MSA 180: Forced Migration in South Asia and the Middle East

This is a partially redacted syllabus for MSA 180, taught in Spring 2021 at UC Davis

Modality: asynchronous lectures/occasional synchronous class meetings

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Description: this course explores histories of forced migration in the Middle East and South Asia during the twentieth century. Looking at the role of colonialism, partition, and social unrest in driving the movement of refugees, IDPs, and stateless peoples, we examine how everyday struggles for refugee protections, asylum, and citizenship influence regional politics. Students will develop a research project in refugee history using digitally curated primary sources, to uncover how forced migration continues to shape Middle Eastern and South Asian societies.

Required Materials: the following books will be available via the bookstore or the Equitable Access program. You are responsible for obtaining access to them.
- Wendy Pearlman, We Crossed a Bridge and It Trembled: Voices from Syria (Harper Collins, 2017).
- Additional materials will be provided on Canvas or through the library. Canvas readings are marked with (ca) on the schedule below. Proquest History Vault resources can be accessed through your campus login and/or the Shields Library VPN.

Assignments/Grading
For MSA 180, you are assessed on two fronts: 1) your understanding of material present in lecture and the readings (the two don’t always converge), and 2) your development of an research project based on archival source research. Here’s a breakdown of what’s expected:
Component 1: “Classroom” work: 50 percent
Component 2: Research Project: 50 percent

Course Schedule

Introduction to the Course
Module 1: Introduction and Orientation to the Course

March 30: syllabus and orientation
April 1: the refugee as political figure
Due April 1: choose your reading response deadlines (see module “quiz” on this).
UNIT 1: Colonialism, “Transfer,” and the Refugee Category in the Middle East
Module 2: Making Refugees in the Interwar Period

April 6: Lecture: Population “Transfer” and Making Minorities in Interwar Turkey and Iraq

April 8: Laura Robson and Benjamin Thomas White, “Refugees in Middle Eastern history / the Middle East in refugee history, 1918–39,” seminar at Institute for Middle East Studies, George Washington University.
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPLCH1-ULRg

Module 3: Catastrophe: the Nakba of 1948 and Palestinian Refugees

April 13: Lecture: Palestine from the British Mandate to the 1948 Nakba

April 15: live Zoom class (12:10-1:30pm): discussion of readings

Module 4: Palestinian Refugees post-1948

April 20: Within or Without: Palestinian Refugees, Citizenship and Statelessness

April 22: Passive Displacement: Occupation as Driver for Forced Migration

Due April 22: Robinson reading response (5pm)

UNIT 2: Partition, Decolonization, and Refugee Movements in South Asia
Module 5: Partition and Decolonization in South Asia

April 27: Situating Partition: the Refugee Regime of 1947

April 29: live Zoom class (12:10-1:30pm): discussion of readings and presentation on refugee history in Proquest History Vault
Module 6: Sectarianism and Displacement in post-Partition Contexts

May 4: Ethnic and Sectarian Dimensions: Punjab


Module 7: Legacies of Partition and its Afterlives

May 11: Between Forced Migration and Enforced Immobility: Kashmir

May 13: live Zoom class (12:10-1:30pm): discussion of readings, and writing your primary source dossier

Due May 13: Sen reading response (5pm)

UNIT 3: Forced Migration in Contemporary Times
Module 8: Refugees of America’s Wars: Afghanistan and Iraq
Companion reading: Pearlman, *We Crossed a Bridge*, 1-141.

May 18: Exit Strategy: Afghan and Iraqi Refugees in the Forever Wars

May 20: live Zoom class (12:10-1:30pm): discussion of primary sources, and writing for connection (e.g. your research papers)

Due May 20: Primary source dossier via Canvas (12pm)

Module 9: Refugees in Proxy Conflicts: Syria

May 25: Assad Or We Burn the Country: Syrian Refugees as International Issue

May 27: optional live Zoom class (12:10-1:30pm): I will hold appointments to discuss your research essays. A signup sheet will be circulated.

Due May 27: Pearlman reading response (5pm)

Conclusion: What Refugee History Gets Us
Module 10: Expelled Minorities: the Rohingya in Bangladesh
June 1: The Rohingya Refugee Crisis

June 3: Wrapping Up: Inventing ‘Refugee Crises’

Due by Thursday, June 10 at 10am: Final Research Essay. You may submit this essay any time between June 4 and June 10 via Canvas.