

Refugees and Displaced Populations in the Context of the Middle East and North Africa

MDES-3000 (3 credits)

Morocco: Refugees, Health, and Humanitarian Action

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

This seminar provides students with the opportunity to analyze and appraise the refugee crisis in the context of Jordan and Morocco. This seminar is focused on the factors behind the flux of refugees to Jordan and Morocco. The seminar grapples with social and economic impact of refugees on the host country, including the strain on housing, water, education, municipal services and health, and the rising tensions between refugees and host communities due to competition for overstretched resources. The seminar also explores issues related of refugee and displaced population's identity and gender-related risks and responses in the context of Jordan and Morocco. The excursion to Switzerland provides the opportunity to visit UN and INGOS to learn about the normative frameworks for protection and refugee policies and learn from experts at UN and human rights and humanitarian agencies. The seminar uses an experiential learning model that integrates theory and practice through field-based visits to displaced populations living in host communities, public institutions, NGOs, UN agencies, and national and international relief and protection organizations. The lecturers are drawn from national universities, UN agencies, local and international organizations.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Demonstrate knowledge of the geopolitical factors leading to the creation of a refugee crisis in the Middle East.
- Show awareness of the socioeconomic effects of the influx of refugees on local host communities.
- Demonstrate understanding of gender-related risks facing refugee/displaced women and girls in refugee camps and host communities and learn the evidence-based women protection interventions.
- Apply child protection standards and best practices to analyze the child protection response in emergencies.

- Demonstrate knowledge of theories of social identity formation and models of identity reformation and reconstruction in refugees and displaced populations.
- Apply the contextual frameworks and theories of integration to analyze the impact of displacement on refugee identity formation and reconstruction.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English. Students will be exposed to vocabulary related to course content as well as the nuances of health, environmental issues, and community change and development through in-country expert lectures and field visits in a wide range of venues and regional locales.

Instructional Methods

This course is designed around the principle that learning is an active, holistic process that extends well beyond the classroom. Seminars introduce key concepts and interpretive frameworks that are then examined, complicated, and enriched through direct engagement with people, places, and contexts — field visits, expert briefings, guided observation, and community-based learning. Field-based learning is integrated into course design rather than treated as enrichment: faculty prepare students for each engagement, guide interpretation on location, and facilitate the reflection that connects experience to course themes. Students move through cycles of experience, observation, and analysis, progressively taking greater ownership of their own inquiry. This process is not always linear, and that is by design — developing the capacity to learn from unpredictable, context-dependent situations is itself a transferable skill and a foundation for lifelong learning.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

- Group Discussion Leadership and Synthesis Assignment on assigned topics: Students are required to lead a discussion and synthesis sessions. Leading a synthesis session requires that the students prepare a presentation summarizing the main themes in the readings in addition to extra material, to prepare discussion questions and lead critical discussions relating to the material under discussion.
- During the semester, students will be required to write one critical analysis of a question based on lectures and readings assigned. The paper should be 7-8 pages long.
- Students will be expected to write a 4-5page reflection paper following a field visit using the assigned readings to frame the reflections.
- Attendance during the thematic seminar is mandatory and your grade will reflect your involvement in class and during other activities and excursions.

Assessment:

Discussion Leadership	20%
Reflection Field Visit Paper	20%
Critical Analysis	30%

Reciprocity Project Design & Implementation 30%

Attendance and Participation

Participation is assessed based on consistent, informed engagement in class sessions, simulation activities, and experiential learning. This includes preparation for discussions, constructive collaboration within teams, responsiveness during simulations, and professional conduct during site visits and guest engagements. Students are expected to contribute thoughtfully, listen actively, and engage respectfully with peers and external partners throughout the course.

Consistent participation in classes, site visits, and required program activities is essential to the academic experience. Students are expected to participate fully and may not opt out of required components, as these activities are integral to course learning and collective discussion. If circumstances such as illness affect attendance, students must communicate promptly with the Program/Academic/Center Director or a designated staff member. Absences may affect academic performance and course grades, and repeated or unexcused absences may result in additional academic or programmatic consequences. When absences are unavoidable, alternative academic work may be required.

Late Assignments

Because this program integrates classroom learning with site visits and debriefs, assignments are designed to build on one another and connect directly to learning on location. *Timely submission is therefore important for maintaining continuity and full participation in the academic experience.* Extensions may be granted *in limited circumstances and on a case-by-case basis* with approval from the Center/Academic/Program Director or a designated staff member. Requests should be made in writing as early as possible and no later than 12 hours before the posted due date. Students are expected to communicate proactively if challenges arise. Work submitted after an approved extension period may receive a reduced or failing grade, depending on the circumstances.

Grading Scale

94-100%	A
90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+
84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C
70-73%	C-
67-69%	D+
64-66%	D
below 64	F

Program Expectations

To support a respectful, engaging, and academically rigorous learning environment, students are expected to approach this program with professionalism, preparation, and openness. Because this is an intensive, field-based program, individual conduct directly shapes the quality of the shared academic experience.

- **Learning Community:** Students are expected to engage respectfully with differing perspectives, including those of classmates, guest speakers, and local partners. Agreement is not required, but attentive listening, intellectual openness, and respectful dialogue are essential.
- **Content Considerations:** Course materials and activities may engage sensitive or challenging topics. The classroom is a space for thoughtful, respectful engagement with complex ideas. When possible, faculty will flag particularly intense content in advance. Students who find that course content affects their ability to participate or keep up with coursework are encouraged to communicate with faculty and seek appropriate support.
- **Participation and Engagement:** Students are expected to come prepared and to engage actively in classes, discussions, and site-based learning. This includes contributing thoughtfully to discussion, asking questions, and engaging respectfully with faculty, peers, and guest speakers. Meaningful participation supports collective learning and is an essential part of the program experience.
- **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Schedules and activities may change in response to local conditions or logistical realities. Students are expected to approach such adjustments with flexibility and professionalism. Adaptability is considered part of meaningful engagement in the program.
- **Academic Integrity:** Students are expected to complete all work honestly and ethically, in accordance with academic integrity standards outlined in course and program policies (see link to full policy below).
- **Managing Academic Work:** Students are responsible for maintaining reliable access to their academic work by keeping multiple copies using secure storage methods (e.g., cloud-based platforms or the learning management system). Technical issues such as lost files or device failures do not excuse late or missing work.
- **Personal Technology Use:** Personal devices may be used for note-taking and course-related activities. Off-task use is not acceptable, particularly during discussions, site visits, or guest presentations, as it detracts from collective engagement.
- **Course Communication:** Course materials, assignments, and updates will be posted on Canvas. While the course calendar provides a general structure, adjustments may occur based on program flow or site-based learning opportunities. Students are responsible for checking the course site regularly and communicating promptly about access issues.
- **Recording Policy:** To support open discussion, recording of classes or program activities is not permitted without prior written approval from the instructor. Approved recordings are for personal academic use only. Documented academic accommodations may supersede this policy.

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.

Credit Hours: School for International Training (SIT) adheres to the standard that 1 credit hour equals no less than 45 hours of coursework. The calculation is based on the standard 50-minute academic hour. The number of credits each course carries determines how many total hours each course involves in a semester. Of the 45-hours for 1-credit hour, one third is designated for direct faculty instruction. Direct faculty instruction includes all learning activities led by the faculty whether in the classroom or in the field — lectures, guest speakers, site visits, hands-on field activities, etc.

The full policy on credit hours can be found [here](#).

AI Usage: SIT's [policy on Generative AI and Academic Programs](#) is included as an addendum to the academic integrity policy.

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](#), [Accessibility 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: Refugees and Displaced Populations in the MENA Region: Geopolitics and Protection

This module will examine the root causes of exodus and displacement in the MENA region including regional conflicts, political instability, and the post-Arab Spring uprisings. The module will also explore the legal status of refugees and potential long-term solutions to the crises of refugees and displaced populations.

Session 1: Background to Refugees and Displaced Populations in Jordan and the MENA region

This session explores the history, causes, and status of refugees in the Middle East, with special focus on Jordan and Morocco. The session provides a historical background to the Arab Israeli Conflict and the displacement of Palestinians across the region. The session also

discusses the Palestinian refugee population in Jordan, their legal status, and the search for a durable solution to their plight.

Required Reading:

- Alhamdan, N. (2021) Palestinian Refugees: Myth vs Reality. Middle East Institute.
Holt, W. H. (2019) The Balkan Reconquista & Turkey's Forgotten Refugee Crisis. Ch. 4: Refugee and Resettlement.
FARAH, R. (2013) Palestinian Refugees, the Nation, and the Shifting Political Landscape. *Social Alternatives*. 2013, Vol. 32 Issue 3, p41-47.
Berger, J. (2016). How the Middle East got that way. *New York Times Upfront*. 4/25/2016, Vol. 148 Issue 12, p18-21. 4p.

Recommended Reading:

- Liel, A. (2020) Trump's "Deal of the Century" Is Modeled on South African Apartheid. *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics & Culture*. 2020, Vol. 25 Issue 1/2, p73-76. 4p.
Goren, N. (2020). Beyond the Trump Plan: How Can the International Community Advance Israeli Palestinian Peacemaking? *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics & Culture*. Vol. 25 Issue 1/2, p53-58., Database: Academic Search.

Session 2: Refugee Politics: The Geopolitics of the Syrian Conflict and the Ensuing Refugee Crisis

This session will explore the political and social background to the ongoing conflict in Syria and the ensuing regional refugee crisis. The session also addresses security implications on Jordan.

Required Readings

- Foreign Policy Research Institute. (2024) Post-Assad Syria-Challenges, Opportunities and the US Role in Shaping its Future
ACW. (2025, January 16). Political Change and the Fate of Syria's Refugees Around the World. Arab Center Washington DC.
<https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/political-change-and-the-fate-of-syrias-refugees-around-the-world/>
Karim, S. (2016) Syrian Crisis: Geopolitics and Implications. *BISS JOURNAL*, VOL. 37, NO. 2, APRIL 2016: 107-132.

Recommended Readings

- Couldrey, M and Peebles, J. Eds. (2018) Syrians in Displacement. *Forced Migration Review*, 57. Retrieved from:
<https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/forced-migration-review-issue-57-syrians-displacement>.

Session 3: International Refugee Protection

This session grapples with the definition, guidelines, and laws related to refugee status, treatment, and protection and the legal obligation of states. The session also focuses on the legal standards and principles that guide the protection of refugees and outlines the different roles, responsibilities, and commitments of states and other actors, including UNHCR and other UN agencies. The policies and laws available for refugee protection in Jordan will be also examined.

Required Reading:

- Francesca P Albanese, Lex Takkenberg. (2020) Palestinian Refugees in International Law. Publisher: Oxford University Press. Part Three Protection and Solutions, VI Focusing on Specific Rights
- Francesca P Albanese, Lex Takkenberg. (2020) Palestinian Refugees in International Law. Publisher: Oxford University Press. Part Three Protection and Solutions, VII Protection of Palestinian Refugees
- Maja Janmyr (2018) UNHCR and the Syrian refugee response: negotiating status and registration in Lebanon, *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 22:3, 393-419.
- Akram, S. et al. (2015) " Protecting Syrian Refugees: Laws, Policies, and Global Responsibility Sharing," 7 Middle East Law and Governance 287.

Recommended Reading:

- Bastaki, J. (2017) The Legacy of the 1951 Refugee Convention and Palestinian Refugees: Multiple Displacements, Multiple Exclusions. *Berkley Journal of Middle Eastern & Islamic Studies*, Vol. 8, Article 1.

Convention relating to the Status of Refugees

Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees

Module 1-Session 5: Children and Displacement-related risks and vulnerabilities - Field Visit

This field visit to a local NGO in the North of Morocco will provide an opportunity to learn about the risks facing refugee children and protection and education programs they provide to refugee and local children.

Required Reading:

- The Alliance 2019. Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. Pillar 3.
- UNICEF. State of Palestine Humanitarian Situation Report No. 45 - 30 November 2025
- Save the Children. (2025, September 6). *Gaza: 20,000 children killed in 23 months of war; more than one child killed every hour.*
- <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/gaza-20000-children-killed-23-months-war-more-one-child-killed-every-hour>
- UNICEF, Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action. 2010

Recommended Reading:

UNICEF Annual Report 2024. UNICEF, Falling Through the Cracks: The Children of Yemen, 2017.

Sahin, E., Dagli, T.E., Acarturk, C. et al. (2020) Vulnerabilities of Syrian refugee children in Turkey and actions taken for prevention and management in terms of health and wellbeing. *Child Abuse Negl.* 2020 Jul 29: 104628.

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/child-refugees-europe/>

Module 2: Refugee policies and Humanitarian Response

This module provides insight into the refugee policies and response to the Syrian refugee crisis. The module will also explore the socio-economic effects of refugees on local host communities and social cohesion. The module also addresses potential impact on the stability and security of host countries; The module also discusses the migration and asylum policies in Morocco and their impact on migrants and asylum seekers.

Session 1: Syrian Refugees: Response and Challenges

This session will address Jordan's policy and response to the influx of Syrian refugees and the socio-economic impact of hosting Syrian refugees in Jordan including the strain on local resources and social services such as housing, water, education, municipal services, and health.

Required Reading:

Arar, R. (2017) Leveraging Sovereignty: The Case of Jordan and the International Refugee Regime. In: *Refugees and Migration Movements in the Middle East*. POMEPS Studies 25. Pp 12-15.

.Francis, A. (2015) Jordan's Refugee Crisis. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. http://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP_247_Francis_Jordan_final.pdf

Session 2: Humanitarian Principles and Politicization of Humanitarian Action

The session addresses humanitarian principles and introduces international humanitarian law.

Fox, F. (2001). New Humanitarianism: Does it Provide a Moral Banner for the 21st Century? *Disasters* 25 (4), 275-289.

Session 3: Refugee Policies: Protection and Response to sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco-

This session examines refugee policies and the international cooperation on the refugee regime, the rights of asylum seekers, challenges faced by asylum seekers with focus on Morocco.

Required Reading:

Soufiane Elgoumri. (2026) Sub-Saharan African Migrants in Morocco: Security Concerns and the Test of Human Rights. Sada. Carnegie Environment for International Peace.

Module 3: Refugees and Social Identity: The Challenges of Relocation

This module examines the theories of social identity formation and models of identity reformation and reconstruction in refugee populations settling in host communities. The module also explores social identity issues for refugees and displaced populations in Jordan as they seek to establish new lives, including the potential impact of the cultural-contextual change and the new social structure and policies of Jordanian society on their healthy adaptation.

Session 1: Integration and Social Identity Formation in Refugee Populations

This session will address the theories of identity reformation and reconstruction in refugee populations in host communities. This session will address the impact of the cultural-contextual new social structure and policies of the Government of Jordan on the healthy adaptation of Syrian refugees.

Required Reading:

- Ager, A., and Strang A. Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 2008: 21(2): 166-191.
- Kiselev, N., Pfaltz, M., Schick, M., Bird, M., Hansen, P., Sijbrandij, M., De Graaff, A. M., Schnyder, U., & Morina, N. (2020). Problems faced by Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in Switzerland. *Swiss Medical Weekly*, 150(4344).

Recommended Reading:

- Navarro Vigil, Y; Baillie Abdi, C (2018). "We" the Refugees: Reflections on Refugee Labels and Identities. *Refugee*. 34 Issue 2, p52-60. 9p.
- Sontag, K. (2018) Highly skilled asylum seekers: Case studies of refugee students at a Swiss university. Volume: 15, No: 4, pp. 533 – 544.
- Mercy Corps Jordan, Report: "Mapping of Host Community-Refugee Tensions in Mafraq and Ramtha, Jordan", May 2013.

Session 2: Social Identity and integration Challenges of Sub-Saharan Migrants and Refugees in Morocco -

This session will address the social identity and integration challenges of Syrian refugees in Jordan. The session includes a field visit to a local NGO to examine first-hand the challenges faced by Syrian refugees in a Jordan host community and the various initiatives for peace building and integrating the refugees in the host communities.

Required Reading:

- Lakouisse, H. and El Kadminir, N. (2020) Sub-Saharan immigrants' integration policies in Morocco. *Journal of African Studies*. 7th issue, Volume 2. November 2020

Session 3: Integration and Social Identity of Palestinian Refugees

This session will explore the integration of Palestinian refugees in diaspora and the role of governmental policies in this integration. This session is comprised of an activity with AI

Hannouneh Society for popular culture. The session will explore the role of popular culture in the identity of Palestinian community in Jordan and will witness first-hand one of the many endeavors by Palestinian community in Jordan aiming at preserving their cultural heritage and national identity.

Required Reading:

Suleiman, Y. (2016) Being Palestinian: Personal Reflections on Palestinian Identity in the Diaspora. Edinburgh University Press. Prologue. eBook. Electronic Resources at SIT.

Recommended Reading:

Leone, G., Siag, M. and Sarrica, M. (2014) What Does It Mean to be Muslim / Arab / Young/ Palestinian / Palestinian Refugee? Self-Definitions and Emotional Reactions to Social Identity Complexity among Young Palestinian Refugees Living in the Diaspora. *Papers on Social Representations*, 23, 7.1-7.23.

Module 4: Gender-related risks and interventions for Displaced and Vulnerable Populations

Session 1: Protection of Orphans and single women in Morocco-Field visit to 100%Mamans

Required Reading:

Farahat, H. and Cheney, K.E. (2015). A façade of democracy: Negotiating the rights of orphans in Jordan. *Global Studies of Childhood* 2015, Vol. 5(2) 146 –157

Julie Rodgers (2025) Moroccan maternal outcasts: speaking out and speaking up in Sofia and Adam, *French Screen Studies*, 25:3, 274-291, DOI: 10.1080/26438941.2025.2470531

Session 2: The Impact of Displacement on Women and Girls- Refugee Gender-related risks and violence

This session examines human rights violations and risk factors facing displaced women and girls with particular attention to issues of safety and security problems exposing them to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) or other forms of violence, discrimination, and exploitation. The session will also look into the challenges and barriers women and girls confront in accessing and enjoying their rights during displacement.

Required Reading:

Lokot, M. (2023). Localizing responses to gender-based violence: The case of women-led community-based organizations in Jordan. *Daedalus*, 152 (2).

Acharai, L., et al. (2023). Sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence among female migrants in Morocco: a cross-sectional survey. *BMC women's health*, 23(1), 174.

Recommended Reading:

IRC Report: Are we listening? Acting on our commitment to women and girls affected by the Syrian conflict. Retrieved: <http://www.rescue.org/arewelisting>

UNHCR (2015) Women Alone: The Fight for Survival for Syria's Refugee Women. Retrieved: <http://unhcr.org/womanalonemedia/>

Session3: Prevention and Response to Risks and Violations Faced by Refugee Women-Field Visit

This session will examine the available protection initiatives, and response to risk and violations faced by local and refugee women and girls in Jordan and Morocco. The session includes a visit to a local organization providing free legal aid, legal awareness and empowerment to learn about the mechanisms and barriers to protection and redress.

Required Reading:

Acharai, L., et al. (2023). Sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence among female migrants in Morocco: a cross-sectional survey. *BMC women's health*, 23(1), 174.

Pittaway, E; Bartolomei, L. (2018) Enhancing the protection of women and girls through the Global Compact on Refugees . *Forced Migration Review*. Issue 57, p77-79.

Recommended Reading:

Intragency Standing Committee (IASC) (2017) Intragency Gender-Based Violence Case Management Guidelines: Providing Care and Case Management Services to Gender-Based Violence Survivors in Humanitarian Setting. Part I: Building a Foundation for GBV Case Management.

Session4: Refugee Women Support and Empowerment

This session combines a lecture, and a field visit to examine first-hand women empowerment and support projects implemented to offer services to Syrian refugees in under-serviced areas. The projects offer training, recreational, social interactions, and income generating activities.

Required Reading:

Al-Dajani, H. et al. (2019). Poverty alleviation and women refugees in the Middle East: empowerment through grassroots micro-entrepreneurship? *Resilient Refugee Women*.

Fathalla, R. (2020). Shadows to Light: Syrian Refugee Entrepreneurs in Jordan's Informal Economy. Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut.

Policy Guide on Entrepreneurship for Migrants and Refugees. (2018). United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

Recommended Reading:

Abdel Jabbar, S. and Zaza, H. (2016) Evaluating a vocational training program for women refugees at the Zaatari camp in Jordan: women empowerment: a journey and not an output. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*. Vol. 21, No. 3, p304–319.

Module 5: Switzerland Excursion: International Humanitarian & Human Rights Protection by ICRC and IGOs

Session 1: ICRC role in protection and assistance of victims of international and non-international armed conflicts-ICRC Museum Visit

This session will examine the role and mandate and activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The session will also explore the activities conducted by ICRC to protect and assist victims of international and non-international armed conflict.

Required Readings:

Thürer, D. (2011) International Humanitarian Law: Theory, Practice, Context. Chapter 1.pdf
Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief. IFRC. Retrieved: <http://www.ifrc.org/publicat/conduct/index.asp>

International Humanitarian Law: Answers to your Questions. International Committee of the Red Cross. (2002). http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/icrc_002_0703.pdf

Session 2: UN Geneva -Field Visit

The session includes a tour of the Palais des Nations, formerly the headquarters of the League of Nations. and learning about the United Nations and the UN's work in Geneva. The UN tour guide will inform you about the organization and its activities to maintain world peace, foster international relations and development

Required Readings:

Pease, K. (2016) The United Nations and multilateral diplomacy. In Pease, K. (Ed.), Human Rights and Humanitarian Diplomacy. pp 66-99. UK: Manchester University Press.