This course is an intensive learning program offered to undergraduate students interested in furthering their knowledge on migration, asylum, and human rights in Europe and in the Mediterranean. The course engages students through an interactive learning approach which takes place in Sicily, as one of the most crucial locations to directly observe, live, and experience migration challenges in the Mediterranean, as well as get the real sense of what managing migration “crises” practically means.

Located in the heart of the Mediterranean Sea, Sicily in recent years has become a critical southern borderland at the crossroad of migratory flows and one of the main gateways to Italy and the European Union (EU). While Italy is among the EU Member States that received the highest number of sea arrivals, within Italy Sicily was the major disembarkation location, accounting for 68% of the total number of sea arrivals in the country between 2014 and 2018. By receiving a large flow of people on the move, Sicily stands out as a crucial venue where to interact and engage with contemporary migration challenges and narratives. It offers the opportunity to study the many aspects of migration in Europe and in the Mediterranean in terms of politics, policies, and polity and
in terms of the convoluted interaction among different narratives, discourses and actors (migrants and civil society's voices, politicians, border guards, sea rescuers, human smugglers, media, etc.). Moreover, it allows comparative reflections with other critical southern borders.

Building on this background, this learning and content-knowledge program aims to provide undergraduate students with knowledge on policies, practices, actors, narratives, discourses, and media coverage of migration and asylum in the Mediterranean, while focusing on migration crises in the region as well as on human rights issues. It offers students a comprehensive view of the many challenges related to the complex social phenomenon of migration, as well as its main actors and processes. More specifically, across its modules, the course focuses on the following intertwined aspects:

- The politics of migration and the inherent crucial debates on the understanding of migration in Europe. It critically examines European immigration policy and its politics of labelling, in terms of the convoluted world of labels deployed for the people on the move (economic migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees, unaccompanied migrants, undocumented migrants etc.), the way how these categorisations shaped debates and policy responses in Italy and Europe, their dehumanising impact, as well as commonalities and differences with the US.
- Migrants' voices and agency, their narratives and strategies, their human and mobility rights, as well as the analysis of migration in the Mediterranean as a dynamic battleground where migrants, refugees, human smugglers, policy-makers at EU, national and local levels, sea rescuers, citizens' activism and NGOs get entangled in a complex set of dynamics.
- Migrants' dramatic journey across the Mediterranean from the countries of origin, as well as across Italian and EU internal borders; the phenomena of human smuggling and trafficking; and the governance of sea arrivals in terms of reception systems; implementation of asylum policies and variable geometries of crisis management at national and local level.
- Media framing and coverage of migration and migration crises in the Mediterranean.

The complexity of migration phenomena is disentangled through a cross-cutting perspective that combines distinct yet complementary study areas:

(1) politological, anthropological, and sociological approaches to analyzing European migratory flows and policies

(2) human rights and criminal justice perspectives on migration

(3) analysis of contemporary communication strategies, framing, media coverage, and related impacts.
Moreover, the course material is based on readings, as well as on the use of video documentaries, first-person memories, interviews and podcasts.

Note that this course, as described in this syllabus, is complemented by a parallel non-compulsory Research Program that focuses on research and data collection methods in migration.

**Course Objectives**

At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand key vocabulary related to migration and asylum in Europe
- Understand the main causes, aspects, challenges and human rights implications of migration processes in the Mediterranean
- Understand and assess EU and Italy's policies towards migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers in terms of humanitarian and securitarian approaches
- Disentangle the complexity of the migration phenomena through cross-cutting and comparative perspectives
- Develop comparative reflections, as well as discuss and debate on the critical aspects of migration
- Practice a balanced and fact-based conversation on the complex social phenomenon of migration

**Methodology**

The didactic approach is an interactive learning approach, taking place through a series of lectures, seminars, guest lectures, and discussion of readings. Students will be encouraged to discuss and debate on the issues of the course, as well as to reflect in critical and comparative terms. Each module is integrated by participant observation, study visits, and field trips (options include a field trip to the *Italian Coast Guard* and Port Captaincies in Siracusa or Catania, the *Italian Relief Corps of the order of Malta* in Siracusa, Arci or CIAO Center in Siracusa, participation in intercultural events including a dinner at a restaurant managed by refugees either in Catania or Siracusa).

The lectures, seminars, and guest lectures are organized through a “sequential” approach (Fig. 1), which aims to distinguish in analytical terms the main phases of migratory processes, thereby bringing students on a journey that goes from the countries of origin (in terms of demographic, political, socio-economic, or human rights factors), to what happens across the Mediterranean Sea, (in terms of smuggling phenomena, sea-patrolling, or search-and-rescue operations). From the sea
The added value of this sequential didactic methodology is that here, migration is not intended as a set of interrelated and yet clearly separated thematic modules, but it is rather explored as a process. Students are therefore engaged in a dynamic and interactive analysis of migration by investigating the different “venues” (origin and transit countries, sea, desert, destination’s external borders, destination’s society, and internal cleavages, etc.), “timings,” and “issues” that, while distinguished for analytical reasons, are all closely intertwined and entangled in the broader migration process. This allows the complexity to be reduced, without losing the “big picture.”

**Required Readings/Materials**

- George Mavrommatis (2017) The rise of a hesitant EU host? Examining the Greek migrant integration policy and its transformation during the crisis, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 17:1, 1-15

Other Resources
- Migrants of the Mediterranean, Humanitarian Storytelling to present the experience of the individual migrant’s journey, from country of origin to Europe. Written memories and podcasts. http://www.migrantsofthemed.com/

Grading

Grading Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter grade</th>
<th>Score or percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93–100</td>
<td>Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90–92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87–89</td>
<td>Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83–86</td>
<td>Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80–82</td>
<td>Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77–79</td>
<td>Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73–76</td>
<td>Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70–72</td>
<td>Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67–69</td>
<td>Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60–66</td>
<td>Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0–59</td>
<td>Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Percentage of grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work and discussions (5 assignments at 5% each)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term essay</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final examination</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall grade</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessment Details

*Attendance and class participation*

The course requires students to attend classes, as well as to participate in class discussions, seminars, and study visits. Students should read the assigned material and be actively engaged in terms of critical reflection.

*Class presentation*

Students will be required to deliver a class presentation on a selected topic/article/reading. Students will present and discuss the assigned topic, providing some critical reflections and raising questions for class debate. Presentations will be delivered in teamwork (groups of two students or more).

*Group work and discussion*

Students will be required to participate actively in work groups and small group discussions at the end of each class. Students will reflect and discuss the assigned topic, and will provide a written critical reflection (up to 250 words). There will be five written reflections throughout the course and each one will count for 5% of the final grade.

*Mid-term essay*
Students will deliver a mid-term short reflection essay on the excursions/field trips taken, or on the operators and experts on the ground they will have the chance to meet and interact with through roundtables and dedicated seminars.

Final Examination

The final examination consists of a written test on the contents of the course.

COURSE CONTENT

Unit 1

Across the Mediterranean (1.1)

An exploration of journeys, flows and routes

This module first introduces migration in the Mediterranean and what are ‘migration crises’. It also introduces key basic terms (migrant, refuge, asylum-seeker etc.), connects migration and mobility issues to human rights and critically analyses the dichotomy between voluntary and forced migration, as well as the politically constructed migrant/refugee binary and its implications. It then focuses on the first phase of the migratory process, namely the role of origin and transit countries, the main African and Middle-Eastern routes as well as the journey across the Mediterranean. It explores “structural” factors in countries of origin by comparing demographic, sociological, political, and economic dimensions, as well as the role of media and social networks in shaping migrants’ migratory plans and perceptions of Europe. It investigates changing routes to Sicily and Italy, smuggling and trafficking phenomena, policy responses, search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean, and human (in)security issues in terms of migrants’ rights, death threats, and the extreme conditions of their journeys.

- General overview of the course and of the main themes; presentation of the required assignments
- Introduction to migration in the world, Europe, and the Mediterranean
- The first phase of the migratory process: the role of origin and transit countries, main routes, and organization of the journey across the Mediterranean

Readings:

Additional Resources:
- “Illegal Alien” No More: The Biden Administration Drops the Label' <https://www.motherjones.com/media/2021/02/illegal-alien-no-more-the-biden-administration-drops-the-label/>
- IOM Migrants Digital Stories; #Iamamigrant

Group Work and Discussion: Students are invited to discuss and reflect in small groups on the different perceptions of the migration 'problem', as well as on the definitions and conditions of forced versus voluntary migration.

Unit 2

Across the Mediterranean (1.2)
- The first phase of the migratory process: the role of origin and transit countries, main routes, and organization of the journey across the Mediterranean
- Why people migrate: “structural” demographic, sociological, political, and economic factors in countries of origin
- Role of media and social networks in shaping migrants’ migratory plans and perceptions of Europe
- Migrants’ agency, migratory plans and perceptions of Europe

Readings & Materials:
Video Interview: Death at sea: Syrian migrants film their perilous voyage to Europe.

One of the following:


**Group Work and Discussion:** Migrants’ experiences. In small groups, students work on the journey story archive of the project ‘Migrants of the Mediterranean’ and compare their journeys and stories.

**Unit 3**

Across the Mediterranean (1.3)

- The politics and policies of migration in Europe and the Mediterranean: effectiveness and problems
- The Mediterranean migration crisis and main policy responses between “securitisation” and “human insecurity” between sea rescue and border closures

**Readings & Materials:**

- Video: The view from the Italian Coast Guard - Search and Rescue Operations

**Unit 4**

Across the Mediterranean (1.4)

- Smuggling and trafficking phenomena in the Mediterranean
- The role of organised crime groups in migration
The interplay between politics, migration and smuggling and the impact of migrants human insecurity

Readings:

Group Work and Discussion: Students are invited to reflect in small groups and discuss the following questions: Smugglers: good or evil? Which policy solutions to address human smuggling?

Unit 5

Across the Mediterranean (1.5)
- Guest Seminar by Prof. Claire Zalc Historian, director of research at CNRS, director of studies at EHESS and head of the GLOBAL department of the Institut Convergence des Migrations. (in collaboration with Accent Paris)
- Field Trip (options include Italian Coast Guard and Port Captaincies either in Siracusa or Catania; Italian Relief Corps of the Order of Malta and simulation of Search and Rescue activities).

Unit 6

At the EU/State External Border (2.1)

Management of arrivals, asylum process and early-stage integration

This module is focused on the second phase of the migratory process, i.e., the arrival of migrants at the EU/state border, the disembarkation operations, the role of the hotspots and the ensuing “channelling” of economic migrants and asylum-seekers; the assistance provided in terms of information, shelter, medical assistance; the room for secondary movements and smuggling from Sicily to Italy and Europe; and expulsion and potential detention. Moreover, it explores the right to asylum, the characteristics of the asylum process, the Dublin Regulation, Italian and EU legislation, the rate of recognition and denial of protection in Italy and Europe, and asylum-seekers' rights and difficulties. Finally, it encourages critical and comparative reflections on the management of
migrants at the “southern borders” (e.g., EU-Mediterranean border versus US-Mexico border) and on the implementation of asylum policies in different contexts (US, EU, Australia, etc.).

- After the journey: the governance of migration at the state border (arrivals, disembarkation operations and hotspots).
- The role of civil society: citizens voices, NGOs and the criminalisation of solidarity

Readings & Materials:
- Videos: The voice of civil society versus the voice of politics

Unit 7

At the EU/State External Border (2.2)
- Roundtable: Migration governance in the Mediterranean: voices from the field. Interventions by UNHCR and the *International Organisation for Migration operating in Libya and Italy* and by Prof. Stefania Panebianco, Professor of Mediterranean and Migration Politics, University of Catania.

Readings:

Unit 8

At the EU/State External Border (2.3)
- Asylum in Italy and in Europe
- Dynamics of protection between law and practices

Readings:

Group Work and Discussion: In small groups, students will be invited to reflect on the concept of ‘protection’ and the impact of COVID-19.
Unit 9

At the EU/State External Border (2.4)

Field trip. Options include a visit to the hotspot in Pozzallo (Southern Sicily); a study visit/encounter with the Territorial Commission in charge of processing asylum requests (either in Catania or Siracusa); a study visit/encounter at the SIPROIMI (System for the protection of refugees) either in Catania or Siracusa.

Guest lecture options: The role of non-state actors and NGOs in the management of migration, Professor Daniela Irrera, University of Catania.

Unit 10

At the EU/State External Border (2.5)

- Comparing asylum policies around the world: EU, US, and Australia
- The global compacts on migration and refugees

Readings:


Group Work and Discussion: Students are invited to develop critical and comparative reflections on: asylum policies across different geographical areas; the management of migrants at all “souther borders” (e.g. EU-Mediterranean border versus US-Mexico border); the politics of “external” walls, through a comparison of EU and US responses to migrants’ “irregular journeys.”

Unit 11

Across, Within, & Beyond the EU/State Border (3.1)
Long-term integration

This module explores reception systems, the conditions of unaccompanied children, migrants, and asylum-seekers, as well as the related challenges for migrants' long-term integration in Sicily, Italy, and Europe. It focuses on economic, cultural and social integration, including education, employment, healthcare, issues of diversity and discrimination, while drawing comparisons with alternative models within Europe, Canada, and the US. Moreover, it investigates the relations between migration and polities in Italy and Europe, how migrants are represented by media and politics, and how migration is used as a symbolic resource for political storytelling. The phenomenon of social amplification of hate-speech and xenophobia on traditional and new media is analyzed, as well as the “digitization”/deindividualization of migrants, and the practices to foster a balanced and fact-based conversation on the complex social phenomenon of migration.

- Reception systems and long-term (social, economic, and cultural) integration for migrants and asylum-seekers: conditions and challenges in Sicily, Italy, and Europe

Readings:

- George Mavrommatis (2017) The rise of a hesitant EU host? Examining the Greek migrant integration policy and its transformation during the crisis, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 17:1, 1-15

Group Work and Discussion: Students are invited to discuss and critically reflect on the challenges of integration as well as on the role of media-framing.

Unit 12

Across, Within, & Beyond the EU/State Border (3.2)

- Guest Seminar: Integration at the local level by Association ARCI in Siracusa: main challenges, best practices and activities.
Unit 13

Across, Within, & Beyond the EU/State Border (3.3)

Fieldtrip. Options include: Interactive/intercultural event with CIAO Center in Siracusa and dinner with refugees; dinner in a restaurant managed by refugees either in Catania or Siracusa; interactive/intercultural event with the cultural/migrants association Isolaquassù in Catania.

Unit 14

Across, Within, & Beyond the EU/State Border (3.4)

Guest Lecture: Migration and the Media (Prof. Guido Nicolosi—University of Catania)

Readings:


Unit 15

Across, Within, & Beyond the EU/State Border (3.5)

- Guest Lecture: The framing of migration by Media (Prof. Guido Nicolosi – University of Catania)
- Final Exam

Readings:

POLICIES

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the on-site syllabus for specific class requirements.

University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an “F” or “N” for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Student Conduct

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found on the Learning Abroad Center website.