

CRITICAL REFUGEE STUDIES

Spring 2019

Tues. & Thurs. 3-4:15pm in GLCR 135

CRES 121

University of California, Merced

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Course Overview

This course explores refugees not as a problem to be solved but as a site of social and political critiques of colonization, war, human rights, and displacement. We will address questions such as: who gets to be defined and accepted as a refugee? What are refugee stories about forced migration? The course will take an interdisciplinary field of *critical refugee studies* (CRS) to understand refugee experiences as linked to militarism and migration as well as feminist refugee epistemology. Additionally, we approach this study from the perspectives of communities, artists, and academic texts as critical sites of knowledge to forge new and humane dialogues and representations. We move between the humanities and the social sciences, drawing on historical, ethnographic, cultural, and visual evidence to illuminate the places where refugees have managed to conjure up social, public, and collective remembering.

Learning Goal:

To know, understand, and practice how policies/laws, data, maps, charts, definitions, treaties, media, art, stories, and other forms of discourse can avoid the objectification of refugees as the producers of those discourses attempt to illustrate crises and address refugee needs.

Course Goals

By the end of the course, students should have a better grasp of the following:

- Read and analyze academic, historical, and cultural texts about refugees.
- Examine problem-oriented approaches to the humanitarian rescue and the study of refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced and stateless human beings.
- Cite and interpret key refugee and human rights situations, and assess the approaches that have been used to resolve them.
- Develop and use a critical refugee studies approach to understand refugee and human rights "crises."
- Engage with and articulate multi-disciplinary questions about comparative and relational topic of refugees.
- Formulate possibilities for comprehending refugee concerns within and beyond the human rights framework.
- Learn how to create refugee migration and story maps.

CRES PLOs

These course learning outcomes contribute to four of the five primary **CRES Program Learning Outcomes**:

1. Investigate the ways society can be centrally constituted by racial, ethnic, and indigenous formations in global and historical contexts, in preparation for a diverse society and international world.
2. Effectively articulate in oral and written form complex ideas about knowledge, power, and society.
3. Analyze how “race,” “ethnicity,” and/or indigeneity are historically and culturally specific (dependent on time and place); relational (not formed in isolation); and intersectional (informed by other social formations such as class, gender, sexuality, etc.).
4. Develop and use theoretical knowledge in a discipline through a discipline-based theory course that can be used as a foundation for interdisciplinary research in race and ethnic studies.
5. Apply interdisciplinary methods and theories that show practical application in critical race and ethnic studies other than academic reading and writing, such as through performance, art, direct service, internships, and study abroad.

Required Readings

***Note:** You are required to complete the readings assigned for each before class and to bring readings to class for our discussion.

Tang, Eric. 2015. *Unsettled: Cambodian Refugees in the NYC Hyperghetto*. NY: New York University Press.

Hyndman, Jennifer. 2000. *Managing Displacement: Refugees and the Politics of Humanitarianism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

All other **readings** available on Catcourses.ucmerced.edu in the Resources folder under Files. To access readings off-campus, you will need to set up a VPN connection at:
<http://library.ucmerced.edu/use/technology/vpn>.

Course Requirements & Evaluations

***Note:** You must complete all assignments in order to pass the course.

1. **Attendance and active class participation** **20%**
Attendance is mandatory. This is the easy part of your grade. You are allowed two absences (no questions asked). Each subsequent absence will result in minus 5% from your final grade. Participation is required and necessary to make the class successful for you and your peers. How to participate: come to class; read; bring readings to class; ask questions; respond to questions; take notes; and attend office hours
2. **Class Presentations** **15%**
Work with a partner to learn about a historical or current refugee, migration or displacement group and/or event. Prepare a 10-minute presentation for the class to explain the group and/or event and connect it to two themes from that week’s readings or the class.
3. **Three (3) Reading Journals (500-word papers)** **15%**
Papers are due at the beginning of class on Thursday. More directions for papers will be posted on CatCourses.
4. **Midterm Exam** **20%**
5. **Refugee Story Maps** **30%**
Your final project will focus on locating stories about refugees or forced migrations that will contribute to the existing story maps on the Critical Refugee Studies website.
Proposal for a refugee story (can be from your Class Presentation) 5%
Gather information about the story 10%
Write-up of story and include image or video 10%
Present refugee story in class 5%

Class Conduct

Respect: This class will challenge common understandings of refugees in relation to race, gender, sexuality, nation, and power. Given the nature of the course, there will likely be a range of opinions. A good classroom environment should stimulate you to think for yourself, challenge paradigms, and raise critical questions. Please keep in mind, however, that we must engage each other in a respectful and considerate manner. Abusive and harsh language, intimidation, and personal attacks will not be tolerated.

Digital Etiquette: All personal electronics should be off or on “silent” mode. Texting, games, schoolwork not pertaining to class, and social media (Facebook, Youtube, email, etc.) are not permitted. (This does not mean that I don’t allow laptops, but they must be used to take notes, refer to your notes, or for class activities). *Audio and video recordings are strictly prohibited in class.*

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism is a serious violation, whether intentional or inadvertent. All work submitted in this course must be your own and original. The use of sources such as ideas, quotations, paraphrases, or anything written by someone else must be properly acknowledged and cited. Plagiarism is when you use someone else’s words without attribution; it includes using portions of a previously published work or website in a paper without citing the source, submitting a paper written for another course, submitting a paper written by someone else, and using the ideas of someone else without attribution. If you have questions about the proper citation of sources, please discuss them with me or consult UCM’s Office of Student Conduct web site at: <http://studentlife.ucmerced.edu/content/uc-conduct-standards>.

Accommodations: University of California, Merced is committed to creating learning environments that are accessible to all. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on a disability, please feel welcome to contact me privately so we can discuss options. In addition, please contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) at (209) 228-6996 or disabilityservices@ucmerced.edu as soon as possible to explore reasonable accommodations. All accommodations must have prior approval from Student Accessibility Services on the basis of appropriate documentation.

If you anticipate or experience barriers due to pregnancy, temporary medical condition, or injury, please feel welcome to contact me so we can discuss options. You are encouraged to contact the Dean of Students for support and resources at (209) 228-3633 or <https://studentaffairs.ucmerced.edu/dean-students>.

Also, if you prefer to be called by a different name or to be referred to by a different gender than what appears on your enrollment record, please feel free to notify me.

Schedule of Readings and Discussions

***Note:** I reserve the right to revise the contents of this syllabus.

UNIT 1: CRITICAL REFUGEE STUDIES AND KNOWLEDGE FORMATION

Week 1: 1/22 & 1/24 Introduction: Who is a Refugee?

Tue Introduction

Thu Toibin, Colin. "**The Barber of Barcelona**," in *From the Republic of Conscience: Stories Inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Liberties Press, 2009: pp. 117-122.

Anita Casavantes Bradford, "**Immigrants, Refugees, and American Family Values: A Historical Reckoning**," July 16, 2018 blog post on Critical Refugee Studies website, <https://criticalrefugeestudies.com/resources/blog/immigrants-refugees-and-american-family-values-a-historical-reckoning>

Week 2: 1/29 & 1/31 Refugee Flight & Migration

Tue Eric Tang, *Unsettled*, ch. 1

Thu Mohamed Abumaye, "**Dadaab Kenya: Policing the Refugee Camp**," Sept. 26, 2017 blog post on Critical Refugee Studies Website, <http://criticalrefugeestudies.com/resources/blog/dadaab-kenya-policing-the-refugee-camp>

Henry A. J. Ramos, "**Introduction & Carmen Alegría**" in *The Flight to Freedom: The Story of Central American Refugees in California* (Arte Público Press, 2006), pp. xvii- 16.

Week 3: 2/5 & 2/7 Critical Refugee Perspectives

Tue Arendt, Hannah. "**We Refugees**." *Altogether Elsewhere: Writers on Exile*. Ed. Robinson, Mark. Boston and London: Faber and Faber 110-19.

Agamben, Giorgio. "**Beyond Human Rights**." *Open* 15 (2008), pp. 90-95.

Thu Yen Le Espiritu & Lan Duong, "**Feminist Refugee Epistemology: Reading Displacement in Vietnamese and Syrian Refugee Art**," *Signs* 43, No. 3 (2018).

Explore **Critical Refugee Studies** website.

UNIT 2: RIGHTS AND REFUGE

Week 4: 2/12 & 2/14 Human Rights

Tue Jennifer Hyndman, *Managing Displacement*, Introduction & Ch. 1, pp. xv-xxix & pp. 1-28.

Thu Kyambi, Sarah. "**National Identity and Refugee Law**," *Critical Beings: Law, Nation and the Global Subject*, ed., Peter Fitzpatrick and Patricia Tuitt. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004.

Week 5: 2/19 & 2/21 Immigration & Refugee Policies

Tue Guy S. Goodwin-Gill, "**Current Challenges in Refugee Law**," in *Exploring the Boundaries of Refugee Law: Current Protection Challenges* (Brill, 2015), pp. 9-28.

Thu Eric Tang, *Unsettled*, chapter 2.

Daniel Solomon, "A Lost Boy in Louisville: One Refugee's Story," *Dissent* 63, No. 1 (2016), pp. 117-126.

***Reading Journal #1 Due**

UNIT 3: COLONIALISM, WAR AND GENDERED SEXUAL DISPLACEMENT

Week 6: 2/26 & 2/28 Colonialism and War

Tue Derek Gregory, "Barbed Boundaries." In *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq*. Blackwell, 2010.

R.T. "Waiting: Life under Israel-Occupied Palestine," March 15, 2018 blog post on the Critical Refugee Studies website, <https://criticalrefugeestudies.com/resources/blog/waiting-life-under-israel-occupied-palestine>

Thu Nicholas Mirzoeff, "The World of War." In *How to See the World: An Introduction to Images, From Self-portraits to Selfies, Maps to Movies, and More*, (Basic Books, 2016), pp. 97-124.

Week 7: 3/5 & 3/7 Gender and Sexual Violence

Tue Jennifer Hyndman, *Managing Displacement*, ch. 3.

Thu David A.B. Murray, "Real Queer: 'Authentic' LGBT Refugee Claimants and Homonationalism in the Canadian Refugee System," *Anthropologica* 56.1 (2014): 21-32.

Castel, Jacqueline. "Race, Sexual Assault, and the Meaning of Persecution." *International Journal of Refugee Law* 4, No. 1 (1992), pp. 39-56.

Week 8: 3/12 & 3/14

Tue Midterm

Thu Film

UNIT 4: REFUGEES OF THE WAR ON TERROR AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Week 9: 3/19 & 3/21 Are Refugees Terrorists?

Tue Rana, Junaid. "The Story of Islamophobia." *Souls* 9, no. 2 (2007), pp. 148-61.

Jennifer Epstein and Justin Stink, "Trump Admits He Has 'No Proof' Terrorists Are In the Migrant Caravan" *Time*, October 23, 2018.

Kathy Gilsinan, "Trump Keeps Invoking Terrorism to Get His Border Wall," *The Atlantic*, Dec. 11, 2018.

Thu Ma Vang, "The Terrorist Ally: The U.S. Government's Case Against Hmong Refugee Leader General Vang Pao," work-in-progress, pp. 1-36.

Spring Break: 3/25 - 3/29

Week 10: 4/2 & 4/4 Climate Change & Environmental Racism

Tue Robert P. Marzec, "Climate Change War Games," in *Militarizing the Pacific* (2016), pp. 1-29.

Thu Shweta Jayawardhan, "Vulnerability and Climate Change Induced Human Displacement," *Consilience*, no. 17 (2017), pp. 103-142.

***Reading Journal #2 Due**

UNIT 5: FEMINIST REFUGEE EPISTEMOLOGIES

Week 11: 4/9 & 4/11 Critical Refugee Studies Conference: April 13, 2019

Tue Guest Speaker: Pos Moua

Thu No Class, attend Critical Refugee Studies Conference on Saturday

Week 12: 4/16 & 4/18 (Re)Mapping Refugees

Tue Alison Mountz, "Where Asylum-Seekers Wait: Feminist Counter-Topographies of Sites between States." *Gender, Place and Culture* 18, No. 3 (2011), pp. 381-99.

In-Class: Story Map Progress Report: Identify a story and come up with a plan to gather information

Thu Jess Bier, "Where Cartographies Collide," in *Mapping Israel, Mapping Palestine: How Occupied Landscapes Shape Scientific Knowledge* (MIT Press, 2017), pp. 1-33.

Week 13: 4/23 & 4/25 Mothering, Children and Family Separations

Tue Eric Tang, *Unsettled*, chapter 6.

In-Class: Story Map Progress Report: Complete gathering information

Thu Leisy Abrego, "How Children Fare," *Sacrificing Families*, pp. 133-158.

***Reading Journal #3 Due**

Week 14: 4/30 & 5/2 Refugee Literature & Art

Tue Attend 50th anniversary of Ethnic Studies event

Thu Selections from Mai Der Vang, *Afterland* (Graywolf Press, 2017).

Shanon Gibney, *Dream Country*, Part I (Dutton Books, 2018).

Week 15: 5/7 & 5/9 Refugee Stories

Tue Finish story map project and 5-7 minute presentations

Thu 5-7 minute presentations on your projects