

**Refugee Crises and Human Rights**  
Political Science 380-0/Int'l ST 390  
MON/WED 2-3:20PM, Parkes Hall 214

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**Course Description**

Are states obligated to provide protection to refugees and, if so, what exactly are they obligated to do and are there any limits? In 1951 the enactment of the *Convention Relating of the Status of Refugees* ushered in a new era of human rights protection for refugees. The 146 states who are party to the Refugee Convention are obligated to recognize refugees who arrive at their borders, provide them with a strong set of rights detailed in the Convention, support their path back to independence, citizenship in their new host country and to not send them back to a place where they will suffer harm. The *Refugee Convention*, together with a constellation of other human rights treaties form, what is known as, the International Refugee Protection Regime. With the number of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people worldwide exceeding 65 million people for the first time in the post-World War II era, the international refugee protection regime is proving inadequate to protect the rights of refugees. Since the Paris bombing in 2015 and, in particular, the ongoing crisis in Syria, states are increasingly exercising their sovereignty to close their borders, detain and deport refugees and pursue programs and policies to address the root causes of conflict rather than admit refugees into their countries. Through this course we will consider the implications of these political responses for human rights and international cooperation. We will assess the obligations of signatory states to the Refugee Convention, the role of refugee hosting states, the ways in which the humanitarian system of refugee protection contributes to global cooperation and its shortcomings. In our course we will conduct a simulation of the Indochinese Comprehensive Plan of Action and use six case studies – Burma/Myanmar, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Congo/Rwanda (Great Lakes Region Africa) and El Salvador (Northern Triangle) in order to consider the differences in the kinds of refugee situations we have today and learn about what it means to be a refugee. Through the lens of refugee movement and the lived experience of accessing human rights as a refugee in a world of nation states, we will critically examine key terms in comparative politics such as national sovereignty, cooperation and rule of law and the relationship between refugee movement, democratic stability and state building.

**Course Objectives**

1. To encourage you to reflect on the challenges and ethical concerns of responding to refugee crisis.
2. To introduce you to the international framework for the protection of refugees.
3. To learn about and critically assess the politics of refugee protection and provide you with case studies and analytical tools to examine and appreciate the responsibilities, challenges and constraints of state cooperation and burden sharing.
4. To help you appreciate and critically analyze multiple perspectives on the themes and topics.
5. To encourage you to develop your own understanding on refugee protection and the challenges of promoting human rights and social justice.
6. To help you pose research questions and communicate your ideas, both oral and written, clearly and with confidence.

**Course Evaluation**

- 20% Blogging: 1 blog post (10%), 3 blog responses (10%)**
- Students will be divided into six case study groups (5 students per group).
  - **Blogger:** On weeks 3, 4, 5, 6 & 8 (note there is no blogger on week 7) one person from your case study group will be required to submit a 2 page blog on Canvas. When it's your turn to be the blogger, your blog post should reflect, analyze, discuss how your case study relates to the readings that week, taking into consideration our class topic for the week and discussions from prior weeks. The blogger for the week should try to present a thesis argument and support the thesis by drawing on evidence from your case study and our readings, discussion. **When you are the blogger, you will need to publish your blog post on Canvas under the "discussions" section for that week's topic no later than 11PM on Monday.**
  - **Responders:** On the weeks when you are NOT a blogger, you need to respond to one of the blogs (while you can respond to your own country case study to deepen your understanding and analysis, I encourage you to also respond to others so that you can learn from the comparative cases). You only have to be a responder 3 times, meaning you will have one week out of the five when you are free from authoring a blog/response. Your response should compare/contrast your case study with what the blogger is reflecting, analyzing, discussing and arguing. Your response should be 2-3 paragraphs and should not exceed one page. If there are already 3 responses to a blog, do NOT respond to it. If you do, your response will not count for credit. **Your response must be posted on the Canvas discussion site no later than 9AM on Wednesday.**
- 20% Class Participation.** We will have two simulations in our class. The first is on the Indochinese Comprehensive Plan of Action and the second is on the Global Compact for Refugees. Your participation grade is based on your regular engagement with the course materials and active participation in our simulations. Preparation includes reading the materials beforehand, planning with your group during class and active involvement during the simulation. You will each be responsible for preparing materials for your group (in class) that you will share in a google folder.
- 20% Case Studies.** On each of our case study Wednesdays, one group will be the discussion leaders. This means that on that day your group will need to read the blogs for that week and responses more carefully. On that Wednesday, your group will also do a 15 minute power point on your case study. This will kick off our discussion for that day as we compare and contrast the cases we are focused on for the quarter. While you will have packets on the general background, you should also do some additional research in order to bring out the relevance of your case study to the topic we are studying that day. You will meet during class to set out an agreement on how you will work as a group on your presentation which you will write down and send to me via email/Canvas.
- 40% Research Plan (10%) due Oct. 31 and Final Paper (8-10 pages, double spaced) (30%) Due Dec. 12 at midnight.** A synthesis of what you have learned in the course where you conduct additional research and delve in deeper to either (1) analyze the human rights implications of a refugee situation that is largely invisible in the media or unattended to by the U.S. (ex., Yemen, Burundi, Nigeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Colombia, South Sudan) or 2) the relationship between your case study and some aspect of human rights (ex., access to justice in Greece, education of children in camps/urban areas, gender justice, brain drain for post-conflict recovery, access to health care in camps/urban areas). Due October 18<sup>th</sup> on Canvas by midnight. The goal of this assignment is to teach you how to transition from examining a topic to posing a research question by taking one of the topics we are examining this quarter and developing it further into a research paper of your own.

**Required Texts**

Articles and documents available on Canvas  
William Maley, *What is a Refugee* (Oxford University Press, 2016)

### **Online Resources**

1. NU Library Forced Migration Subject Guide:  
<http://libguides.northwestern.edu/forcedmigrationstudies>
2. Oxford Handbook of Migration Crises  
<http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190856908.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780190856908>

### **Class Preparation & Attendance**

The most important component of our time together this quarter is you – your openness to learning and ownership of your learning experience. This means that you are responsible for reading the syllabus and managing your time so that you are prepared for class. My role is to facilitate your learning by providing reading materials, bringing in my expertise on the topics and raising questions to help you integrate the knowledge.

While I understand this is not your only class, I do expect you to, **at a minimum**, have familiarized yourself with the readings we will be discussing before coming to class. This means taking the time to understand what the authors have to say, what information is being conveyed and how the ideas and information are relevant to our discussion. Surfing the Internet for the information is not appropriate preparation. You should come to class having read and thought about the assigned readings, and you should feel free to test out ideas and enter into conversations with your fellow students.

I will assess your participation based on your thoughtfulness and your engagement with the materials, not whether you agree with other students or with the assigned materials. I expect that you will read the syllabus fully and regularly check the syllabus to make sure you know the course readings and requirements. Ownership of your learning experience means coming regularly to class. Each day's class will be a mixture of lecture and discussion. When you do not attend on a regular basis, it's understandable that you will be confused and feel that it's hard to understand the organization of the course since the course is made up of readings, lectures and discussions that all come together to create your educational experience. If you miss one or more of these components, you will find it difficult perform well in the class. Ownership of your learning experience means coming to see me during office hours if you feel you do not understand the material or are concerned about the course organization, requirements or my teaching style. Consider our class just as you would a job. As such, if you need to miss class, you must either make arrangements ahead of time with me or notify me in writing where the situation arises unexpectedly and you need to miss class or a portion of class. You are only permitted to miss **three (3)** class periods. Students with more than three missed classes or two unexcused absences will have their grade lowered by half a letter grade for each unexcused absence (i.e. from B+ to B).

### **Discussions**

In our class time together my hope is that we will have thought provoking discussions by developing our skills of mindfulness, mutual respect, empathy and understanding. You can contribute by practicing this three-part process: listening, validating and empathizing. In our class discussion, try to hear what your classmates and I have said through this three-step process:

- Listening: I heard you say, ... is that what you said? Is there more?
- Validating: It makes sense that you would think...because of your understanding that...
- Empathizing: That must make you feel...about the issue. Is that how you feel?

### **Policy on Make-Ups, Extensions, Incompletes**

In principle, deadlines cannot be changed. However, allowance will be made for cases in which genuine emergencies prevent students from completing work on time. Such emergencies might include medical treatment or bereavement. Having a heavy workload, impending deadlines for other courses or extra-curricular commitments are an important part of learning how to manage your adult life and cannot normally be considered emergencies. We all have to make choices in our life and prioritize. Having said that, your overall well-being is a top priority. If you are feeling that you are unable to meet the course deadlines or have a situation that is making it difficult for you to meet the course obligations, a great resource on campus is Student Assistance & Support Services: <http://www.northwestern.edu/studentaffairs/dos/about-us/our-office/assistance-support/> Please keep me informed of how you are doing.

**Plagiarism and Academic Integrity** Plagiarism is the presenting of someone else's thoughts, ideas, or work as one's own, *regardless of whether this is what is intended*, and it will not be tolerated in this course. All cases of alleged violation of academic integrity will be referred to the Assistant Dean for Advising and Academic Integrity. Possible penalties range from failing the course to permanent exclusion from the university. For more on plagiarism, see: <http://www.wcas.northwestern.edu/advising/dishon.html>  
[http://www.writing.northwestern.edu/avoiding\\_plagiarism.html](http://www.writing.northwestern.edu/avoiding_plagiarism.html).

**Students with Disabilities** Any student with a documented disability needing accommodations is requested to speak directly both to the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) (847-467-5530) and to the instructors as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first two weeks of class). All discussions will remain confidential.

**Canvas** Much of the business of this course, including access to readings on reserve and announcements, will be conducted through the Course Management System (Canvas), so you are responsible for checking it frequently. To access Canvas, you will need to use your NetID and password. You are also encouraged to use Canvas to continue discussions or pose questions outside of class.

## Course Topics and Weekly Schedule

### *Week 1*

#### **Mon., Oct. 1 Introductions**

- In class exercise: refugee flight and the meaning of seeking and finding protection
- I will introduce our case studies for the course and explain the role they will play. You will rank order three case studies you would like to work on. I will use your rank orderings to assign your case studies for the quarter.

#### **Wed., Oct. 3 Defining a Refugee: The Refugee Protection Framework Part I**

*We will learn about the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol that define who is a refugee as we consider the politics of defining who is a refugee and who is not – immigrants, migrants - why are some people who leave their countries and make a perilous journey to seek a better life blocked from entry deported and others given a status and rights as a refugee*

- William Maley, Chapters 1 & 2 pp. 1-41
- *1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol*

### *Week 2*

#### **Mon., Oct. 8 [Columbus Day]**

##### **The Human Rights Framework and the Rights of Refugee Status**

*We will learn what is meant by “rights-based protection” and consider the relevance of categories such as migrant and refugee by examining refugee rights in the Refugee Convention and the international human right framework.*

- Barbara Harrell-Bond, “Can Humanitarian Work with Refugees Be Humane?” *Human Rights Quarterly* 24 (2002) 51-85
- *1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol*
- I will reference these human rights instruments : UDHR, ICCPR, ICESCR, CAT, CRC

#### **Wed., Oct. 10 The Refugee Protection Framework – Alternatives**

*We will consider what it means to have a rights-based approach to refugee protection by thinking about states that are not parties to the Refugee Convention and offer protection in other ways.*

- Dawn Chatty, “The duty to be generous (karam): Alternatives to rights-based asylum in the Middle East,” *Journal of British Academy*, 5, 177-199, 25 July 2017.
- You will have time to work with your group on your case study presentations

### *Week 3*

#### **Mon., Oct. 15 State Formation and cycles of Displacement**

*This week we will consider the triggers, root (systemic) causes, proximate causes and intervening factors that create what we call a refugee crisis. While in the post-WWII period refugee resettlement was the dominant response to refugee crisis, we will draw on our case studies of to consider why sometimes refugees end up in camps and learn about the politics of “durable solutions”- local integration, resettlement and repatriation - as solutions to refugee crises*

- William Maley, Chapter 3, “Exile and Refuge,” pp. 43-74
- Sarah Kenyon Lischer (2003) “Collateral Damage: Humanitarian Assistance

- as a Cause of Conflict,” *International Security*, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 79-109.
- Chimni, B.S. (1999) ‘From Resettlement to involuntary repatriation: towards a critical history of durable solutions to refugee problems’, Working Paper No. 2, *UNHCR: 1-21*. (pages 9 – 17)
- **Blogger group 1 (due 11PM)**

**Wed., Oct. 17 Case Studies - Presenter: Rwanda/Congo (Great Lakes Region Africa)**

*Week 4*

**Mon., Oct. 22 Nation States and the Human Rights of Refugees**

- William Maley, Chapter 4, “States and Refugees,” pp. 75-89
- Hannah Arendt, The Decline of the Nation State and the End of the Rights of Man, Chapter 9, *Origins of Totalitarianism*
- **Blogger group 2 (due at 11PM)**

**Wed., Oct. 24 Case Studies – Presenter: El Salvador (Northern Triangle)**

*Week 5*

**Mon., Oct. 29 Root Causes of Refugee Crises and Durable Solutions**

- William Maley, Chapter 5, “Roots of Refugee ‘Crisis’ in a Globalized World, 101-126
- Weiner, Myron (1996) “Bad Neighbors, Bad Neighborhoods: An Inquiry into the Causes of Refugee Flows,” *International Security* 21:1, pp. 5-42
- **Blogger group 3 (due at 11PM)**

**Wed., Oct. 31 Case Studies – Presenters: Somalia and Afghanistan**

**\*\* DUE on CANVAS by MIDNIGHT: Research Plan for your final paper \*\***

*Week 6*

**Mon., Nov. 5 How and why do states cooperate to provide protection to refugees?**

- William Maley, Chapter 6 “Diplomacy and Refugees, pp. 127-154
- Betts, Suason Game Theory of state cooperation (Canvas)
- ‘W. Courtland Robinson, “The Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indochinese Refugees, 1989-1997: Sharing the Burden and Passing the Buck,” *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol 17, No. 3 (2004).
- **Blogger group 4 (due at 11PM)**

**Wed., Nov. 7 Case Studies – Presenter: Burma/Myanmar** - Before class today look at the Indochinese Refugee Simulation (Canvas packet). You will have time in class to start preparing for the simulation

*Week 7*

**Mon., Nov. 12 Indochinese Comprehensive Plan Simulation**

**Wed., Nov. 14 Indochinese Comprehensive Plan Simulation conclusion and discussion**

- Crisis Migrants: Susan Martin, Sanjula Weerasinghe and Abbie Taylor “Setting the Scene” in *Humanitarian Crises and Migration: causes, consequences and responses* (Routledge: 2014) p. 3-27
- Heaven Crawley, “Ensuring respect for rights in the provision of refugee protection and assistance,” Summary of an expert meeting held at UNHCR, Geneva, 13 November 2017.
- *I will do an Introduction to the Global Compacts as we start to prepare for the final simulation (have a look at them, but no need to read carefully)*

*Week 8*

**Mon., Nov. 19 Are states obligated to prevent refugee crises?**

- William Maley, chapter 7, “Refugees, Intervention and the ‘Responsibility to Protect,’” pp. 155-179
- Frelick, Bill (1997) “Unsafe Havens: Reassessing Security in Refugee Crises,” *Harvard International Review* 19:2.
- **Blogger group 5 (Due at 11PM)**

**Wed., Nov. 21 Case studies – Presenter Iraq**

*Week 9*

**Mon., Nov. 26 Are we seeing the end of the refugee regime or a new era of stronger protection?**

- William Maley, chapter 8, “‘When Adam Delved and Eve Span...’ Some Reflections on Closing and Opening Borders,” pp. 181-197.
- Simulation preparation

**Wed., Nov. 28 Simulation: Negotiating the Global Compact for Refugees**

*Week 10*

**Mon., Dec. 3 Conclusions**

**WCAS Reading Week begins Monday, December 3  
Final paper Due December 12 at 11:59PM**

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