a moral claim on being developed? What justifies such a claim? How is Nussbaum's approach here connected to human rights?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.