

History of Modern Civilization: Through a Refugee Lens

University of Seattle

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USA**

Course Description:

People have always moved. We know from history that humans developed the first civilizations in the great river valleys to which they had migrated. They spread civilization far and wide from these initial locations. Movement has always been a key factor in the creation of new civilizations, new mixes of peoples. People are still on the move — in ever greater numbers, faster, and due to many different circumstances. Economics, better river valleys if you will, has always been the major factor, but violence and now anarchy make people move.

Today, forced migrations, which create movements of refugees and internally displaced civilians from and within countries in distress, are greater in numbers, frequency, and complexity. In this course, by looking at some of the contemporary forced movements of peoples and the historical underpinnings — political, social, economic, and religious — of why they fled their homes and homelands, we will come to understand how cultures are changed and evolve into new or altered entities.

In a world population of 5.8 billion, war, civil strife, or persecution displaces roughly one out of every 115 to 120 persons. The vast majority of people who are displaced, are displaced because of generalized violence. The cost in human lives and money is immense. Lives and cultures are irrevocably changed, for when wars end, millions of refugees return home to devastated homelands or resettle in different countries after years in exile.

During the course of the quarter, we will move through three phases of the refugee experience and analyze and interpret some themes common to societies changed through conflict. Among them will be the following:

1. As we consider why people flee, we will look at the evolution of altered societies — for example, the break-up of the former Yugoslavia and the emergence of the small African nation of Eritrea as an independent nation-state. We will consider, too, the impact of one nation's upheaval on an entire region, as Vietnam on Southeast Asia and Rwanda on Central Africa, as well as the paradoxical concurrent movement toward globalization and local or tribal loyalties.
2. In our considerations of life in exile, we will look at the effect of war on civilians, particularly the most vulnerable members of a population — women, children, the elderly and infirm. We will

take a hard look at the disregard for human rights and consider genocide as the ultimate affront to our common humanity.

3. In the aftermath of war, we will look at efforts by nations to reconstruct devastated lands and to reconcile with former enemies. We will see how, with the end of the Cold War, the United States and other developed nations are changing national strategic interests and reflect on the challenge before all nations to incorporate conflict resolution, preventive action and preventive diplomacy as vital elements of foreign and national policy.

Core Course Objectives:

History 121 is part of the Core Curriculum Phase I: Foundations of Wisdom. Through this course and our reflections on how the refugee experience is critical to our understanding of the forces and events that shape our modern world, you will be given the opportunity to form and sharpen your abilities to think critically and ethically.

Your readings, class discussions, and writing assignments will lead you into the historian's way of asking appropriate questions, interpreting texts, and dealing with significant issues so that you can apply this mode of thinking to other areas of learning.

Through the readings and your discussions and writing assignments, you will be able to reflect ethically on the human condition. Among others, you will deal with human rights issues, the diversity of peoples of history (refugees become peoples bereft of their histories), and responsibilities of the international community to insure a safe and habitable world for all peoples so that they will not have to flee to survive.

This course will prepare you well for courses in the Core Curriculum Phase II: Person in Society. This phase includes courses in political science, anthropology, and sociology, economics, and psychology.

Syllabus:

Calendar

Introduction: Who is a refugee?

September 24 Introduction

September 26 Who is a refugee?

"The Refugee Experience" Video

The State of the World's Refugees

"The Challenge of Protection" 1–12

"The Work of UNHCR" 169–178

September 29 Who is a refugee?

The State of the World's Refugees

"The Dynamics of Displacement" 13–29

Mayotte, *Disposable People?*

"Introduction" 1–10

Flight: Historical Background and Root Causes

October 1 **Cambodia**

Mayotte, "Flight Cambodia" 14–33

October 3 **Afghanistan**

Mayotte, "Flight Afghanistan" 128–145

October 6 **Eritrea**

Mayotte, "Flight Eritrea" 221–241

October 8 **Rwanda**

Issue: *A Journal of Opinion* 1995

Catherine Newberry, "Background to Genocide in Rwanda" 12–17

Alison Des Forges, "The Ideology Of Genocide" 44–47

October 10 **Bosnia-Herzegovina**

Foreign Affairs, Mar/Apr 1995

Warren Zimmermann "The Last Ambassador" 2–20

October 13 **Summary Discussion**

October 15 **Test**

Exile: Nations, Cultures and Traditions Irrevocably Changed

October 17 **Cambodia**

Mayotte, "Closed In" 35–64

October 20 **Cambodia**

Mayotte, "Closed In" 64–91

October 22–24 **Refugee Women**

Mayotte, "Refugee Women" 147–189

October 27–29 **Refugee Children**

UNICEF, "Impact of Armed Conflict On Children" 9–68

October 31/Nov 3 **Internally Displaced and National Sovereignty**

Mayotte, "Urban Refugees," 243–277

November 5 **Summary Discussion**

November 7 **Paper research**

Return: Building a New Nation Through Reconstruction and Reconciliation

November 10 *Test*

November 12 *Cambodia*
Mayotte, "Cambodia Return" 93–124

November 14 *Afghanistan*
Mayotte, "Afghanistan Return" 191–216

PAPERS DUE

November 17 *Eritrea*
Mayotte, "Eritrea Return" 279–301
Mayotte, "Epilogue" 303–304
November 19 Rwanda
Philip Gourevitch, *The New Yorker*
January 22, 1997, "The Return," 44–54
Philip Gourevitch, *The New Yorker*
Aug. 4, 1997 "Continental Shift" 42–55

November 21 *Bosnia-Herzegovina*
Susan Woodward, *Current History*, March 1997, "Bosnia After Dayton: Year Two" 97–103
Cedric Thornberry, *Foreign Policy*, "Saving the War Crimes Tribunal," 72–85

November 24 *Summary Discussion*

Conflict Resolution and Preventive Action

December 1 *Conflict Resolution*
James Laue, "Resolution: Transforming Conflict and Violence," 1–20

December 3 *Preventive Action*
John Burton, "On the Need for Conflict "Prevention" iii–v, 1–16

December 5 *Preventive Action and U.S. Foreign Policy*
Reading to be announced

Final Test: Thursday, December 11, 1997, 12:00–1:50 p.m., Room 308 ADM

Course Readings:

Text: Judy Mayotte, *Disposable People?: The Plight of Refugees* Course Packet (available at Copy Mart, Madison and Ith)

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