Migration from Central America and West Africa: Human Rights Virtual Field Trips

Draft Syllabus

March 15, 2021 to May 05, 2021
Mondays, 5 - 6 PM Online
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In this seven-week fully online course we will investigate the field of refugee and migration management/deterrence through focusing on the experiences of people undertaking migration journeys in two areas of the world: Central America to the U.S., and West Africa to Europe. We will examine the participation of other stakeholders and players who are facilitating, trying to prevent, and otherwise participating in these journeys and arrivals. The course will include a mix of lectures (some recorded for background viewing), readings, discussions, films, and guest lectures from leading scholars, practitioners, and migrants themselves. We will investigate four basic questions for human rights practitioners who are studying and trying to influence the problem: What is this phenomenon? How did it come to be like this? Can it be different? If so, how can it be different?

Professor Brogden manages the Online Graduate Programs in Human Rights Practice and has an appointment as an Assistant Professor of Practice. She is a cultural and medical anthropologist who studies and teaches about trauma sequelae of human rights crises and “wicked issues,” such as the causes and consequences of migration to individuals, communities and countries implicated in these two migration corridors. From 2003-2016 she oversaw the resettlement of over 6,000 refugees to the U.S. from 2003-2016, and now works in northern Ghana to address educational, ecological, and economic sequelae of the colonial era that contribute to decisions by young people to risk the journey to Europe as irregular migrants.

Course Objectives

During this course registered participants will:

1. Read articles which provide information about:
   a. the background and historical context of migrant journeys
   b. the ways that scholars and activists have conceptualized, studied, and approached practice concerning migration as a “wicked issue”
   c. theoretical tools that can be useful in thinking about human rights in the context of migration
Articles will draw from a variety of disciplines, and may include historical, economic, political, anthropological, sociological, and geographic/ecological approaches to the topic. Students will also review media reporting on the issue.

2. Participate in virtual tours and discussions of migration in several locales, hosted by a local scholar, activist, or other highly engaged individual. We will focus on two migrant corridors: West Africa to Europe and Central America to Arizona.

3. Assess stakeholder interests, spaces of agency, possibilities for enlarging these, envision projects which could enhance human rights in relation to the migration experience studied.

4. Complete a thought experiment for generating deep solutions to migration in one of the migration corridors we will study.

All course materials will be uploaded to the UA Community Learning Portal D2L Community. Access will be given to registered participants once the site is finalized on March 12.

Course Outline

March 15
- Receiving, arriving, transit countries and international human rights law: legal frameworks for asylum and refugee status
- How not to give into despair in the face of intractable/wicked issues
- Ethnography as a method of understanding phenomena
- Levels of analysis in understanding migration and how to break this “wicked problem” into processual phases [phases in migration] and structural elements

March 22
- The Phenomenology of the Journey: states of exception, intertwinement with drug trafficking routes

March 29
- The Phenomenology of Reception: continued liminal status, detention, and refoulement

April 5
- Well, how did we get here? How migration to the U.S. and Europe became a wicked issue through policymaking and innovation by actors on the ground
April 12
- The Phenomenology of the Decision to migrate: Push pull factors; deep causes of migration

April 19
- Securitization as an attempt to deter and/or stop migration: the illegality industry and migration

April 26
- Can it be different? If so, how can it be different? Deep migration solutions...

Books and Films relevant to the course (not a required reading list!)


Gebrewold, Belachew and Tendayi Bloom, editors. 2016. Understanding Migrant Decisions from Sub-Saharan Africa to the Mediterranean Region.


Miller, Todd. 2017. Storming the wall: climate change, migration, and homeland security.


__________. 2021. Build Bridges, Not Walls.

Books by Journalists

Enrique’s Journey (2007) by Sonia Nazarro (Random House)

The Beast: Riding the Rails and Dodging Narcos on the Migrant Trail (2014) by Oscar Martinez (Verso)

A History of Violence: Living and Dying in Central America (2017) by Oscar Martinez (Verso)
**Book by a person who did the migrant journey**

*The Devil’s Highway, A True Story* (2008) by Luis Alberto Urrea

**Films**

*Who is Dayani Crystal?* (2013)

*The Golden Dream (La Jaula del Oro)* (2013)

*New roots film* (available on Youtube) OTOXO productions (2016)