Introduction to Migration & Displacement
SOSS 4055A(Hons); SOSS 7082A(MA)
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Class Meetings: Tuesdays, 9.30-12.30 unless otherwise noted
ACMS Classroom, Solomon Mahlangu 2163
Consultation by appointment

Description and objectives

Human migration and displacement are integral to societies around the world. As planetary processes concentrate wealth, heighten inequality, and reshape political systems, people’s movements in search of profit, protection and passage continue to transform governance, economies, and societies. Nowhere are the relationships between mobility and transformation more acute than in Africa. Studying migration means interrogating these connections.

As an empirical phenomenon and heuristic, people’s movements may be simultaneously destabilising and empowering: they challenge not only the organization of socio-economic and political structures, but also our presumptions about them. They ask us to read cities, states, and societies through varied lenses and at multiple scales. Drawing course material from the social scientific canon together with case material primarily from Africa and elsewhere in the ‘global south’, this course questions, and problematizes core concepts and broader debates within academic scholarship and policy processes.

This is not a practical training course although it has significant practical implications. Instead, it begins a dialogue between the empirical dynamics of human mobility (e.g., causes, consequences, responses) and debates over contemporary social, political, and economic life. Throughout it questions the methods and motivations for generating and sharing knowledge about mobility. While not offering technical training, it provides critical empirical and conceptual foundations and analytical and communication skills.

The course comprises two primary sections. The first outlines global trends and provides the conceptual and legal vocabulary used in discussions of migration and displacement in contemporary societies. In doing so, it highlights the often-uneasy relationship between complex social realities and the flattening effects of categorisation in policy and science. The second investigates formal and informal responses to migration by embedding the study of human mobility within broader social scientific considerations of globalization/transnationalism, state power, and the changing nature of social and political community. Throughout the course, students will be asked to relate migration patterns and responses to multiple forms and scales of governance and regulation.
The course readings and discussion will range widely across spaces and themes, but all topics refer back to a series of central questions. Successful students will synthesise information from all topics to develop well-informed responses to these queries:

1. **What are the most significant causes and consequences of migration?** This is an open question drawing on empirical and ethical concerns. Students will assess instigation and impacts at multiple geographic and historical scales across a broad spectrum of sites, institutions, and actors. In doing so, they should be particularly aware of epistemological and etiological questions regarding causality, structure, and agency and the politics of particular causal claims.

2. **What are the practical, conceptual, and ethical distinctions between various categories of migrants and what ‘work’ do they do?** What, if anything, empirically distinguishes the experiences of categories of migrants from each other or other similar groups in sending and receiving communities? Given the importance of categories in policy debates, students should question how they are generated and their boundaries maintained in theory and practice? Whose interests do they serve and what are the consequences of their use?

3. **How does human mobility affect the nature of community, politics, citizenship, and representation? How does it affect how we speak and write about these subjects?** How do responses to migration and displacement – including humanitarianism, conflict interventions, asylum, and migration policies – reflect and change the nature of political and social power and belonging? How do varied forms of human mobility call into question ethical and conceptual presumptions about the nature of politics, economy, and society?

4. **What are the potential implications of mobility for other policy fields and debates?** As part of the social world in which we live, mobility has important consequences for, among others, environmental management, housing and health delivery, poverty reduction, political participation and representation and gender empowerment. Drawing on experience, course work, and prior knowledge, students should reflect on what these implications may be and consider the challenges of incorporating ‘migration’ thinking into broader analysis and practice.

**Teaching and learning process**

The course privileges analysis, synthesis, and explanation over memorization or description. Getting the most from the readings and classroom discussions demands students continuously link specific topics and readings to the broader questions and themes. Students will learn on this course in a variety of ways, all of which are equally important in successfully completing the course. These include:

- **Independent reading** of weekly set texts and other recommended or related options;
- **Regular writing** of response papers before class and practice exam questions;
- **In-class presentations** based on readings and response papers;
- **In-class discussion** on readings, course themes and current events;
- **Student-run study groups and discussion group.** While not compulsory, these are highly recommended;
- **Attendance at seminars and events**: The ACMS runs series of public events and seminar during term times. These are important complements to formal classroom learning. While we do not require participation, these are important opportunities to learn, network, and engage.
- **Participation in a tutorial / staff facilitated reading group**;


Meetings with the course coordinators. Each student must arrange at least 2 meetings with one or both the course coordinators during the term. Students are responsible for arranging these meetings, one of which should be within the first three weeks of the term.

Structure and assessment

The course is divided into 12 three-hour seminars held on Tuesday mornings (unless otherwise indicated), plus one revision session. Students should come to class prepared to summarise or comment on all readings and participate actively in debates and discussion. Attendance is compulsory and students must complete all required readings before class-time. Students unable to attend a class or complete the readings must inform the course coordinators in advance. When unable to attend, students should arrange with their colleagues to be briefed on the classroom discussions, announcements, or scheduling changes. Instructors will not distribute lecture notes, presentations, or make special arrangements for those who miss class. Students who miss two class sessions without valid reasons will not be allowed to sit the final exam.

Students are assessed on four key performance areas. Apart from the final examination, all assignments must include page numbers, students’ names and number, and the date of submission.

1. Three Response Papers (15% of total mark)

These papers help refine insights into the substantive material and refine students’ ability to communicate complex arguments in writing. They also serve as practice for the final exam. Each paper should be structured in the form of a short essay (no more than 500 words) with an original and provocative thesis statement supported by evidence drawn from the readings. They should synthesise insights from all the week’s required readings although they need not engage extensively with each reading. Ideally they should reference readings from previous weeks or other courses. Regardless of the specific themes, emphasis should be on critique not summary. The best papers will relate readings to the course’s primary questions or explore their implications for broader social or political debates. Under no circumstances should they be summaries although summarising main points may be necessary as part of a larger argument. To earn credit, students must email copies to all course participants at least 24 hours before the class meeting. Response papers will be marked on the basis of the ACMS assessment template provided to students at orientation. The papers will be marked solely by the course coordinators and returned at class time. Note: Students may submit an optional fourth paper. This paper will be marked and returned and the three top-scoring response papers will inform the final mark.

Response paper topics will be chosen by students at the beginning of the course with at least two students preparing papers for each session. One student will give a 10 minute presentation based on their response paper (the use of PowerPoint is highly encouraged) while another student will give a five minute verbal response to the first paper. The response is intended as a critical engagement with another’s work, not as a second presentation. Time limits will be strictly enforced, so practice is essential. All students will give at least one in-class presentation and one response. The in-class presentations are an integral part of the response paper and are compulsory.

Response paper marks are a good predictor of exam performance. As such, students are encouraged to use these small assignments as an opportunity to improve academic writing and substantive understanding. Course coordinators will provide substantial feedback to help in this effort. Additional support is available at the Wits writing centre in Wartenweiler Library.

2. Group Project (20% of total mark)
All students will participate in a small group project critically engaging with a ‘migration issue’ across the African continent or elsewhere. The themes are flexible, but each project will conclude with a 20 minute presentation. During this time, students should outline the core causes and consequences of the ‘issue’ along with an explicit discussion of broader implications. Topics may include, but are by no means limited to, the impact of European policy on Africa; the AU’s engagement in migration issues; the implications of free movement in East Africa or the South African White paper’s effects on regional relations; the UN Humanitarian Summits and the Global Compacts. Alternatively, groups might consider a specific group or site they feel speaks to broader issues and concerns. Conversely, groups are discouraged from addressing South African policy or migrants’ condition in South Africa.

Further details will be provided once course enrolment is finalised. Students are encouraged to join groups exploring themes related to their dissertations. Group themes and membership must be approved by the seventh session.

3 **Mid-term Assessment** (15% of total mark)

This open-book, 24 hour take home assessment will include a series of questions asking students to relate the first section of the class back to broader themes. As with the final exam, there will be no topic-based questions, so students must have an integrated understanding of the course material to date. MA and Hons students will be asked to answer two questions in 24 hours. The mid-term assessment will be marked by the course coordinators. Students are encouraged to engage with the course coordinators after the assessment.

4 **Final Written Examination** (50% of total mark)

This take-home, open book exam will include a series of questions asking students to synthesise course readings. There will be no topic-based questions, so students must have a broad understanding of the course material overall. All MA students will be asked to answer three questions in 48 hours. Honours students will have to address two. Review questions will be distributed before the exam. Students are encouraged to work together while preparing but are not permitted to communicate about the exam while writing. Any evidence of plagiarism on the exam or other written work will be dealt with severely and may result in expulsion from the course and the university. Exams will be marked by the course coordinators and an external examiner.

NOTE: Assignments submitted after the deadline without approval will be penalised 20 points per 24 hours. The minimum penalty is 20 points.
## Timeline

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Date Due</th>
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<tr>
<td>First class session</td>
<td>12 February 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response papers</td>
<td>Emailed to class 24 hrs before class meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group project approved by course coordinator</td>
<td>2 April 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term assessment</td>
<td>9-10 April 2019</td>
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<td>Group presentations</td>
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<td>Revision session</td>
<td>4 June 2019</td>
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<td>Final examination</td>
<td>10-12 June 2019</td>
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### Academic integrity

Plagiarism and cheating—such as copying work (including published materials) in your assignments without proper citation; having your work done by someone else; copying answers from someone else during exams; or summarising others work and presenting it as your own—will not be tolerated. Students suspected of plagiarism will be given an opportunity to defend inclusion of other’s material. Should the case warrants further action, students will be given an official warning from the ACMS and their case may be referred to the University’s legal office. Students be found guilty of plagiarism may fail an assignment, the course, or be expelled from the University. More on academic integrity is available at: [https://www.wits.ac.za/research/about-our-research/ethics-and-research-integrity/](https://www.wits.ac.za/research/about-our-research/ethics-and-research-integrity/)

### General resources

In addition to the specific readings listed below, students are encouraged to make use of the following sources, among others, for independently broadening their reading:

#### Periodicals

- Journal of Refugee Studies
- Forced Migration Review
- Journal of Ethnic and Racial Studies
- Refugee Survey Quarterly
- Journal of Southern African Studies
- Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies
- Mobilities
- Third World Studies
- Migration Letters
- Migration Studies
- Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies
- Disasters
- International Migration Review
- International Migration
- Journal of Modern African Studies
- African Affairs
- Urbanization and Environment
- Global Networks

Most of these journals are available online through the Wits Library’s electronic journal system or on the library shelves. We also encourage you to use of non-migration related journals as background on related themes. There are also innumerable websites and institutions addressing many of the course themes.
Seminar Topics and Readings

Readings marked with an arrow are required and must be completed before class. Those included in the appendix are optional and listed as a partial guide for further reading. Required readings are included in your course materials. Lecturers’ names are listed under the class heading and date.

There are several questions included under each topic. These are intended to guide your reading and encourage you to compare and synthesise the separate readings. However, we encourage you to find consider themes and arguments in the readings yourselves. You will do well to keep in mind the course’s four central questions while reading. Please note, your response paper must not be a response to one of the guiding or course questions.

Section one: Conceptual and empirical foundation

1. **Conceptualising migration and displacement**
   12 February - Loren Landau and Jean Pierre Misago

*Guiding Questions:*

- What is migration and can it be studied as a discrete phenomenon? Under what conditions does it make sense to distinguish between various categories of migrants (e.g., international and domestic; forced and voluntary; permanent and temporary)?

- Is migration best seen as a cause or consequence of broader political, social and economic trends?

*Readings:*


2. **Migration, displacement and mobility: Africa in global perspective**
   19 February – Loren Landau

*Guiding Questions:*

- What may make migration in Africa similar or different from movements seen elsewhere in the world?

- What sources of information do we have about migration patterns in Africa and what are some of the problems with these sources?
Readings:


3. **Governance, power, and agency**

26 February—Loren Landau

*Guiding Questions:*

- How do we understand governance? What is the relationship among law, formal institutions and the social?

- In considering where migration occurs, which forms of governance or regulation are likely to be most significant? Are their variations and what might account for them?

*Readings:*


4. **Global and local governance of migration and displacement: The role of law and policy**

5 March – Jean Pierre Misago
Guiding Questions:

- How do we understand law’s power? To what extent is it autonomous? To what extent is it constitutive of practice?
- To what degree does law affect the lives of refugees? How best do we understand the meaning of law in African migration?
- Are asylum and immigration legal or political issues?
- What are the obligations of states toward asylum seekers, internally displaced, and other migrants? Where do these obligations come from? On what ethical foundations can various claims be made?

Readings:


Legal Instruments for Reference Purposes

- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990), entered into force 1 July 2003 (http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cmw.htm)
- See also the Global Compact on Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees
5. **Sources of displacement & migration in Africa: Politics, land, and conflict**  
12 March – Loren Landau

**Guiding Questions:**

- How has the emergence of post-colonial nation-states in Africa generated migration and conditioned responses to it?
- How does political rationality generate exclusion, migration and displacement?
- How does environmental regulation and protection relate to migration?

**Readings:**


6. **Differentiating mobility: Gender, age, class and power**  
19 March – Jean Pierre Misago

**Guiding Questions:**

- What is intersectionality and how might it matter for people on the move?
- What categories of difference most accurately help us understand migration? Why are some categories more visible in the literature and policy than others?
- How can we make meaningful decisions about risk, vulnerability and need among diverse populations?

**Readings:**

21 - 31 March: Research Break

Section Two: Responding to migration and Displacement

7. Global responses to migration and displacement
2 April – Jean Pierre Misago

Guiding Questions:

- How do we explain the similarity and differences in responding to migration and asylum in various world regions? Under what conditions do issues of migration and asylum regulation control become considered national security or human rights concerns?
- Who is empowered by current responses to mobility? How will this be manifested?
- How do declining commitments to migrant and refugee rights speak to the relative power of law, discourses of rights, and local vs. translocal social mobilisation?

Readings:


9-10 April: Mid-term assessment

8. Critical Perspectives on Humanitarianism
16 April – Loren Landau

Guiding Questions

- How can we understand humanitarian interventions as a form of global and local governance?
- What is behind how are refugees or forced migrants created discursively as objects of humanitarian interventions? What are the consequences of this?
- What are the most significant governance impacts of the humanitarian imperative?

Readings:

Fassin, D. 2010. ‘The Heart of Humaneness: The Moral Economy of Humanitarian Intervention’ in Fassin, D & M. Pandolfi (Eds.): *Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Interventions*; pp 269-293. Zone Books [other chapters may also be relevant to your work].


9. **Urbanisation and the power of cities**

   23 April - Loren Landau

**Guiding Questions:**

- What is the significance of the 21st Century’s ‘Urban Age’ for configurations of power, production, and meaning? Are all cities created equal?
- What does the study of cities mean for the scale at which we understand mobility, markets, and politics?

**Readings:**


10. **The right to have rights? The ethics of othering and membership**

   30 April - Loren Landau

**Guiding Questions:**

- Where do communities derive their power and legitimacy?
- Who defines rights to citizenship, space, livelihoods and protection?
- What arguments can be made for denying the rights of others or insisting on their protection?
- If membership is important for claiming rights, what are the most important forms of belonging in the contemporary world?
Readings:


11. **Social responses to mobility and displacement: Livelihoods and labour**

7 May – Jean Pierre Misago

*Guiding Questions:*

- How do you conceptualise livelihoods? What are the spatial dimensions?
- How does mobility condition the livelihoods choices of and labour market outcomes of non-nationals?
- Which factors impact migrants’ and refugees’ access to labour markets and influence their economic choices and opportunities in countries of destination?

*Readings:*


12. **Migration, marginalization and belonging? Inclusion and exclusion**

14 May – Loren Landau

*Guiding Questions:*

- How does the creation of immigrant or migrant neighborhoods potentially reshape patterns of authority and citizenship?
- How can marginality and invisibility become a resource for migrants and others?
- What are the ‘new’ idioms of belonging and identity that migration and globalisation bring to the fore?
How do these new forms of belonging and identity challenge, complement or confirm concepts of territoriality and the nation-state?

Readings:


18 – 26 May:  
Study break

28 May:  
Group Project Presentations

4 June:  
Revision Session

10-12 June:  
**Final Examination**
Appendix: Additional Readings by Topic

Conceptualising Migration and Displacement


Migration, Displacement and Mobility: Africa in Global Perspective


Global and Local Governance of Migration and Displacement: The Role of Law and Policy


Shacknove, Andrew. 1985. 'Who is a Refugee?' 95 Ethics 274-85.


Nicholas Leader, ‘Proliferating Principles; Or How to Sup with the Devil without Getting Eaten,’ Disasters, 1998, Vol. 22, No. 4, 288-308 (In Course Reader)


Sources of Displacement and Migration: Politics, Citizenship, Sovereignty & Conflict in Africa


Sources of Displacement and Migration II: Land, Environment and Conflict in Africa


Differentiating Mobility: Gender, Age, Class and Power

- ReliefWeb ‘If not now, when? Addressing gender-based violence in refugee, internally displaced, and post-conflict settings’ (Available online at: [http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/s/4OB847015485B34749256BEF0006E603](http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/s/4OB847015485B34749256BEF0006E603))

Critical Perspectives on Humanitarianism
Mamdani, M. 2010. ‘Responsibility to Protect or Right to Punish’ Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding; Vol 4, 1.

The Right to Have Rights? The Ethics of Othering and Membership
Global Responses to Migration and Displacement


**Migration, Marginalisation and Belonging? Inclusion and Exclusion**


Social Responses to Mobility and Displacement: Livelihoods and Labour


