The Politics of Refugee Protection in Europe:
Past, Present, and Future Prospects

Lecturer: Anne Koch, Chair of Comparative Politics
Office: HG 016
Email: akoch@europa.uni.de
Office hours: Tuesdays 16 – 17 hrs and by appointment

MA-Seminar (3/6/9 ECTS)
Time: Tuesdays 14:15 – 15:45 hrs
Location: Seminar room GD 312

SUMMARY

Questions related to asylum and refugee protection feature prominently on the agenda of various European governments, and have given rise to vigorous civil society activism. The domestic interpretation of international legal requirements poses of eminently political questions. This seminar aims at engaging with the underlying politics of refugee protection. This entails an investigation of the origins of relevant institutional structures, an analysis of current discourses and practices in different European countries, and a critical engagement with prevailing categorization schemes.

Over the course of the seminar, we will discuss the shift in academic research from refugees to forced migration, the evolving international legal framework for the protection of forced migrants, the various legal status arrangements offered by European governments, and the development of common protection standards at the European level. Students will be asked to independently carry out diachronic and cross-country comparisons in order to gain an understanding of the commonalities and differences between national provisions of protection. Based on the results of these case studies, we will engage with various future scenarios for a common European protection framework.

The seminar will be held in English. For participation, English language proficiency at level C1 is required.

REQUIREMENTS

Attendance

I expect that all students regularly attend the class, actively participate in class discussions, and take initiative in proposing current refugee-related events for discussion. Please inform me in case you cannot attend a session. In case you miss more than two sessions, you need to provide a doctor’s certificate. Please note that the final block seminar counts as four sessions!
Assignments

Each student has to contribute two short reflection papers. A reflection paper consists of a brief two-page summary of your thoughts on the core reading for any of the classes. For these brief thought pieces, neither research beyond the assigned readings nor references to other readings are expected. However, in this context as well as in general class discussion I particularly value critical engagement with the readings! Reflection papers have to be handed in before the class to which they refer (i.e., please send them to me via email the night before the class takes place at the very latest).

In addition, each student is expected to hold an oral presentation of 10-15 minutes that counts as 60% of your final grade if you . The oral presentation should link in with the topic discussed in the respective week’s class. It can be based on supplementary reading that I provide, but should also refer to some independent research beyond these readings. I expect presenters to prepare handouts summarizing their key points for the entire class. Powerpoint presentation are not mandatory, but encouraged. Presentations should be concluded by raising at least two open questions for further discussion.

In addition to this, students wishing to obtain 6 or 9 ECTC credits have to submit a research paper of 12-15 pages (6 credits) or 22-25 pages (9 credits) by 31 March 2015. The paper may engage with any of the topics discussed in class but must engage with a clear research question that should be cleared with me before the start of the writing process. Research papers can be written in English or German.

The different assignments outlined above will all contribute towards your final grade. For students wishing to obtain 3 ECTS credits, each reflection paper counts as 20% of the final grade, and the oral presentation county as 60%. For students wishing to obtain 6 or 9 ECTS credits, each reflection paper counts as 10% of your final grade, the oral presentation counts as 30%, and the final research paper counts as 50%.

Extensions for submitting the research papers can only be granted for medical reasons and have to be applied for before the original deadline.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

October 14  Introduction

Core reading

Brown, Chris (2010). “The Only Thinkable Figure? Ethical and Normative Approaches to Refugees in International Relations”, pp. 151-168 in Betts and Gil Loescher eds. Refugees in International Relations (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
October 21 Labels and categories: From refugees to forced migrants

Core readings


Supplementary readings


October 28 The legal basis of refugee protection

Core readings


Supplementary readings

*The 1998 UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*


November 4  The institutional foundations of refugee protection

Core readings


Supplementary readings


November 11  Current EU protection standards: Achievements and shortcomings

Core readings


Supplementary readings


November 18  Border regimes and mechanisms of exclusion

Core readings


Supplementary readings


November 25  Reading week

No class!

HOMEWORK: Use this week to start thinking about your final essay topics. A good starting point for this may be to go through the course syllabus and either read up on the supplementary readings of sessions that you found particularly interesting, or to read ahead on upcoming topics that stir your interest. Send me an email stating your topic and a concrete research question by the end of the week (Sunday, 30 November). Please note that this does not need to be your final topic and/or research question – it is mainly meant to get you started with the (sometimes lengthy and difficult) process of coming up with a feasible research question for your final paper. I will provide individual feedback within two weeks of receiving your emails!

December 2  Case study 1: The Bosnian refugee crisis

Core readings


Supplementary readings


December 9  Case study 2: The Syrian refugee crisis

Core readings

Orchard and Miller (2014). “Protection in Europe for refugees from Syria”, Refugee Studies Centre *Forced Migration Policy Briefing* 10, pp. 6-63 and p. 77

Supplementary readings


Other articles in *Forced Migration Review* 47 (Special Issue on the Syria crisis, displacement and protection) that may be of interest – available at http://www.fmreview.org/syria

→ Overview of UNHCR activities in Turkey: http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224

December 16  Case study 3: Refugee agency and empowerment

Core readings


Ruedin and Meyer (2014). “Politicization from below? The deportation issue in public discourse in Austria, Switzerland, and Germany”.

Supplementary readings


European University Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder)
Winter semester 2014/2015


January 6

Camps: Spaces of exception or spheres of social and political life?

Core readings


Supplementary readings

Sigona, Nando (2014). “Campzenship: reimagining the camp as a social and political space” Citizenship Studies online preview.


➡ Overview of global detention schemes and practices at http://www.globaldetentionproject.org/


January 10   Full day block seminar

We will use the day for a role play on EU refugee policy ("SimEUPol: Asylum and refugee policy"). Over the course of the day, you will be able to apply the knowledge gained during the seminar, and get an insight into the modes of interaction and discussion between members of the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the Council of the European Union.