

# Dept of Social Science – Job Talk

International Development Studies (IDS)

## Esayas Geleta

**Date:**

**Thursday,  
May 02**

**Times:**

**Research  
10:00 am  
– 11:30 am**

**Teaching**

**2:00 pm  
– 3:30 pm**

**Location:**

**701 Ross  
South**

**All sessions will be  
open to faculty &  
students.**

**Light refreshments  
will be provided.**

### The Microfinance Mirage: The Politics of Poverty, Social Capital and Women's Empowerment



**Research Presentation Abstract:** Microfinance has long been considered a development strategy that can correct the failure of the global credit market, and address the financial needs of the poor enabling them to create and run profitable business enterprises. The Microfinance Mirage argues that this neoliberal oriented analysis overemphasises the economic argument whilst ignoring the cultural roots of inequality and subordination. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted among rural credit clients in the Northern region of Ethiopia, the study provides a nuanced critical analysis of microfinance challenging the common assumption that it facilitates the building of social capital, poverty reduction and the empowerment of women.

Making a unique contribution to our further understanding of the microfinance industry the research shows that, in some cases, microfinance can result in the disintegration of pre-existing relationships and destruction of the livelihoods of the poor. Exploring the impact of microfinance in one of the poorest regions of sub-Saharan Africa, Ethiopia, this study demonstrates its potential and problems, and shows the complex and contradictory social and cultural environments in which projects are often located.

**Esayas Geleta** (PhD) is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Arts at Grande Prairie Regional College in Grande Prairie, Alberta. Dr. Geleta has authored 12 articles, the most recent being: "The pluses of pulses": haricot beans and women's empowerment in Ethiopia" in *Development in Practice* 28(2):311-317 · February 2018 (with Carol Henry & Patience Elabor-Idemudia).