CMEN19: Middle Eastern Studies: Middle Eastern Refugees in the Global North

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Office hours: By appointment

Course Dates
24 March 2019 – 9 June 2019
Location: CMES Seminar Room

Course Description

A substantial number of people from the Middle East migrate to those countries that can be collected under the term ‘the Global North’. Many of these people who travel ‘north’ seek asylum. In 2015 alone, more than a million of forcibly-displaced people left behind their homes in the Middle East and migrated to, among other Global Northern geographies such as Australia or Canada, the European Union.

This course focuses on refugees understood as forcibly-displaced people. It discusses those social structures, organizations and institutions that affect the lives of people seeking asylum not only in Sweden but in the Global North more broadly. With the course’s point of departure being the Swedish asylum system, we will start with tracing the historical roots of the international refugee regime. Thereupon the course explores asylum systems in other Global North countries, and assesses empirical research that investigates how Middle Eastern refugees interact with these different administrations of asylum. The student will read this literature critically, problematizing the process of seeking asylum in relation to citizenship, gender and sexuality, class, race/ethnicity, geopolitics, among other intersecting axis of power that mark (and are being marked by) the lives of Middle Eastern refugees in the Global North. To address these complex power relations, the self-organized refugee rights activism that has emerged recently in different Global Northern contexts will be an important empirical reference point. Thus, the course examines contentious politics in interaction with the social structures, organizations and institutions that affect the lives of people seeking asylum in the Global North.

In class lectures and seminars, students will engage critically with the current state of research on Middle Eastern Refugees in the Global North and they will meet with locally engaged NGO-workers as well as refugee rights activists who have first-hand experiences of South-North migrations. Students will also participate in multi-media activities that aims to make them more acquainted with the plight of displacement and seeking refuge.
Learning outcomes

Upon the completion of the course, the students will be able to:

Knowledge and understanding

- describe key principles (legal, political, ethical) related to refugees and forced migration;
- show a working understanding of refugee studies with the focus on Middle Eastern refugees in the Global North;
- increase knowledge about the international refugee regime, the lived experiences of forced-displaced people, and the forms of refugee rights activism in the Global North that are organized and sustained by the directly affected social actors themselves;

Competence and skills

- synthesize and apply theories and concepts to relevant real-world issues with respect to Middle Eastern refugees in the Global North;
- account for, discuss and present specific empirical examples of Middle Eastern refugee communities in the Global North;
- investigate the effects of forced displacement on societies in the Global North;
- engage in current debates on forced migration and humanitarian responses concerning Middle Eastern refugees in the Global North;

Judgement and approach

- critically reflect on the diversity of ways in which Middle Eastern refugees in the Global North are discussed and, thus, discursively constructed in current political agendas, programs and other public debates;
- investigate and critically examine, by applying methods of empirical social science research, material that represents the lived experiences of Middle Eastern refugees who have migrated to the Global North;
- evaluate, through a reflexive and ethical lens, the politics and practices that affect the lives of Middle Eastern refugees in the Global North.

Course Assessment

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<th>Paper</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>40%</td>
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**Course Expectations**

**Class Attendance and Participation**

This course will be run in a seminar format, meaning that group discussions (in smaller groups or for the entire class) will take place every class meeting. Students are expected to keep up with reading assignments and think about the readings critically before they come to class. Informed participation is expected from all students. Students are expected to focus their class participation on analytical insights and theoretical details to construct their arguments. Please keep track of some after class activities that you can complete on your own.

While in class please follow these common courtesy rules:

- Turn off cell-phones (and don’t just put them on vibrate)
- Laptops and other electronic devices are not acceptable for use during class
- Show up to class on time
- Stay alert in class
- Show respect to your instructor and fellow students
- Refrain from disruptive behavior

**Assignments One and Two: Reaction Papers**

Students are expected to submit two Reaction Papers, and each will be worth 30 points. The essay should be around 1,000 – 1,500 words and focus on the set of reading to be discussed in class for that section of the course. Students choose their own deadline for their papers. I strongly recommend that you choose an earlier first deadline allowing time for feedback before you embark on writing your second paper. Please submit your papers on LUVIT.

For each of the papers, choose one of the major topics in the course syllabus. A paper addressing a specific topic is due on the same day a topic is being discussed in class. There are nine topics covered in class, not including the first meeting. You should sign up for your topics of choice on the first day of class. By signing up to a particular topic, you are also taking charge of running the discussion on the topic in class that day. The papers are due at 8:00 pm, which gives you a few hours to revise your paper following the class discussions.

Your paper should reflect a process of carefully reading and thinking through the assigned readings. Consider the implications of the arguments, and bear in mind that you can (and perhaps should) make connections to other topics discussed in class during other sessions.
These reaction papers are your reactions to the material you have been assigned to read. They are not just summaries, but they should reflect an engagement with the readings. Some guidelines that may help you structure the paper are:

- State what you think are the most important conclusions the author draws
- Disagree with the author, if you think that the evidence doesn’t support the points being made, or if you think the author is missing something important
- Connect the material with other topics and readings from this course
- Connect the material you read with things you’ve read or talked about in other courses
- Say what you found most interesting or unexpected about the reading, and say why
- Draw out the implications of the author’s argument for improving people’s lives.
- Point out something contentious or debatable the author has said and argue it from the other side

The reaction papers are very individualistic are there are multiple ways you can write a very interesting one. You do not need to consult additional readings outside of the literature for this course, and you do not need to provide a list of references for your paper (provided that you clearly refer to the authors you are discussing).

I will evaluate your paper based on:

- how well you know the material;
- how well you criticize or respond to the ideas in the readings instead of just summarizing them; and
- how much evidence there is of hard intellectual work and grappling with the implications of the ideas presented in the readings.
- I will also weigh how well you express yourself and the clarity of your writing, although these are secondary factors.

I will evaluate your reflection statements based on the following rubric:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Identification</th>
<th>Exceeds Expectations (30 points)</th>
<th>Meets Expectations (20 points)</th>
<th>Fails to meet expectations (15 points)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You identified the main arguments and the important concepts used to make it.</td>
<td>You identified a concept and provided a comprehensive definition.</td>
<td>You did not identify or define a concept from the reading.</td>
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**Assignment Three: Literature Review**

The aim of this assignment is to allow you to formulate a research question based on the analysis of the existing literature related to the topic. Based on a review of existing academic literature, you are expected to identify gaps in research and propose a way of contributing to filling such a gap.

Choosing a topic of interest to you and relevance to the course, you are expected to conduct a literature review that highlights the state of the art on a particular subject. Your review should provide more than a mere summary of the existing literature. Instead, you are expected to provide analysis and critique, and evaluate the different arguments provided in the literature. Your review should focus on the findings provided in the different academic sources and also shed light on the key theories used. The goal is to evaluate the state of knowledge related to the topic: what do we know; how well do we know it; and what still needs to be known. As such, the literature review should ultimately pose a research question that is based on the existing literature but remains unanswered by it. For a short guideline on how to conduct a literature review, please read Knopf, Jeffrey (2006). Doing a Literature Review, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 39 (1): 127-132.

The assignment should be around 3500 words, and is due on June 3rd at 13:00.
Here are some things to consider when working on your review:

- Think about the topic you choose.
  - The topic needs to move beyond descriptive analysis and focus on a question, puzzle or problematic.

- Pick literature that is most relevant to that topic.
  - Use at least three readings from the class.

- Find references in the library that supplement class readings.
  - Be extensive but also pay attention to finding relevant ones that relate directly to your topic.

- Formulate an argument that is based on your sources.
  - Your paper should be based on a clear thesis statement that reflects the organization of your thoughts in a logical way that develops throughout the paper.

- Summarize the arguments in the various readings and use these summaries to formulate the outline for your essay.
  - Your thesis statement and outline will probably change over time, but they keep you focused when it is time to write.

- Follow the outline to elaborate the arguments of the different authors in a clear manner. Build your literature review in an interesting way.
  - And make sure that you are connecting it to your thesis statement.

- Make sure that the paper provides a single focused line of argument, and includes an introduction and a conclusion.
  - Your thesis should indicate a clear purpose for the paper and should be established in the introduction, developed logically and fully throughout the paper, and summarized and clearly articulated in the conclusion.

- Reference all sources used in the paper both within the body of the paper and in a Works Cited page.

Students should keep in mind some basics of writing good papers:

- Support your claims. Make an argument instead of unsupported assertions.
- Focus on analytical insights instead of opinions.
- Connect ideas, sentences and paragraphs.
- Make sure that your writing flows and that sentences are well constructed to show how ideas relate. Write simply.
- Do not use Google or Wikipedia (Google Scholar is OK).
- Use course material, academic journals (obtained through databases) and scholarly books.

I will evaluate the literature review based on the following rubric:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Structure</th>
<th>Exceeds expectations (40 points)</th>
<th>Meets expectations (30 points)</th>
<th>Fails to meet expectations (20 points)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thesis statement well stated. Literature well chosen for topic. All relevant concepts are discussed.</td>
<td>Clear thesis. Literature well chosen for topic. Some concepts are discussed.</td>
<td>No clear thesis statement. Discussed concepts are not applicable to topic.</td>
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<p>| Content | Uses topic to apply knowledge of the field. Identifies similarities and differences between different sources. Identifies gaps and draws thoughtful conclusions from the literature review. Summarizes contributions of the topic to the field. | Clear connections between paper topic and the field. Identifies some of the main agreements and disagreements in the literature. Gaps identified are not very clear. Attempts to make conclusions but with some difficulty explaining the contributions of these conclusions. | Inadequate application of the knowledge of the field to paper topic. Cursory identification of similarities and differences. No identification of gaps and unsupported or irrelevant conclusions. Ignores the discussion of contributions to the field. |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Organization and Development</th>
<th>Exceeds expectations (40 points)</th>
<th>Meets expectations (30 points)</th>
<th>Fails to meet expectations (20 points)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thesis is established in the introduction, is fully developed throughout the paper, and a reasonable conclusion is articulated. Strong connections of ideas and transitions through the paper that facilitate understanding.</td>
<td>Thesis reflects the purpose of the paper. Introduction and conclusion are present but may be incompletely developed. Makes coherent connections between sentences. Uses transitions between paragraphs and within them.</td>
<td>No main idea. Ineffective introduction and/or conclusion. Connections between ideas are confusing or not present.</td>
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| Conventions and editing | Accurate and consistent citations. Writing flows and contains well-constructed sentences that show relations between ideas. Precise sentence-level editing. | Accurate and consistent citations. Thoughtful writing, but not always effective. Occasional use of awkward sentences. | Improper citations, phrasing interferes with reader understanding, no editing apparent. |

**GENERAL GUIDELINES**

**Dishonesty**
I am quite confident that no one in this class would violate academic conventions regarding dishonesty. However, it is my duty to inform you that any student who breaks the rules by cheating, plagiarizing, or falsifying records will receive a failing grade for the course and have their case reported to the University administration.
GRADES

Grades will be granted based on the following scale:

A = 93-100
A: Outstanding work that goes above and beyond the requirements of the assignments and demonstrates exceptional critical skills and creativity. Outstanding effort, significant achievement, and mastery of the material of the course are clearly evident.

B = 85-92
B: Above Average work that demonstrates a thorough understanding of the course material, fulfills all aspects of the assignments and goes a bit beyond minimum competence to extra effort, extra achievement or extra improvement.

C = 76-84
C: Average work that fulfills ALL aspects of the assignment with satisfactory understanding of course material. If you do the assignment exactly as it is assigned, you will receive an average grade.

D = 68-75
D: Below Average work that shows a marginal understanding of the material but also failure to follow instructions, implement specific recommendations or demonstrate personal effort.

E = 60-67
E: While all assignments have been submitted, the work shows a failure to follow instructions for an assignment or to demonstrate an understanding of basic course material.

F = 0-59
F: Failure to show up to class, or submit assignments.
Course Schedule

March 25  Introduction to the Topic: Trends and Origins

Key Themes for discussion:
- Who is a refugee?
- Do refugees have a stronger claim to protection and assistance than other groups, such as economic migrants?
- Academically, how has the field evolved? How do we understand the state of the art of refugee studies?
- What are some of the features of the refugee crisis? Is this the best way to describe the course of events?

Required Readings: (70 pp)

Recommended:
- PeopleMovin: migration flows across the world, http://peoplemov.in/#t_MX

After Class:
- Download from app store a game called “Bury me, my Love” – $2.99. Start playing this game on your phone. You’ll need a smart phone or iPad to participate. You can read more about the game here: http://burymemylove.arte.tv

March 28 Labelling Refugees

Key themes for discussion:
- Who is a refugee, again?
- What role does labelling play in the experience of forced migrants?
- What are the political and scholarly consequences of definitions?
- What about moral consequences?
- Why study refugees in Middle Eastern Studies?

Required Readings: (100 pp.)

Recommended:
- Kelley, Ninette. 2001. The Convention Refugee Definition and Gender-Based


In Class:
- Who is a Refugee? [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvzZGplGbL8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvzZGplGbL8)

April 1 **Studying Refugees** (103 pp.)

*Key themes for discussion:*
- How should we address refugee experiences academically?
- What is the connection between methodology and morality in studying forced migration?
- What are the major ethical considerations when studying refugee populations?
- What is meant by policy irrelevant research into forced migration?

*Required Readings: (103 pp.)*

- Nayel, Moe Ali. 17 May 2013. “Palestinian Refugees Are Not at Your Service” [https://electronicintifada.net/content/palestinian-refugees-are-not-your-service/12464](https://electronicintifada.net/content/palestinian-refugees-are-not-your-service/12464)

*Recommended:*
After Class:
- Play with the meta-data on the UNHCR’s website, looking at different outcomes based on country of origin, country of asylum, and country of resettlement: http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/resettlement-data.html. Bring observations and questions to class the next meeting.

April 3 The Contemporary Refugee Regime: Protection, Harm and Borders

Key themes for discussion:
- The development of asylum policies
- What are the options for refugee protection?
- Who are the major actors comprising the refugee regime? and what are their mandates?
- Are current institutional responses sufficient?

Required Readings: (100 pp.)

Recommended:

In Class:
- The 1951 Refugee Convention: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p9dYwmnBphs&t=261s
April 8   Intersectionality at the Border

Key themes for discussion:
  • What goes into status determination? How do you assess the policies of bordering Europe?
  • What is meant by intersectionality and how does it apply to the study of displacement?
  • How may intersectionality challenge some of the assumptions of the refugee regime?

Required Readings: (80 pp.)

Recommended:

April 10   Deterrence

Key themes for discussion:
  • Why are migrants considered a security threat to sending and receiving states?
  • What factors may strengthen the view of migrants as security threat?
  • How have state institutions responded to such threats?
  • How do such constructions affect the experience of migrants?
  • Is it justifiable to view forced migration in security terms?
Required Readings: (50 pp.)


Recommended:


April 15, 22 and 29 no class

May 6 Trafficking and Smuggling

Key themes for discussion:

- What are the differences between smuggling and trafficking? What are the problems associated with these labels? What nuance does this term “assisted migration” offer?
- What role do transit countries like Morocco and Libya play in Africa’s human trafficking?
- How do European migration policies shape the processes of trafficking and smuggling?
- Why are social networks important for understanding transit experiences? What does the inclusion of transit experiences in general bring into the understanding of migration processes?

Required Readings: (135 pp.)


**Recommended:**


**In Class:**


**After Class:**

- Listen to full episode of: “Don’t Have to Live Like a Refugee” from *This American Life* (one hour); [https://www.thisamericanlife.org/593/dont-have-to-live-like-a-refugee](https://www.thisamericanlife.org/593/dont-have-to-live-like-a-refugee)
May 13  Arrival and Reception

Key themes for discussion:

- How do we understand integration? What are the obstacles for integration?
- How does the interrogation of integration contribute to our understanding of nation-state, nationalism, citizenship and belonging?
- What are the critiques of integration? What are the alternatives?
- Is transnationalism an impediment to local integration? How does the concept relate to intersectionality?

Required Readings: (103 pp.)

- Bird, Laura “Fleeing Syria, Refugees Arrive to a Different Kind of Hell in Greece”, available at http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/05/fleeing-syria-refugees-arrive-to-a-different-kind-of-hell-in-greece/275531/

Recommended:

http://bostonreview.net/forum/john-bowen-france-after-charlie-hebdo


In Class:
- Watch Salam Alaikum Sweden (http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/salam-alaikum-sweden/)

May 20 Narratives and Representations

Key themes for discussion:
- How are refugees represented in the mainstream media? By humanitarian agencies?
- How do we understand the connections between the “refugee crisis” and Islamophobia?
- What do representations of refugees tell us about host societies?
- What principles should guide the depiction of human suffering?

Required Readings: (approx. 100 pp.)
Recommended:


In Class:

- Continue watching *Salam Alaikum Sweden*.

**May 27**

**Refugees and Political Movements**

Key themes for discussion:

- What are some of the features of social and political reactions to refugee settlement?
- How do we assess the relationship between refugee settlement and nationalist populism?
- What are some sites of humanitarianism and solidarity that are components of the “refugee crisis”?
- What is meant by performative agency and what are some of the ways to study it?

Required Readings: (approx. 120 pp.)