

Thinking Migration: Political Realism in the Age of International Migration Law

Course Summary

This course explores the philosophical underpinnings of migration, specifically the political and legal factors that shape the movements of people, their premises, and the responses thereof. It will focus on “political realism” and its conceptual basis, as one of the major influences of migration policies, leading to what one could call a “migration realism”.

Political realism has long been a subject of debate in normative political theory, with some arguing it has little to offer in terms of new perspectives, and others criticizing it on the grounds that it threatens the international legal order. Such viewpoints often forbid new avenues for thought: a political-realist take on the concept of migration can actually provide critical insights as regards international migration law, and help call into question its commonly held assumptions. In that regard, there have been significant political-realist contributions to the current discourse on migration, some challenging very convincingly the link between moral principles and normativity: these contributions can become excellent tools to uncover the political powers that often creep under normative facades.

This course will include discussions on historical examples, short documentaries, as well as an analysis of the current debates and challenges in the field of migration. Participants will exercise their minds and share their thoughts on concepts such as nationalism, liberal nationalism, cosmopolitanism, state sovereignty, the free movement of people across national borders, as well as the "state of exception", exploring how exceptional situations lead to legally unsanctioned restrictions on migration.

Tentative Flow

Week 1 | Moralism and realism in migration

Week 2 | The many sources of normativity in migration

Week 3 | At the root of the political: territory, space, borders Week

4 | Colonialism: a trojan horse in the philosophy of migration Week

5 | Self-determination: affirming leads to denying

Week 6 | On the compatibility of nationalist and cosmopolitan perspectives

Week 7 | What makes migration norms peremptory?

Week 8 | Behind the curtain of morality: limit-situations and exceptions

Core Bibliography

Bernard Williams, *In the Beginning Was the Deed: Realism and Moralism in Political Argument*, Princeton University Press, 2005

Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab, The University of Chicago Press, 2007

Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, trans. G. L. Ulmen, Telos Press Publishing, 2006

David Miller, *On Nationality*, Oxford University Press, 1995

Jens Bartelson, *The Critique of the State*, Cambridge University Press, 2004

Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Cosmopolitan Tradition: A Noble but Flawed Ideal*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019

Raymond Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics*, Princeton University Press, 2008

Documentaries

Between Borders: American Migrant Crisis

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxFot-SMEXA>

Life in the Shadow of US-Mexico border Wall

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9Gd-axMMbM>

Death on the Border

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJoL7E4uvuU>

Inside The World's Deadliest Migrant Route :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l5kIbQRjJHk>

'Get away from the target': rescuing migrants from the Libyan coast guard

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7CuTxZnjXk>

Teaching fellow — Short biography

Marouan holds a Master's degree in Social and Human Sciences from the Paris-Nanterre University, and is specialized in Philosophy of Law. He has presented two dissertations, one set in the context of the Lippmann-Dewey debate and the question of expertise; the other on Carl Schmitt and the concept of legitimacy.

Originally a Computer Science graduate, his passion for philosophy eventually got the best of him. This pushed him to establish the 'Meeting Point of Civilizations' NGO, with a focus on promoting philosophy among the general public in Egypt. In addition to academic philosophy and offering numerous courses in the field, he is actively involved

in Applied Philosophy as a way of self-discovery, through the revival of

Marouan Moussa

the Socratic method. This is inspired by the works of Pierre Hadot and draws on the methodology of Oscar Brenifier's Institute of Philosophical Practices. The project took a more concrete shape in 2015 with the launching of "Falsafa bel Baladi", the first platform exclusively dedicated to Public Philosophy in Egypt.

Marouan currently works as an advisor in the field of migration and conducts related conceptual research. He coordinates the "Thinking Migration" task force in the GIZ's Migration Portfolio. His PhD thesis will focus on migration and international law.
