Refugee Integration and Cultural Transformation
INTS-3000 (3 credits)

Czech Republic: Human Rights and Refugee Integration

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description
The arrival of Syrian refugees into Europe in 2015 and, more recently, Ukrainian asylum seekers fleeing the conflict between Ukraine and Russia has re-centered debates on human rights, refugee protection, and the sustainability of social and cultural support systems for refugee settlement and integration. This course explores the complexities of refugee integration and cultural transformation in Central Europe, focusing on the social, political, and economic aspects of refugee resettlement. By contextualizing recent refugee arrivals within the larger framework of European Union (EU) migration policies and border regimes, students will critically examine the impact of EU directives, the rise of right-wing populism, and the role of civil society & local governments in promoting or hindering integration and belonging.

Through case studies and site visits in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Germany, students will investigate best practices in refugee integration, including language and education access, employment, and cultural orientation. We will also examine how the arrival of newcomers can both enrich and challenge existing social and cultural fabrics. The course draws on public policy, academic frameworks, grassroots organizing, and experiential learning to comprehend potential solutions to problems facing people seeking refuge and resettlement.

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

- Describe different terms used for border crossers and people seeking refuge, reflecting critically on language and terminology associated with migration.
- Examine different approaches to refugee rights and integration in the Czech Republic, Germany and Poland.
- Analyze the effectiveness of refugee integration initiatives in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Germany.
- Evaluate how regional-level policies and practices intersect with and influence the national-level approaches to refugee protection and inclusion in the Czech Republic, Germany, and Poland.
- Develop advocacy materials that contribute to the advancement of refugee rights, protection, belonging, and integration.
Language of Instruction
This course is taught in English.

Instructional Methods
SIT’s teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984; 2015) and informed by various scholars, such as Dewey, Piaget, Lewin, among others. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that is not confined to the formal curriculum; “knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 2015, p. 49). Learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being. Learning involves a community and is a lifelong endeavor. Learning is transformational. The suggested four step-cycle of a concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation embedded in the experiential learning model is not linear and might not always happen in that specific order, as any learning is highly context dependent. These stages of taking part in a shared experience; reflecting on that experience by describing and interpreting it; challenging their own assumptions and beliefs to generate new knowledge; and ultimately applying new knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes in a variety of situations and contexts are important for students to engage in to become empowered lifelong learners.

Required Texts
See the course schedule for a full list of reading assignments.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

1) Reflection Papers (30%)
Each week, you are required to turn in a 500-word reflective journal entry on the assigned readings, videos, and/or your interactions with community members. Short prompts will be provided for the journal entries. By the end of the semester, each student should turn in ten (10) journal entries. Alternatively, instead of a written reflection, you can also make a 3–4-minute oral recording of your reflections and upload it to Canvas before the deadline.

2) Media Analysis of Refugee Narratives (25%)
Choose a well-known European news outlet or an organization that works with refugees. You can pick a mainstream, left-wing, or right-wing news source (e.g., The Guardian, BBC News, Daily Mail, Euronews, Valeurs Actuelles, etc. OR a refugee-focused organization (e.g., UNHCR, International Rescue Committee (IRC), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)). If you're unsure if your chosen source is appropriate, please check with me.

Find one or more articles from your chosen source that discuss refugees. You can focus on a single, in-depth article or a series of articles on a specific refugee-related issue.
Write a 4–5-page paper (Times New Roman, 12-point font, double-spaced) that analyzes how the article(s) portray refugees. Consider the language, tone, and overall narrative used in the piece(s).

In your paper, include:

- An explanation of why you chose the specific source and article(s).
- A summary of the main points and arguments made in the article(s).
- An analysis of the language and narratives used to describe refugees.
- Your thoughts on the potential impact of these narratives on public perception of refugees.

Please include a bibliography with your paper, listing the article(s) you analyzed and integrate at least 5 readings/videos from our course materials into your paper.

3) Oral Presentation (35%)

We want you to develop your presentation and advocacy skills and share what you’ve learned with a wider community beyond your class. So, for your final presentation, you will create a multimedia presentation (for example, using Canva or Google Slides), in order to express what you have learned from refugee integration through course materials as well as your lived experience in the Czech Republic and Germany. Working in groups of two, you will create a 12–15-minute presentation that does ONE of the following (please review the two options below):

**Option 1: Conduct a Comparative Analysis of Refugee Integration Strategies in Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic**

For this presentation, you can draw upon your experiences and learnings from the field visits to Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic as well as course materials. You should compare and contrast the approaches to refugee integration in these three countries, discussing factors such as:

- Reception and initial support for refugees
- Access to housing, education, and employment
- Language and cultural orientation programs
- Public opinion and political discourse surrounding refugees
- Role of civil society and NGOs in supporting integration

Students should evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies and identify lessons learned that could be applied to other contexts.

**Option 2: Analyzing Civic Engagement Strategies: Refugee-Led Initiatives and Grassroots Advocacy**

This presentation topic focuses on the content covered mostly in Module 5, which explores the role of civil society and civic engagement in supporting refugees. Students can draw upon the required readings, such as the examples of NGOs in the Czech Republic, as well as their own experiences and observations from the program.

Students can present on:

- Examples of refugee-led initiatives and how they contribute to empowerment and integration
• The work of local NGOs and grassroots organizations in advocating for refugee rights and providing support services
• Challenges faced by civil society actors and strategies for overcoming them

Students can discuss the potential for these grassroots efforts to drive broader policy changes and social transformation, highlighting the importance of refugee agency and community-based solutions in fostering sustainable integration.

4) Class Attendance and Participation (10%):
Attendance during the seminar is mandatory and your grade will reflect your involvement in class and during other activities and excursions. We encourage you to participate actively, but also remind you that speaking more is not always better. You’ll receive participation credit for the days when you do the following:

• Be present - the success of this interactive course depends heavily on you attending class. Being present in class helps you establish rapport with your instructor and members of the classroom community.
• Practice Active Listening - pay attention in class and during field excursions, ask appropriate questions, show interest, respect, and enthusiasm in responding to ideas (this includes body language), entertain contradictory perspectives, and taking notes,
• Be Involved in Class Discussions - the only way to maximize our collective learning potential is if we are all here contributing. This means challenging yourself to speak up if you usually don’t, and also means allowing others to speak if you are a person who tends to dominate class discussions.
• Display Respect – Practice ethical engagement and culturally responsive interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and communities.

Assessment
Reflection Papers - 30%
Media Analysis - 25%
Oral Presentation - 35%
Participation - 10%

Attendance and Participation
Due to the nature of SIT Study Abroad programs, and the importance of student and instructor contributions in each and every class session, attendance at all classes and for all program excursions is required. Criteria for evaluation of student performance include attendance and participation in program activities. Students must fully participate in all program components and courses. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the academic director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program.

Late Assignments
SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and
progress to the culmination (projects, ISP, case studies, internship, etc.). It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program. Example: Students may request a justified extension for one paper/assignment during the semester. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. If reason for request is accepted, an extension of up to one week may be granted at that time. Any further requests for extensions will not be granted. Students who fail to submit the assignment within the extension period will receive an ‘F’ for the assignment.

Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94-100%</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-93%</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87-89%</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84-86%</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-83%</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77-79%</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74-76%</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-73%</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67-69%</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64-66%</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>below 64</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Program Expectations

- **Be prepared and engaged:** For an interactive course to succeed, you must be present, on time, and have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Being prepared with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone. Moreover, the content of this course is learned collaboratively, meaning that when a student isn’t here, they take away from everyone’s opportunity to learn. The only way to maximize our collective learning potential is if we are all here contributing. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the academic director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program.

- **Submit assignments on time:** SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination (projects, ISP, case studies, internship, etc.). It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program.

- **Bring your curiosity:** Ask questions in class. Engage the guest lecturers, as these are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak. Remember, there are no foolish questions, and your inquiries might help others in class who have similar ideas/thoughts. By actively participating and showing curiosity, you
demonstrate respect for our guests and contribute to creating a dynamic learning environment for everyone.

- **Maintain academic Integrity:** As members of a learning community, we all want to submit work that reflects our own ideas and efforts. Even if it is unintentional, plagiarism can have serious consequences. Before you submit each assignment, ask yourself these questions:
  - Did I reference ideas, quotes, phrases, or facts I read about in a book, article, or website, without citing the author and year of the source where I read about them?
  - Did I paraphrase by changing only a word or two or moving the words around?
  - Did you answer “yes” to any of the above questions? If so, you are committing plagiarism and need to give credit to appropriate sources before you submit your assignment.

- **Principled Disagreement:** Learning often involves discomfort. Some discomfort can facilitate personal and collective growth. You, your peers, guest lecturers, instructors, and local constituents, have diverse experiences, values, beliefs, affiliations, and identities. Reflecting on these differences can be emotionally challenging, even when it deepens self-awareness and mutual understanding. In this course, we aim to encourage principled disagreement rather than avoiding difficult conversations. *This is challenging work, and we will inevitably make mistakes.* Our goal is to thoughtfully critique ideas rather than attacking individuals. We aim to embrace productive discomfort and minimize unproductive discomfort, striving for principled disagreement.

- **Content Considerations:** Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.

- **Our social identities** – Our social identities - race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual identity, religion, mental and physical ability, size, national origin, citizenship status, and more – shape how we are perceived, represented, and treated. They also influence what knowledge and learning is deemed valuable and legitimate. To challenge hegemonic paradigms and perspectives, this course intentionally includes readings, topics, videos, and assignments from authors and perspectives of diverse backgrounds. However, there may be gaps we have overlooked. Your constructive feedback is always welcome on how to make this course more inclusive and transformative.

- **Store Your Work:** Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will always be available to despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.

- **Mindful Digital Engagement:** While the topics of refugee integration and cultural transformation are captivating, it is difficult to compete against the internet's endless
distractions. Engaging with the digital world during class or study abroad activities can be disruptive to both instructors, guests, community partners, and peers. To foster an environment of active presence and engagement, we ask students to adhere to these mindful digital engagement guidelines:

- Cellphones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
- To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student’s own private use.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and the Policies section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as Library resources and research support, Disability Services, Counseling Services, Title IX information, and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion resources.

Course Schedule

*Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers’ availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs

Module 1: Historical Context and Current Trends in Refugee Migration in Central Europe

This module introduces students to key concepts, terminology, and analytical frameworks in refugee studies. It provides an overview of the history of refugee migration in Central Europe, tracing key events and trends that have shaped the contemporary context. The module also examines recent refugee arrivals, including Syrian refugees and Ukrainian asylum seekers fleeing ongoing conflict. By the end of the module, students will have a strong foundation for understanding key concepts and frameworks in refugee studies.
Sessions may include:
- Understanding forced migration and its causes
- Key terminology in refugee studies e.g., difference between asylum seekers and refugees
- Historical Overview of Refugee Migration in Central Europe
- Legal frameworks for refugee protection
- The role of international organizations in refugee protection and integration

Required Readings


Required Online Resources:
Guterres, A. (2015). António Guterres: Refugees have the right to be protected [Video]. TED Talk. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=potB0voQzNg

Recommended Readings:


Module 2: EU Migration Policies and Border Regimes

This module provides students with a critical understanding of EU migration policies and border regimes, and their impact on the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in Central Europe. Through engagement with theoretical perspectives and guest lectures, students will develop a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between EU migration policies, border regimes, and the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers.

Sessions may include:
- Overview of EU Border Regimes and Migration Policies
- Technologies used by states to control and surveil borders
- Rise of right-wing populism and anti-immigrant sentiment in Europe
- International Cooperation on Migration in the EU
- Challenges and Opportunities for improving the EU asylum system

Required Readings


Required Online Resources


Recommended Texts


Module 3: Case Study: The 2015 Syrian Refugee Integration Process in Germany

This module includes an excursion to Germany. By examining Germany's response to the influx of Syrian refugees, including its "open-door" policy and subsequent challenges, students will gain insights into the complex dynamics of forced migration and its impact on public opinion, electoral politics, and long-term refugee policies. Through field visits and guest lectures with local experts and agencies supporting integration, students will evaluate the effectiveness of various policies and support systems in place, and the importance of international and regional solidarity in addressing the needs of asylum seekers and refugees.

Sessions may include:

- Germany's "open-door" policy and initial reception of refugees
- Shifting public opinion and political discourse around refugee policies
- Lessons learned for refugee integration and support.
- Challenges and Opportunities for Refugee Integration and Inclusion

Required Reading:


Required Videos/Websites

Al Jazeera English. (2023, April 20). Syrian refugee aims to revive German town as its mayor [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bwe33kunBvM


Zukar. (n.d.). Syrian refugee voices [YouTube channel]. Retrieved March 11, 2024, from https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZtL0Z52RsNiwbHsRXaSlxQ
Recommended Reading:


Module 4: Case Study: Compassion, Integration, and Cultural Transformation in Poland

This module includes an excursion to Poland. The module delves into the experiences of Ukrainian asylum seekers. Students will delve into the complexities of local integration strategies, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with these processes. Additionally, the module incorporates the UNHCR's "Refugee Integration Evaluation Tool (RIET) 2.0" to provide students with a practical framework for assessing and promoting the successful integration of refugees into host communities. By the end of this module, students will have a nuanced appreciation for the challenges and opportunities for integration and cultural transformation, as well as the importance of evaluating and refining strategies to support the well-being of refugees and forced migrants.

Sessions may include:
- Local Integration: Challenges and Opportunities Assessing Refugee Integration
- Cultural Transformation and Social Cohesion
- Housing and Urban Planning for Refugee Cohesion
- Innovative Approaches to Refugee Integration

Required Readings:


**Recommended Readings:**


**Module 5: Activism from below: Civil Society and a Civic Engagement**

This module focuses on the role of civil society and civic engagement in supporting and advocating for the rights of refugees and forced migrants. Students will explore the various ways in which refugees, grassroots organizations, community groups, and individual activists in Czech Republic, Poland, and Germany work to promote the well-being and inclusion of refugees in their host communities. The module aims to equip students with a deeper understanding of the power of collective action and the importance of civic participation in addressing the challenges faced by refugees and forced migrants.

Sessions may include:

- Refugee-Led Initiatives and Empowerment
- The Role of NGOs in Refugee Support and Advocacy Volunteering and Civic Engagement
- Challenges and opportunities for Refugee Support Organizations
• Building Coalitions for Refugee Support

Required Readings


Websites of Civil Society Organizations working on Refugee Support (please review these websites)


