

Jackson School of International Studies
JSIS 498 B
Winter 2020
1:30-3:20pm Wed.
Smith 309

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ADVANCED READINGS IN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES:
CRITICAL REFUGEE STUDIES

What is an Advanced Readings Seminar and how is it different than other JSIS courses?

The JSIS Advanced Readings in International Studies seminars are about learning to analyze an international studies question through understanding the academic conversation about the topic. ‘Understanding,’ is achieved by entering into scholarly dialogue with recent publications and developments in the field, and with each other in the seminar. We read a number of texts rapidly (usually one a week) -- from the acknowledgements pages and preface, through to the index at the back of the book. We read closely because we want to understand the motives of the author/s and the academic network of the author/s (including the support received for the research, or not). We want to understand the structure and methods of the research project and the presentation of it in the book, as much as we want to understand the argument itself and the evidence that supports it. Our aim is to understand the main areas of agreement and disagreement between scholars about a topic, the main schools of thought, how they evolved, and how the nature of the conversation about a topic changes.

Readings in Critical Refugee Studies: course description and objectives:

There is perhaps no better time than the present to be exploring the making and remaking of refugees and the refugee label. Forced displacement and refugee resettlement are among the most intensely politicized and polarizing topics in contemporary democracies. Scholars, policymakers, humanitarians, and members of host populations have long debated the responsibility to protect and to receive people forced out from their homes by conflict and persecution. In this seminar, we will read and discuss a selection of recent books by scholars working in the social sciences, humanities, and arts about refugees and asylum seekers in both the Global South and Global North.

The title of this course reflects the debt owed to researchers working within the recent and evolving field of Critical Refugee Studies (CRS). We take our cue from the CRS Collective’s vision statement: *“In the way we centralize refugees and their subjectivities and collaborate with our communities, our objective is to change traditional paradigms*

of doing research on refugees and challenge the current discourse on refugees within the academy and beyond it.”

What is so wrong with the current discourse on refugees that a new field has emerged?

According to the Critical Refugee Studies Collective:

“Spectacular, supranational, hyper-focus on refugee suffering, desperation and neediness in media and international relations, and legal and social science scholarship have all represented refugees as passive recipients of western generosity and increasingly as the targets of racial profiling, surveillance and detention today. This has created a multi-billion-dollar professionalized field for rescue recreation, and precluded any critical examination of the global geopolitical-historical conditions that create and sustain the refugee “crisis.” In contrast to the problem-oriented approach to refugees, the Collective charts an interdisciplinary field of Critical Refugee Studies (CRS), a humane and ethical site of inquiry that re-conceptualizes refugee life-worlds not as a problem to be solved by global elites but as a site of social, political and historical critiques that, when carefully traced, make transparent processes of colonization, war, and displacement. Such reconceptualization requires approaches that integrate theoretical rigor and policy concerns with refugees’ rich and complicated lived worlds — approaches that fuse the critical and the creative.” <https://criticalrefugeestudies.com/>

Additional critiques of the current discourse on refugees include the following:

1. First, the reception of refugees has typically been analyzed as if they were any kind of migrant, rather than subject to a set of distinct and separate defining characteristics and national and international legal regulations.
2. Second, the children of refugees, whether or not they directly experienced violence or persecution, have been treated in the literature as if they were unaffected by the circumstances forcing their parent/s flight from danger and war, disregarding the long-term impact of conflict on the family.
3. Third, refugees, like all forced migrants, have long been stereotyped as lacking in volition and agency, notwithstanding their determined efforts to survive sieges in war and difficulties in resettlement.
4. Fourth, most literature on refugee incorporation, mimicking voluntary immigrant assimilation, focuses on educational and economic assimilation, and thus reduces successful adaptation to a new society largely in human capital terms. (The sole caveat is an additional focus on the mental health of refugees).
5. Fifth, because refugees’ articulation of their own decision-making and the meanings that refugees themselves make of their agency & actions have received so little attention, the question of their cultural accomplishments, their civic-political contributions, and their roles in building peace are relatively unexplored territory.

This course seeks to further the aims of CRS with the development of global refugee-centered studies. Among the many questions we seek to answer in our discussions about the readings are: to what extent do the course texts respond to the preceding critiques of the traditional discourse on refugees? What methods and research designs are the most valuable, and why? To what extent have there been historical shifts in the discourse on refugees, and why (e.g. from WWI to WWII to Cold War to post-Cold War)? How is the discourse on refugees different from that about asylum seekers, other forced migrants, and voluntary immigrants, and is it a difference worth maintaining? Why or why not? To what extent is the interdisciplinary nature of CRS valuable? Why or why not? What are the shortcomings of CRS, and how should global refugee-centered studies be furthered?

Required Texts:

The following books are available for purchase at the University Bookstore. Some are also available in the UW library system as e-books.

1. ***Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge(es)*** by Yen Le Espiritu. Univ. of CA Press, 2014.
2. ***Sans Papiers: The Social and Economic Lives of Young Undocumented Migrants*** by Alice Bloch, Nando Sigona, and Roger Zetter. Pluto Press, 2014.
3. ***Refuge Beyond Reach: How Rich Democracies Repel Asylum Seekers*** by David Fitzgerald. Oxford Univ. Press, 2019.
4. ***Refugees' Roles in Resolving Displacement and Building Peace*** edited by M. Bradley, J. Milner, B. Peruniak. Georgetown Univ. Press, 2019.
5. ***Displaced: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives*** edited by Viet Thanh Nguyen et al. Harry N. Abrams; Reprint edition 2019.
6. ***We Crossed a Bridge and It Trembled: Voices from Syria*** by Wendy Pearlman. Custom House; Reprint edition, 2018.
7. ***The Best We Could Do*** by Thi Bui. Harry N. Abrams; Reprint edition, 2018.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS, ASSIGNMENTS, AND GRADING

Participation in Seminar Discussions: Students are expected to come to the seminar every week having read and critically reflected on the required readings *before* class. This is not a lecture course; discussion is primarily student-generated and based on weekly reading and student discussion leaders. Your participation grade will be based on the quality and relevance to course questions of your weekly participation, the extent to

which your class contributions move the discussion forward, and the quality of your facilitation as discussion leader.

Short analytical essays: You will turn in 6 short essays, about 3-4 pages each (double-spaced) for 6 of the 7 required texts during the term. I will drop your lowest grade. (Or, if you prefer, hand in only 5 essays. In that case, you will *not* have an opportunity to revise an essay or drop a grade.) Hard copies are due in class on the day we discuss that particular text. Each essay should identify a key question or problem that the author/s or editor/s address. You should also discuss what their contribution is to the scholarly conversation or debate about that particular question or problem. For edited texts that have chapters written by different authors (i.e., *Refugee's Roles; Displaced*) briefly discuss the overall text's intervention or contribution to the scholarly conversation, but then focus on how 3-4 chapters demonstrate the text's overall contributions. Conclude your essay with a paragraph that asks an interesting question related to the author/s argument in the text. Explain in that paragraph why your question is an important one. Remember--your essay is due on the class session where we discuss the book. If we take 2 class periods to discuss the text (i.e. *Refuge Beyond Reach*), submit your essay on the last day we use that particular book. Late papers will be marked down one-tenth of a grade for each calendar day late.

Discussion leaders and reports: For each week starting in week 2, we will have one to two discussion leaders in each class. These individuals will work collectively as a team to research and present the following in 10-20 minutes: briefly describe the scholarly background of the author/s of the text; present your short analytical essay/s in an engaging way; and then facilitate discussion of questions from the other seminar participants, alongside the questions on the syllabus (p. 3 top) about furthering the development of CRS and global refugee-centered studies.

Final Essay: You have three options to choose from for your final essay. Footnotes to required course texts are required, but outside reading is not.

Option One: At the end of the quarter, you will turn in a 5-8-page essay that builds upon the readings and discussions of the course in response to some of the questions posed in the course description. Feel free to elaborate, complicate, and expand those questions as needed. The answers you develop will be yours, and the paper will advance and support your argument. Additional outside reading or research is not required.

Option Two: At the end of the term, you will turn in a 5-8-page paper about the critical vocabularies you learned from the texts and discussions in the course. Use the link on the Critical Refugee Studies Collective website upon which to model your paper, but do not copy. Be original.

<https://criticalrefugeestudies.com/critical-vocabularies>

Option Three: Produce an original creative contribution to the evolving field of CRS or global refugee-centered studies such as a graphic short story, a narrative based on an

original interview with a refugee or your own memoir if you have a refugee background, or a fictional short story. Use Thi Bui, Wendy Pearlman, and the edited volume by Viet Thanh Nguyen for inspiration. But *remember* that you must refer to relevant course texts and footnote your references. **Everyone who chooses option three must email me or make an appointment to see me about their plan at least 3 weeks before the essay is due.**

Distribution of Grades:

Short essays:	50%
Final Essay:	25%
Discussion leadership and Participation:	25%

SCHEDULE OF DISCUSSIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS

- Jan. 8** An overview of the guiding themes, questions, and requirements of the course; Assignment of discussion leaders
- Jan. 15** ***Body Counts*** by Yen Le Espiritu. Univ. of CA, 2014.
- Jan. 22** ***Sans Papiers: The Social and Economic Lives of Young Undocumented Migrants*** by Alice Bloch, Nando Sigona, and Roger Zetter. Pluto Press, 2014.
- Jan. 29** ***Refuge Beyond Reach*** by David Fitzgerald. Oxford Univ., 2019, 1-122
- Feb. 5** ***Refuge Beyond Reach*** by David Fitzgerald. Oxford Univ., 2019, 123-265
- Feb. 12** ***Refugees' Roles in Resolving Displacement and Building Peace*** edited by M. Bradley, J. Milner, B. Peruniak. Georgetown Univ. Press, 2019.
- Feb. 19** ***Displaced: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives*** edited by Viet Thanh Nguyen et al. Harry N. Abrams; Reprint edition 2019.
- Feb. 26** ***We Crossed a Bridge and It Trembled: Voices from Syria*** by Wendy Pearlman. Custom House; Reprint edition, 2018.
- March 4** ***The Best We Could Do*** by Thi Bui. Harry N. Abrams; Reprint edition, 2018.
- March 11** Last day of class- Wrap Up and Final Essay Due in Class

Course Policies:

Classroom Climate: My goal is to create a classroom environment that encourages and welcomes different perspectives on a controversial topic: refugees. Respect for different perspectives and the people who express them does not necessarily mean agreement with them. At a minimum, it means that we should be grateful for the opportunity--- to examine and challenge our ideas and grow intellectually, to participate in a space where all voices can be heard without fear of ridicule, where we can learn from our mistakes, and where we don't impose our biases on each other. Diverse backgrounds, embodiments, and experiences are essential to the critical thinking endeavor at the heart of university education. Therefore, I expect you to follow the UW Student Conduct Code in your interactions with your colleagues and me in this course by respecting the many social and cultural differences among us, which may include, but are not limited to: age, cultural background, disability, ethnicity, family status, gender identity and presentation, citizenship and immigration status, national origin, race, religious and political beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and veteran status. Everyone must conduct themselves with complete respect for all class members and for the learning process. Please talk with me right away if you experience disrespect in this class, and I will work to address it in an educational manner.

Religious Accommodations: Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW's policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at [Religious Accommodations Policy \(https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/\)](https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [Religious Accommodations Request form \(https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/\)](https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/).

Disability Accommodations: Your experience in this class is important to me. If you have already established accommodations with Disability Resources for Students (DRS), please communicate your approved accommodations to me at your earliest convenience so we can discuss your needs in this course. If you have not yet established services through DRS, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (conditions include but not limited to; mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), you are welcome

to contact DRS at 206-543-8924 or uwdrs@uw.edu or disability.uw.edu. DRS offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or temporary health conditions. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between you, your instructor(s) and DRS. It is the policy and practice of the University of Washington to create inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law.

Policy on Tardiness, Extensions, and Late Work: Coming into class late, that is after a presentation or discussion has started, is disruptive and disrespectful to both professor and students. I do understand that sometimes this is unavoidable. If an emergency forces you to be late once or maybe even twice, that probably won't hurt your grade. But a pattern of lateness will hurt your participation grade. That said, it is still better to be late than to skip class entirely.

All assignments must be submitted in hard copy in class on the day that they are due. Please note that it is your responsibility to keep a back-up copy of each written assignment. Late papers will be marked down one-tenth of a grade for each calendar day late.

Policy on Cellphones and Laptops: Because I expect all students to be actively engaged in class discussion and to be taking notes, I do not allow the use of cellphones during class. If you are expecting an important call during class, please let me know before class starts. Please note that there is generally a break of about 10 minutes or so during the class. **Referring to e-books and taking class notes on a laptop is allowed.** However, if inappropriate laptop use distracts me or otherwise disrupts the class, I reserve the right to impose a laptops-free classroom or section of the classroom.

Policy on Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the presenting of the work of another as if it were your own. It is a grave academic offense and can be punished by dismissal from the university. Plagiarism can be intentional and unintentional. Unfortunately, I have caught students plagiarizing before, both intentionally and unintentionally. I expect you to avoid plagiarizing by carefully citing the sources of ALL the information you write up in all the written assignments in this class. Cite when you quote directly AND cite when you paraphrase, or put another's information in your own words. This includes proper in-text citations and a bibliography or works cited page at the end of an assignment. You may use either the APA or the Chicago citation style, but use one of them consistently in the paper. Additionally, I expect all work to be original and thus not copied from anyone else.

GRADING POLICY FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

One of the biggest challenges you can face as a writer is uncertainty about the criteria that will be used to evaluate the overall quality of your work. With that in mind, I want

to give you as much information as possible about what I'm looking for in your written work for this course. I typically grade your written work along five dimensions:

- **Focus, Significance, and Connections to the class:** Is the topic chosen relevant to the course? Is the topic important (and not trivial)? Is the topic chosen focused enough to be able to be covered adequately within the space of the particular writing assignment? Is there evidence that class materials have been read and understood? Has the writer applied lecture or discussion materials and readings to the paper?
- **Organization:** Is the paper's structure apparent and easy to follow? Does the writer present a preview in the introduction of how the problem or argument will be handled?
- **Development:** Does the paper adequately introduce the topic, present convincing evidence to support the writer's position, summarize findings, and offer a plausible or reasonable conclusion?
- **Form:** If the writer uses quotations, are they clearly linked to the argument and are they explained? Does each paragraph develop a single point? Does each paragraph logically follow the preceding one? How well does each paragraph transition between one another? Are sentences well-formed and appropriately varied in length and style?
- **Technical:** Is the paper generally free of spelling, typographical, and grammatical errors? Does the writer use words incorrectly, awkwardly, or inappropriately? Are borrowed ideas given credit and cited appropriately? Is the form of the footnotes and bibliography understandable and consistent? Is the paper the appropriate length and was it turned in on time?

Campus Resources:

UW Leadership Without Borders <http://depts.washington.edu/ecc/lwb/>

Safe Campus <https://depts.washington.edu/safecamp/>

Counseling Center <https://www.washington.edu/counseling/>

Crisis Services <http://www.washington.edu/counseling/services/emergencies/>

JSIS Writing Center <http://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/>