

US Immigration Policy

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1. Course Description

“Understand that America is God’s crucible, the great Melting Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and reforming! Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and Russians-into the crucible with you all...God is making the American.” –Israel Zangwill, 1908

These famous words come from a play entitled “The Melting Pot” written during the peak of the first great wave of immigration to the United States, where immigrants from predominantly European countries made their way to this country in the largest numbers in its history. The movement of people across borders remains an important topic of discussion not just in the United States, but all across the world. Zangwill’s play addresses some very important issues that we still grapple with today such as what does it mean to be an American? How should immigrants be incorporated into American society? In this course we will examine how conceptions of national identity, nativism, and assimilation influence public opinion towards immigrants and shape immigration policy in the United States. This is a special topics course that focuses on immigration *politics* as much as immigration policy. The course is divided thematically into three sections:

I: History of US Immigration Policy

We will begin by examining what America “looks” like today, and what America might look like in the near future, paying special attention to the demographics of the Shenandoah Valley. We will then examine immigration attitudes and policy from the first settlers up until present day, ending with a section on comprehensive immigration reform. This will enable us to understand how policy shapes the composition, magnitude, and flow of immigrants coming to the US, and envision what immigration policies we might expect to see in the future.

II. US Refugee and Asylee Policy

In the second part of the course, we will turn our attention to a specific aspect of US immigration policy, focusing on refugees and asylees. We will discuss how US policy regarding refugees and asylees has changes in response to major world events such as the Cold War and 9/11. We will deepen our understanding of these issues by examining case studies of Liberian refugees in Ghana, the resettlement of the lost boys of Sudan to the US, and the role of asylum officers in

the US. This section of the course is meant to give you a snapshot of the large scope of refugee and asylee issues around the world, and how these are intertwined with refugee and asylee policy in the US.

III. American National Identity

Finally, we will examine the normative content of American national identity including which components of American identity matter when and for whom. We will pay close to the role that “identity politics” plays in conditioning attitudes towards immigrants and policies concerned with immigration. To conclude, we will examine the infamous “Hispanic Challenge” posed by Huntington and briefly evaluate how the new immigrants are assimilating into the US and becoming Americans.

2. Course Objectives

At the conclusion of this course it is expected that you will be able to identify and evaluate the following:

- 1) the reasons that immigration is such a controversial topic in the US
- 2) the current demographics of immigrants coming to the US
- 3) the existence of racially-based and exclusionary immigration policies in US history
- 4) the influence of public opinion on US immigration policy
- 5) how US immigration policy shapes the composition, magnitude of flow of immigrants
- 6) how US refugee and asylee policy is shaped by the current political environment
- 7) the existence and potential solutions to protracted refugee situations in Africa
- 8) the procedures of the US asylum process and meaning of well-founded fear
- 9) the differing conceptions of national identity that are prominent in the US
- 10) the tenets of the Hispanic Challenge and whether the evidence supports its claims

3. Course Materials

Required Text:

Ong Hing, Bill. *Defining America Through Immigration Policy*. University of Temple Press, 2009.

Online Readings:

For each session, there is a series of articles that you will be required to read. The readings are due *before* class begins on the session that they are assigned in the syllabus.

Films:

In this class, we will be viewing several documentaries and films, which will carry the same weight as the required readings. All of the dates of these showings are clearly marked on the syllabus. If you must be absent on the day of a film, then it is your responsibility to rent the film and view it at home. A viewing guide will be handed out prior to the start of each film. It will consist of questions designed to tap your basic understanding of the characters and the plot of the film, and a critical thinking questions, which are designed to have you think about the message of the film and what it says about immigration policy and/or immigrants. After the viewing of each film, we will hold a class discussion, using the viewing guide as the foundation for each discussion. However, when discussion takes place you are expected to go beyond simply rehashing the content of the film, and actively reflect, engage, and challenge the material presented by the filmmaker. There will be assigned readings that coincide with each film, and you must have thoroughly completed these in order to be fully successful in film discussions. Lack of participation in film discussions will result in a deduction in the final participation score, which is explained under course requirements. Below is a list of films that we may view:

1. The Latino Underground
2. Prisoners Among Us or Gangs of New York (excerpts)
3. Hearts Suspended
4. Citizen USA
5. Liberia: An Uncivil War
6. God Grew Tired of Us
7. Well-Founded Fear

4. Course Requirements

GRADING:

Attendance and Participation: 10%

This is, for the most part, a very learner-centered class. This means that while there will be some use of lecture, much of the material will be conveyed through the use of discussions, activities, simulations, and films. Thus, your coming to class fully

prepared to discuss the readings and engage in the concepts presented in the readings will make this class as a whole, as well as your own individual performance, the most successful. I will be posting questions on specific readings and topics that will be discussed in class online each week. Part of your participation grade will be determined by your contribution to these organized discussions, as well as in-class simulations and group activities. I reserve the right to give pop quizzes if participation is not up to par, and these quizzes will be factored into your final score.

Attendance is a prerequisite. You will not get an A or B range score for simply showing up to class. In short, attendance to class meetings is required, not optional, and will not be rewarded. However, failure to attend classes may result in penalties to the final grade.

Absence Policy:

You are allowed two personal absences for any reason. After that, I will deduct 2.5% from your final grade. For example, if you received a 90%, but you missed four classes during the semester, you will receive an 85%. If you are absent for more than five classes, you may automatically be dropped from the course, or receive a failing grade. You are allowed excused absences that do not count against your two personal absences, but you must provide written documentation that accounts for your absence. Sending an email to me saying that you are sick, but that is not backed up with written documentation, will be counted as a personal absence. If there is a prolonged illness, emergency, or trauma that results in your prolonged absence, you must go through the University Ombudsmen, and have this office contact me in order to arrange make-up work or the possibility of an incomplete, if the situation warrants this.

How to Effectively Participate in Class:

Your final participation score is based on how effectively you participate in class. Here, I would like to give you a few helpful hints on how you can participate successfully. Effective participation does not mean just sitting down and going through the reading, or worse, skimming through it. Reading is an active, interactive, and reflective process. To really understand an article, it is usually necessary to read through it very carefully, taking notes, then sit down and reflect about its content. This will enable you to discuss the article with others during our class session. Reading means to engage yourself with the ideas of the text, not just memorize words on a page to spit back for an exam. What are the text's strengths and weaknesses? If you were going to tell someone else about the author's main point, how would you explain it? What political arguments/analyses are found in this text? How does this reading fit in with the other readings assigned for a particular topic?

While I recognize that some of the readings are long and complex, if you think of the readings as stories about immigration, and think of the characters as the individuals

(either migrants or natives), groups of people, or countries. What experiences have major impacts on the characters? For example, when reading statistics on the changing demographics in the US, you can think of the people of the US, both immigrants and natives, as the characters. Then you might want to ask yourself, "What does this mean for US elections if there are more Latinos that immigrate to the US in the next 25 years? How does this affect the likelihood that comprehensive immigration reform will be passed and what the bill might look like? How does this affect the experience of being a Latino immigrant in the US?" You will find that even statistics have a larger meaning and tell a story about how immigration impacts the US, and this is what makes these readings interesting and informative!

Once you have completed the readings (and remember, engaged with the text!), you will be asked to participate in class discussion, activities, and simulations. You will have many chances in class to ask questions and to comment on the material being presented. Besides simply critiquing the readings, you may want to talk about an aspect of the readings (or a particular reading) that really caught your attention. Perhaps you think that author has an outrageous stance on the issue...perhaps you see the relevance of the article to current political events....or you learned something from the article (or were challenged to think about something you already knew in a different way)...these are the types of comments that are welcomed in class. Comments that are not welcome and will result in deductions from your participation score are comments that are off-topic, opinions that are not substantiated, and comments that are rude or offensive to the class. If you make a statement such as "I liked" or "I disagreed with", be sure to substantiate your opinion. It is ok not to like or agree with something, BUT be sure that you can talk about why you dislike or disagree with something in an informed manner.

Exams: Midterm = 35%, Final Exam = 35%

The exams will test you over your knowledge of readings and in-class material. You will be primarily tested over vocabulary, concepts, and specific policies regarding immigration in the US, but will also be required to write a comprehensive essay that critically examines US immigration policy and/or theories about immigration. The format of the exams will be: *short answer, short essay, and comprehensive essay.*

The first exam will take place **Session 16.**

The second exam will take place **Session 29.**

Course Reflection Papers 10%:

A reflection paper is a written representation of your experiences in the course (both in and outside of the classroom), and the learning outcomes of this experience. In a reflection paper, you are asked to give a description of your experience, to determine you're a priori thoughts and expectations before your learning experience, changes in your beliefs, perceptions or abilities prior to the experience,

and future applications of your experience in the course. Reflection papers should be composed of personally insightful descriptions as well as concrete examples of learning, rather than broad or cliché statements. A reflection paper can be in response a single event or a series of events. You will write a reflection about the culmination of your experiences in the classroom, following a three-part framework where you will explore 1) What you know you know (KK), 2) What you know you do not know (KDK), and 3) What you did not know that you did not know (DKDK) about immigration. You will find more specific guidelines on Blackboard, as well as a grading rubric for this assignment. The reflection paper is due **Session 23**.

Asylum Memorandum 10%:

This paper allows you to play the role of asylum officer. You will be presented with the facts of a case and with transcripts of including mock interviews and testimony. It will then be incumbent upon you to make a decision about whether the person in question should receive asylum or be deferred to an immigration judge. As this deals with a legal decision, you will need to practice your analytical, argumentative, and critical thinking skills; you are assessing information, and making a choice that you must defend in this memorandum. This means that you must have an argument that is sustained through evidence and reasoning. I am not looking for a correct answer, but rather how well you can make your case. Remember- assertions and opinions do NOT count as evidence. Beyond presenting evidence, you must determine whether the evidence available justifies the conclusions that you are drawing from it and you may find that you are often questioning and evaluating your evidence. This legal memorandum should have a clear argument about whether asylum should be granted or not, and an analysis of the evidence that led to this result. The legal memo is due **Session 26**. Be prepared to present your findings in class!!

5. Course Schedule

Introduction to Immigration

Session 1: Why Study Immigration?

- (1) Introduction to Course
- (2) USA Today: Costa Rica

2: Demographics in the Shenandoah Valley and Regional South

- (1) Zarrugh, Laura, "The Latinization of Immigrants in the Central Shenandoah Valley" **online**
- (2) Washington Post: "Immigrant Workers Vital in Virginia," **online**.

- (3) "The New Latino South: The Context and Consequences of Rapid Population Growth," published by the Pew Hispanic Center. **online**
- (4) DHS, "Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Living in the US: 2010," **online**
- (5) Documentary: *The Latino Underground*

Demographics

3: National Distributions and Trends

- (1) Documentary: CSPAN- *The Hispanic Population*
- (2) The United States of Education- Changing Demographics in the United States and in America's Schools, **online**.

4: Changing Demographics in the US

- (1) "The New American Electorate: The Growing Political Power of Immigrants and Their Children," published by the Immigration Policy Center. **online**
- (2) Congressional Research Service: America's Changing Demographic Profile, **online**.
- (3) Brookings Research Institute: Economic and Demographic Trends in Washington DC, **online**.
- (4) National Journal, "Will Changing Demographics Make America More Conservative?" **online**.

History of US Immigration Policy

5: Immigration in a New World & Defining Immigration Policy after 1787

- (1) Ong Hing, Chs. 1,2
- (2) DHS, "The Foreign-Born Population 2010," **online**.

6: US Immigration Policy I: Immigration Policy 1820-1952

- (1) Ong, Hing, Chs. 3-5

US Immigration Policy II: Immigration Policy 1965-Present

7: US Immigration Policy 1965-1986

- (1) Ong-Hing, Ch. 6 (pp. 93-103)
- (2) DHS, "US Legal Permanent Residents: 2010," **online**

8: Reforms of the 1990s

- (1) Ong-Hing, Ch. 6 (pp. 103-111)
- (2) Ong-Hing, Ch. 7

US Immigration Policy III – Non-Permanent Residents

9: Temporary Visas

- (1) “US Immigration Policy in Global Perspective”, published by the Immigration Policy Center, **online**
- (2) Testimony, US Chamber of Congress, **online**.
- (3) Southern Poverty Law Center, “Close to Slavery,” **online**.

10: Documentary: *Hearts Suspended*

- (1) Alarcon, Rafael, “Migrants of the Information Age: Indian and Mexican Engineers and Regional Development of the Silicon Valley,” **online**
- (2) Washington Post Article: Immigrant v. Native Labor Trends, **online**
- (3) Borjas, “The New Economics of Immigration,” **online**

US Immigration Policy IV- Alienage and Naturalization

11: Citizenship: What is it- How do I get it?

- (1) DiSipio, Luis, Chs. 3, *The New Americans*, **online**
- (2) Perspectives on Politics, **online**

12: Panel with local immigrants

- (1) **Come with Prepared Questions for Our Panel!**

US Immigration Policy V: Illegal Immigration and Immigration Reform

13: The Politics of Immigration Reform

- (1) Ong, Hing, Ch. 9
- (2) Camorata, “Shifting Tides in Illegal Immigration,” **online**
- (3) Wolgin and Garcia, “Changes in Mexico Impact US Immigration Policy,” **online**
- (4) Schildkraut, “Border Fences, Amnesty Guest Worker Programs, Oh My!” **online**

14: Guest speaker from ICE

- (1) Ten Key Enforcement Changes under the Obama Administration, **online**.
- (2) **Come With Prepared Questions for Our Speaker!!**

Illegal Immigration and Immigration Reform, Continued

15: Immigration Challenges at the State Level

- (1) Washington Post, "Summary of State Ballot Initiatives," **online**
- (2) CNN, "Judge Weighs Arizona Immigration Law," **online**

16: **MIDTERM EXAM**

US Refugee and Asylee Policy I: Introduction

17: History and Trends

- (1) The Onion, "Outdoor Music Grounds Mistaken for a Refugee Camp," **online**

18: Introduction to Refugees and Protracted Refugee Situations

- (1) Crisp, "No Solution in Sight: The Problem of Protracted Refugee Situations in Africa." **online**
- (2) Dick, "Responding to Protracted Refugee Situations: A Case Study of Liberian Refugees in Ghana," **online**
- (3) Forced Migration Review, "Local Integration in West Africa," **online**

Case Study of Liberian Refugees

19: The Story of War in Liberia

- (1) Documentary: *Liberia: An Uncivil War*

20: Discussion of Documentary

- (1) Dolo, "Charting a New Course in Liberian Education Policy," **online**
- (2) Byrne, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? National Identity and Attitudes Toward Local Integration Among Liberian Refugees in Ghana," **online**.
- (3) Omata, "Struggling to Find Solutions: Liberian Refugees in Ghana," **online**.

Refugee Resettlement

21: The Lost Boys of Sudan

- (1) Goodman, Janice H. "Coping with Trauma and Hardship Among Unaccompanied Refugee Youths from Sudan," **online**
- (2) Documentary: *God Grew Tired of US*

22: Discussion of Documentary

US Refugee and Immigration Policy II: Political Asylum

23: Nuts and Bolts of the Asylum Process

- (1) Ong Hing, Ch. 12
- (2) Keith and Holmes, "A Rare Examination of Typically Unobservable Factors in US Asylum Decisions," **online**
- (3) Documentary: *Well-Founded Fear*

24: Discussion of Documentary

Political Asylum Simulation

25: Discussion of Documentary/Simulation

26: Catch-up Day- Asylum Memos Due Today!!

The Content of American National Identity

27: A Brief Inquiry into the Content of American National Identity

- (1) Roshwald, "Kindred Blood, Mingled Blood: Ethnic and Civic Frameworks of National Identity," **online**
- (2) Schildkraut, "Defining American Identity in the Twenty-First Century: How Much "There" is There?" **online**

28: The Hispanic Challenge

- (1) Huntington, S., "The Hispanic Challenge," **online**
- (2) Alba, "Mexican-American Political and Economic Incorporation," **online**
- (3) Galindo and Vigil, "Are Anti-Immigrant Sentiments Racist or Nativist? Does it make a difference?" **online (recommended only!)**