

IMMIGRANTS IN AMERICA

Professor Betsy Leondar-Wright taught this course at Lasell University annually from 2019 to 2023)

Readings:

- We will read several articles from a special issue of *Contexts* Magazine in Spring 2019: <https://contexts.org/articles/spring-2019-migration-table-of-contents/>
- Eaton, *Integration Nation*.
- [Kanya and Mirkin, "Working With Immigrant Families"](#)

FOCUS AND GOALS OF COURSE

The United States is a nation of immigrants: every family except Native American Indians came here from somewhere else.

But today immigration is one of the most controversial topics in American politics. Why have more people sought to immigrate to the US in the most recent decade than in some past decades? Who should be allowed to enter and to stay, with what legal status? How should immigrants and refugees, adults and children, be treated? Our country is polarized into opposing camps on those questions.

The immigrant experience is very diverse, ranging from happy stories of voluntary moves into good situations to terrible stories of extreme hardship, some of it caused by US employers and government actions. To understand this complex mosaic, this course will combine community service, films and readings about the immigrant experience, library and field research, and development of policy opinions.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Connect your own family history with the lived experience of past and present immigrants;
- Understand why people are leaving many countries around the globe;
- Do better library research and evaluate the trustworthiness of sources;
- Participate in community service and advocacy to help refugees and immigrants in need; and
- Join the national conversation about immigration policy in a more informed way

SCHEDULE OF SESSIONS

	Topics	Readings due	Homework, assignment deadlines and special events
Tuesday Sept 5	Our immigrant roots		
Thursday Sept 7	Diversity of immigrants to US		
Tues Sept 12	History of immigration to Massachusetts and the US	“Immigrants are our commonwealth” fact sheet https://miracoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Immigrants-are-our-Commonwealth-2023.pdf	
Thurs Sept 14	Psychological impacts of immigrating	Kamya and Mirkin, “Working with immigrant and refugee families”	
Tues Sept 19	Library research skills		Guest speaker Stacey Wilson: Meet in Brennan Library
Thurs Sept 21	The rise of nativism		Homework: Bring in one anti-immigrant post, meme or YouTube video to show the class
Tues Sept 26	Mistreatment of immigrants		Deadline: Essay on Kamya and Mirkin, “Working with Immigrant Families”
Thurs Sept 28	Standing up to anti-immigrant bias	Reading: Upstander handout	
Tues Oct 3	Welcoming immigrants	Readings: In Eaton, <i>Integration Nation</i> , all read Introduction pp. 1-9 (pdf in Canvas module); Each student read a different Eaton chapter.	Homework: Come to class ready to summarize your story for the class in ~3 minutes
Thurs Oct 5	Immigrants and the US economy	Portes, “The economics of migration” in <i>Contexts</i>	

Tues Oct 10	Crossing borders for jobs or cultural/family connections		Presentation(s) on Mexico and/or Canada
Thurs Oct 12	Disasters & Temporary Protective Status	Herwees, "Fleeting Protection," ACLU magazine, Summer 2019	Presentation on Haiti
Tues Oct 17	US involvement in Central America		Presentation on El Salvador
Thurs Oct 19 Asynchronous	Effects of US foreign policy		Watch <i>Harvest of Empire</i> documentary on your own & participate in online discussion
Tues Oct 24	Invited for jobs	Banerjee and Rincon, "Trouble in tech paradise" in <i>Contexts</i>	Presentations on India or on highly educated Chinese immigrants
Thurs Oct 26	Invited for jobs; then start on undocumented	Lan, "Raising global children across the Pacific" in <i>Contexts</i>	Presentation on low-wage undocumented Chinese immigrants
Tues Oct 31	Undocumented immigrants	Flores and Schachter, "Examining Americans' stereotypes about immigrant illegality" in <i>Contexts</i>	Presentation on Brazil
Thurs Nov 2	Controversies over deportation and detention of undocumented immigrants	Golash-Boza and Ceciliano-Navarro, "Life after deportation" in <i>Contexts</i> Watch 6-minute video, "Are Deportation Laws Racist?"	Presentation on Honduras or Guatemala
Tues Nov 7 asynchronous - not in the classroom	Refugees		Watch the film "Human Flow" by Ai Weiwei. (It's on Amazon Prime, and for rent on Youtube for \$3) Participate in the online discussion by 6 pm; then respond to 2+

			others' posts by midnight
Thurs Nov 9	Refugees and asylum seekers	Fee and Arar, "What happens when the United States stops taking in refugees?" in <i>Contexts</i>	Presentation on Afghanistan
Tues Nov 14	Refugees; Family sponsorship		Presentation on Ukraine or the Dominican Republic
Thurs Nov 16	War refugees from Africa		Presentation on Somalia by Claudiana
Tues Nov 21	War refugees from the Middle East		Presentation on Syria
Tues Nov 28	Climate migrants	Read the NPR story on climate migrants: https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2018/06/20/621782275/the-refugees-that-the-world-barely-pays-attention-to	
Thurs Nov 30	Federal policy debates		Due date for final paper. Please come to class prepared to describe both sides of the controversy you wrote about.
<i>Tues Dec 5</i>	<i>No classes - Symposium - please attend</i>		

Thurs Dec 7 - last class	Any remaining federal policy debates; Course wrap-up		
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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1) CLASS PARTICIPATION is crucial for learning from this course. Your class participation score, up to 20 points, will be based on attendance; on speaking up in class discussions and exercises; on completing homework; and on demonstrating your understanding of the readings verbally and in writing and quizzes. Your grade could be negatively affected by too much silence, by dominating discussions, by incivility towards other students or the professor, or by side-talking or other distraction during class.

No device distraction during class: Cell phones, laptops and other devices must be turned off and stowed out of sight during class, unless we are doing an online exercise. This is for others' learning as well as your own.

Readings are due *on the date they are listed*. Some sessions will include reading review. Please arrive ready to summarize them, ask clarifying questions and discuss them. Evidence of not doing the reading will drastically reduce your class participation grade.

2) ASSIGNMENTS

Please submit electronically in the appropriate Canvas portal, with your name in the document name.

(A) Essay on article by Kamin and Mirkin, "Working with Immigrant Families"

Due Sept 26. Up to 10 points. 600 to 1250 words.

Write an essay about how your future career may bring you in contact with refugees and recent immigrants and how the article prepares you to respond better to their situations.

If your major prepares you for a people-serving profession (such as teacher/educator, police officer, counselor, advocate, activist, lawyer, health care), focus on a job that you aspire to in that field; if not, then use your imagination to put yourself into any job involving contact with recent immigrants and/or refugees.

Apply the article's insights to that imagined situation. When you work with recent immigrants and refugees, what issues would probably arise? How might you respond? Cover as many of the topics with bold subheads in the article as possible. Just as the authors describe how awareness of immigrant experiences informs their therapy practices, expand on how their ideas in their article could inform your professional work.

Feel free to make up fictional characters and situations and write your essay as a fictional story about what they say, do and feel and how you interact with them and their situations; or to write in general terms about issues you imagine arising.

No bibliography is needed unless you draw on non-course sources, just in-text citations (e.g., (Kamin and Mirkin, p. 4).

Grades will be based on adherence to the assignment, comprehension of main points of article, creativity, thoughtfulness and writing quality.

(B) Final paper on federal policy controversies – Due November 30. Up to 20 points. 1500 to 2500 words.

Students will sign up to research one major controversy over federal immigration policy: DACA/Dreamers; Temporary Protective Status; refugee limits; detention policies (child separation, detention camps); the Wall; the travel ban; a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants; or another current controversy. Read at least two short opinion articles on each side; then fact-check them using authoritative sources as well as neutral fact-checking sites (such as FactCheck.org, Politifact.org or Snopes.com). Review the websites of at least one organization advocating for each side. Write a paper laying out the arguments for each side, describing the organizations advocating for them, then stating your own opinion and backing it up with credible information. Use in-text citations and a reference list at the end in APA format.

Please come to class on November 30 ready to summarize two sides of the controversy, your opinion on it, and recommendations on what US policy should be.

(C) Multi-part assignment: Research and presentation on one country or region

Each student will be in charge of teaching the class about why people leave one country of origin (a country their own family is not from) or one region. This assignment has several components, totaling 50 percent of the grade:

1) **Library research and extra reading** (10 points) – **Deadline 2 weeks before presentation.**

Each student must meet with a librarian at Brennan Library at least 3 weeks before their presentation date to get help finding sources on the presentation topics, including at least one primary source or government record, at least two rigorous books/articles found in academic databases, and at least one AV resource. Read thoroughly, take notes and turn them in. Up to 10 points for documentation of library session, for reading notes and for bibliography of 4+ sources in APA style.

2) **In-person interview of an immigrant** who has come to the US from your assigned country since 2010. (13 points) - Deadline before your presentation date
Arrange an interview, and a translator if necessary. For documented immigrants in the US for more than a year, interview an individual immigrant themselves (or a whole family) and take photos or video of them. For asylum-seekers or other recent undocumented and/or vulnerable low-income immigrants, it's best to interact with them informally while assisting them, and interview and photograph someone in charge of helping them instead; share their story without identifying them.

By your presentation date, upload photos and field notes on the interview setting, the person's background story, why they left, their current life, and other interview questions and answers. Incorporate your key learnings into your powerpoint presentation.

Invite whoever you interview to come speak to our class as part of your presentation. If they say yes, work with the professor and any relevant nonprofit to make arrangements.

3) **Community service** (12 points)

Each student will do at least 3 hours of volunteer work for an organization specifically dedicated to helping immigrants in need or advocating for immigrant rights, if possible an organization focused on immigrants from your assigned country. (General charities who may happen to assist immigrants among others are not appropriate for this assignment.) Submit documentation signed and dated by organizational staff, by December 13.

4) **Presentation to the class** (15 points)

Each student will teach the class about immigrants from their assigned country for approximately half an hour. Present a visually illustrative powerpoint on the topics below, summarizing both your library research and your interview, speaking for at least 10 minutes; a film or interactive activity can take up to 20 minutes. (If you arrange a guest speaker, they can speak and answer questions for 30 minutes, meaning your time would be 45 minutes total by prior arrangement.)

Topics to be covered in presentation:

- **Why do people tend to leave** your assigned country (or region)? Summarize past and current economic and government conditions ('push' factors causing emigration) and/or or 'pull' factors drawing people to choose the US.
- What does their **life in the US** tend to be like? (Geography, occupations, income level, rate of hate crimes, rate of deportations, cultural contributions such as food, religion, music, etc.)
- Summarize the **story of the immigrant(s) from there you interviewed** and/or helped; and in other ways bring human stories alive and use them to illustrate your main point.
- What **legal status (or lack thereof)** do most immigrants from there tend to have? Are there any **policy debates** affecting their future status? What's your opinion on what US policy should be?

GRADING - Grades will be calculated on a 100-point scale:

Class attendance & participation, including online discussions and evidence of comprehension of readings	20
Essay on Kamin and Mirkin article	10
Final federal policy argument presentation and paper	20
<u>Assignment on immigrants from one country</u> (total 50% of grade)	
Interview with an immigrant, notes, photos	13
Community service to immigrant-serving organization	12
Library research documentation and annotated bibliography	10
Presentation with powerpoint	15

Canvas will add up your scores. There's no averaging or weighting of assignments, just accumulating points as you earn them.

COURSE POLICIES

Policy on student opinions

Some classroom exercises and assignments will ask you to put forward opinions. Feel free to try out a stance new to you, or one you aren't sure you actually agree with. If you disagree with the professor or the author of a reading, you will not be graded more strictly for that; if you agree, you will not be graded more leniently. All positions you take will be evaluated only by whether you present evidence and whether you make a reasoned argument.

Diversity and Inclusion

The Lasell community appreciates diverse, global perspectives and recognizes that students, faculty, and staff from a range of backgrounds make our campus greater. We are committed to providing our community with the academic resources and professional development needed to foster an inclusive environment. More information is available at: <https://www.lasell.edu/campus-life/diversity-and-inclusion.html>.

Trigger Warning

This class includes some explicit and difficult topics, such as war and hate crimes. For some students, this material can be re-traumatizing or difficult to process and hear. Students are encouraged to seek the support of professors, peers or Lasell counseling services. You are welcome to speak with the professor before the potentially triggering film or lesson to strategize ways to safely participate.