

5515.001 REFUGEES: Histories and Contemporary Stories

Instructor: Dr. Dariga Abilova

Meeting time: TuTh 11:00AM - 12:20PM in ENV 190

Office Hours: Wed 2:00PM – 4:00PM or by appointment

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Course Description, Structure, and Objectives

This course is designed to introduce students to the issues on human statelessness, displacement and forced migration. The course will also introduce students to existing international efforts (or lack of thereof) to assist refugees and displaced people.

Required Materials

1. Dunn, Elizabeth Cullen. *No path home: Humanitarian camps and the grief of displacement*. Cornell University Press, 2018.
2. Wamariya, Clemantine, and Elizabeth Weil. *The girl who smiled beads: a story of war and what comes after*. Crown, 2018.
3. Additional readings and scanned book chapters posted on Canvas Weekly Modules.
4. Documentaries and movies. Some will need to be purchased unless you come to class to watch them.

This course has digital components! To fully participate in this class, you will need internet access to reference content on the Canvas Learning Management System. The University is committed to providing a reliable online course system to all users. However, in the event of any unexpected server outage or any unusual technical difficulty which prevents students from completing a time sensitive assessment activity, I will extend the time windows and provide an appropriate accommodation based on the situation. Please immediately report any technical problems that are preventing you from accessing the course and contact the UNT Student Help Desk: helpdesk@unt.edu or 940.565.2324 and obtain a ticket number.

How to Succeed in this Course

You should be prepared for a much bigger reading load and more challenging assignments in this capstone course. If you complete all readings before class, participate in the class and submit all assignments on time, *you will succeed in this class*. The goal of this class is to empower you with new knowledge and experience to do things you can't yet do. That means every week we will have challenges you don't yet know how to clear. The schedule and policies in this syllabus are all designed with the purpose of giving you the tools you need to succeed and motivating you to use them to pass each challenge. Every assignment is designed for your focused practice and palpable improvement. Every deadline is in place to support your pacing. Every grading policy is there to encourage and reward you for working up to your own high standards.

If you are struggling for any reason please send me an email, talk to me after class, text me on MS Teams or come by my office whether or not we have an appointment. I want to hear what you're experiencing with the course, and we will work together to fix it. Depending on your struggle, there might be immediate help from UNT's Office of Disability Accommodation (info and link below) and/or a medical note from a counselor or therapist that will authorize me to accommodate your needs. If your struggle doesn't match either of these, we will work to find another solution.

I am generally strict about enforcing everything in this syllabus because that strictness usually helps my students achieve their goals and they thank me later for the tough love. If for any reason you fall off the train and feel unable to catch up, talk to me right away and we'll get you back on board.

Academic Integrity:

We will have written assignments in the class. I am a big believer that each one of you is more than capable of coming up with your own thoughts and arguments. And if you happen to agree with someone else's – that is fine, too, but **you always need to give credits to the creators**. Stealing someone else's hard work or failing to give proper credits to respective authors will never help to pass the assignments and goes against the university's policy on academic integrity.

Academic integrity emanates from a culture that embraces the core values of trust and honesty necessary for full learning to occur. As a student-centered public research university, the University of North Texas promotes the integrity of the learning process by establishing and enforcing academic standards. Academic dishonesty breaches the mutual trust necessary in an academic environment and undermines all scholarship. The Student Standards of Academic Integrity are based on educational principles and procedures that protect the rights of all participants in the educational process and validate the legitimacy of degrees awarded by the University. ([UNT Policy 06.003 \[EXT LINK\]](#))

Acts academic dishonesty include **cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, forgery, sabotage of other's works, self-plagiarism, team plagiarism and patch-writing plagiarism** ([UNT Policy 06.003 \[EXT LINK\]](#)). Any attempt to engage in academic dishonesty will result in receiving zero for the assigned items and may get reported to the Dean of Students.

You can (and you should) use spellchecking tools like Grammarly to review your original writing. However, the use of AI tools to produce content for you **will result in an automatic zero for the assignment**. In other words, you must write all your assignments yourself and you should ONLY use AI for editing, proof-reading and checking for misspellings.

If you would like assistance with expressing your ideas in writing, or just want to refresh your knowledge about proper citation mechanisms (so that you can give proper credits to authors), consider visiting the UNT's Writing Studio. Also, check [these very helpful handouts on the Writing Center's website \[EXT LINK\]](#), which will assist you with organizing and citing your academic papers.

Recording in Class:

This course will encourage open and robust discussions on issues and ideas without fear that any statements made will be used for inappropriate or retaliatory purposes. To ensure the comfort and protection of everyone in our classroom, recording of any kind is prohibited in this space (this includes audio recordings, live-streaming, photographs of course materials, etc.) unless a student has an approved accommodation from the Office of Disability Access (ODA). In such cases, all students in the course will be notified whenever recording will be taking place.

ADA accommodation statement:

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their

designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access \[EXT LINK\]](#). You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

Word on Communication:

For this course, I will check my email at least once per day Monday-Friday during regular business hours 9 AM – 5 PM, so please remember that you will not necessarily receive an instant reply from me, but I will answer your email within next 48 hours. **Make sure that you use your UNT email when contacting me.** When emailing me, please identify yourself by giving me your entire name, the class you are in, and your specific question. Try to be very specific with your questions, **as the more specific you are, the better I will be able to answer your question!**

Respectful Learning Environment

I value the many perspectives students bring to our campus. Please work with me to create a classroom culture of open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. All discussions should be respectful and civil. Although disagreements and debates are encouraged, **personal attacks are unacceptable**. Likewise, when others critique your points, don't take them personally but think about what about your and others' arguments could be presented in a more persuasive manner. Remember, you can disagree without becoming disagreeable and in addressing disagreements you will help your own and the class's learning. In return for your thoughtful engagement with the material and each other, I will work to provide a learning environment that allows you to take intellectual and emotional risks. Together, we can ensure a safe and welcoming classroom for all. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please stop by my office and let me know. We are all learning together.

Every student in this class should have the right to learn and engage within an environment of respect and courtesy from others. We will discuss our classroom's habits of engagement and I also encourage you to review UNT's Student [Code of Conduct \[EXT LINK\]](#) so that we can all start with the same baseline civility understanding.

Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (UNT Policy 16.004):

UNT prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its application and admission processes; educational programs and activities; employment policies, procedures, and processes; and university facilities. The University takes active measures to prevent such conduct and investigates and takes remedial action when appropriate.

Grading

A	B	C	D	F
90-99%	80-90%	70-80%	60-70%	0-60%

Grades are never rounded up. For example, if you have earned 89.99%, your grade is B+.

Late work is not accepted unless there is a valid documented reason for missing the original deadline. Also, if you have an important life event, or an emergency, or any other situation that is preventing you from submitting the work on time – please let me know as soon as possible. I reserve the right to reject last minute requests for deadline extensions without any proper documentation.

In the interest of academic fairness, all students are graded on same criteria for each assignment. Personal desires or needs to maintain a particular GPA for scholarships, athletics, or other reasons cannot be considered in grading the submitted material.

If you believe that the grade assigned should be reviewed again, I am more than happy to take another look. However, a granted grade review will require a full re-grade of the entire work and may discover that certain portions were graded too leniently.

Assignments

Attendance and participation – 15%

This course is an interactive seminar course, where you are expected to actively participate and contribute to class discussions. I know that speaking in the class sometimes causes anxiety, so I will do my best to maintain a focused environment by moderating the discussion and asking prompting questions. Each week, you have 1-3 required readings and book chapters on a specific topic. You should read them all and think about the author's main arguments before class and come prepared to discuss them. Strive to attend every class session to earn full credit for participation grade as each class attendance will amount to 0.5 percentage points out of possible 15. Classes canceled by the instructor will be credited to students. UNT will also notify through [Eagle Alert \[EXT LINK\]](#) of any emergencies or if there is a campus closing that will impact a class in accordance with the Emergency Notifications. Please try to arrive before class begins to find a seat, prepare your materials, and connect with your peers. The beginning of class is especially critical—just like the beginning of a movie or book. Being late to class is sometimes inevitable. **If you are late, know that you are welcome to join the class, but please do so without distracting others.**

First book reflection 20%

In this assignment, you will reflect on Clemantine Wamariya's memoir, *The Girl Who Smiled Beads*, which recounts her journey as a Tutsi refugee fleeing Rwandan genocide. The book explores themes of survival, identity, trauma, and resilience. The instructions for this assignment, including two reflection questions, are posted on Canvas.

Second book reflection – 20%

In this assignment, you will reflect on Elizabeth Dunn's book *No Path Home*, which examines the experiences of refugees and internally displaced people in the context of post-war Georgia. The book highlights the limits of international humanitarianism, exposing the ineffectiveness of the current system. The instructions for this assignment, including two reflection questions, are posted on Canvas.

Midterm in-class – 20%

During Week 10, you will complete a midterm in class. This paper-based midterm will consist of four short essay questions. We will have a review session in class to prepare for the midterm.

Movie Reflection – 25%

After we watch movie *For Sama* (2019) in class, you will write a movie reflection essay and submit it on Canvas. The reflection is comprised of three short questions which you will answer after reflecting on the movie. The questions, along with detailed assignment instructions, are posted on Canvas under "Assignments" and is also posted in Week 16 module.

Course Requirements/Schedule

** PLEASE NOTE: I reserve a right to make amendments to this schedule and should they become necessary – you will be notified well ahead of any deadlines.*

Week 1 (01/12 – 01/18)	<p>International Laws on Protection of Refugees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Intro to the class</u> <p>No class on Thursday January 18th - Professor is out of town for SPSA Conference</p>
Week 2 (01/19 – 01/25)	<p>War and Displacement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arnon, D., McAlexander, R. J., & Rubin, M. A. (2023). Social cohesion and community displacement in armed conflict. <i>International Security</i>, 47(3), 52-94. • Kaufmann, C. D. (1998). When All Else Fails: Ethnic Population Transfers and Partitions in the Twentieth Century. <i>International Security</i>, 23(2), 120–156. <p>Last Day to Drop a Class Without a W is January 23, 2026</p>
Week 3 (01/26 – 02/01)	<p>Social Engineering and State-Mandated Displacement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rutland, P. (2021). Racism and Nationalism. <i>Nationalities Papers</i>, 1-14. • Stanton, G. (2013). The ten stages of genocide. <i>Genocide Watch</i>.
Week 4 (02/02 – 02/08)	<p>War and Displacement: Rwandan Genocide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book Discussion: Wamariya, C., & Weil, E. (2018). Chapters 1 – 10.
Week 5 (02/09 – 02/15)	<p>War and Displacement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book Discussion: Wamariya, C., & Weil, E. (2018). Chapters 11 – 22. <p>First Book Reflection DUE: Sunday February 15th, by 11:59 PM submitted on Canvas</p>
Week 6 (02/16 – 02/22)	<p>IDPs: The 2008 Russia-Georgia War</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book: Dunn, E. (2018). Chapters 1 – 4 (better to start with Chapter 2 first and then go in order).
Week 7 (02/23 – 03/01)	<p>IDPs: Faulty Humanitarianism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book: Dunn, E. (2018). Chapters 5 – 8. <p>Second Book Reflection DUE: Sunday March 1nd, by 11:59 PM submitted on Canvas</p>
Week 8 (03/02 – 03/08)	<p>Addressing faulty humanitarianism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 8 in Collier, P., & Betts, A. (2017). <i>Refuge: Rethinking refugee policy in a changing world</i>. Oxford University Press. (Scanned chapter posted on Canvas). • Dabis, C. (Director). (2009). Amreeka [Film]. National Geographic Entertainment ; Virgil Films.
Week 9	<p>Spring Break: No Classes!</p>
Week 10 (03/16 – 03/22)	<p>Midterm Week: Review on Tuesday and Midterm In-Class on Thursday March 19th</p>

Week 11 (03/23 – 03/29)	<p>Trafficking and Human Security: The case of North Korea</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • García, A. B. M. (2019). Denouncing Human Trafficking in China: North Korean Women's Memoirs as Evidence. <i>State Crime J.</i>, 8, 59.
Week 12 (03/30 – 04/05)	<p>Self-identification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pearlman, W. (2018). Becoming a Refugee: Reflections on Self-Understandings of Displacement from the Syrian Case. <i>Review of Middle East Studies</i>, 52(2), 299–309.
Week 13 (04/06 – 04/12)	<p>Solidarity (or not)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martuscelli, P. N. (2022). Solidarity in the Time of COVID-19: Refugee Experiences in Brazil. <i>Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees / Refuge: Revue Canadienne Sur Les Réfugiés</i>, 38(1), 27–42. • Chapter 1 in Jensen, K. (2023). <i>The Color of Asylum: The Racial Politics of Safe Haven in Brazil</i>. University of Chicago Press. (Scanned Chapter posted on Canvas). <p>Last day to drop a class with W is April 10, 2026</p>
Week 14 (04/13 – 04/19)	<p>Refugees Representation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupavac, V. (2008). Refugee Advocacy, Traumatic Representations and Political Disenchantment. <i>Government and Opposition</i>, 43(2), 270–292. • The Oxford Handbook of Refugee & Forced Migration Studies, Chapter 29 (Scanned chapter is posted on Canvas).
Week 15 (04/20 – 04/26)	<p>European Refugee Policy: Bosnia vs. Syria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ther, P. & Riemer, J. (2019) Refugee Politics After the Cold War. In <i>The Outsiders: Refugees in Europe since 1492</i> (pp. 231–284). Princeton University Press. (Chapter posted on Canvas). • Vajrača, S. (Director). (2005). <i>Back to Bosnia</i> [Film]. Alternate Plan Productions / BayView Entertainment.
Week 16 (04/27 – 05/03)	<p>Visual Refugee Stories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waad Al-Kateab, Frontline Films, ITN, P., & Channel Four Television (Producers), & Watts, E. and Waad Al-Kateab (Directors). (2019). <i>For Sama</i>. [Video/DVD] Public Broadcasting Service. Retrieved from https://video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/for-sama <p>Movie Reflection DUE: by Sunday May 3rd by 11:59 PM submitted on Canvas</p>

Additional UNT Policies

Retention of Student Records:

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All

records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about student's records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University's policy. See [UNT Records Management and Retention Policy \[EXT LINK\]](#) for additional information.

Access to Information - Eagle Connect:

Students' access point for business and academic services at UNT is located at: my.unt.edu. All official communication from the University will be delivered to a student's Eagle Connect account. For more information, please visit [Eagle Connect website \[EXT LINK\]](#).

Student Evaluation Administration Dates:

Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. The survey will be made available during weeks 13-15 of the long semesters to provide students with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught. Students will receive an email from "UNT SPOT Course Evaluations via IASystem Notification" (no-reply@iasystem.org) with the survey link. Students should look for the email in their UNT email inbox. Simply click on the link and complete the survey. Once students complete the survey, they will receive a confirmation email that the survey has been submitted. For additional information, please visit the [SPOT website \[EXT LINK\]](#) or email spot@unt.edu.

Survivor Advocacy:

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-5652648.

Use of Student Work:

A student owns the copyright for all work (e.g. software, photographs, reports, presentations, and email postings) he or she creates within a class and the University is not entitled to use any student work without the student's permission unless all of the following criteria are met:

- The work is used only once.
- The work is not used in its entirety.
- Use of the work does not affect any potential profits from the work.
- The student is not identified.
- The work is identified as student work.

If the use of the work does not meet all of the above criteria, then the University office or department using the work must obtain the student's written permission.

Transmission and Recording of Student Images in Electronically Delivered Courses:

No permission is needed from a student for his or her image or voice to be transmitted live via videoconference or streaming media, but all students should be informed when courses are to be conducted using either method of delivery. No notification is needed if only audio and slide capture is used or if the video only records the instructor's image.

Student Support Services:

UNT provides mental health resources to students to help ensure there are numerous outlets to turn to that wholeheartedly care for and are there for students in need, regardless of the nature of an issue or its severity. Listed below are several resources on campus that can support your academic success and mental well-being:

- [Student Health and Wellness Center \[EXT LINK\]](#)
- [Counseling and Testing Services \[EXT LINK\]](#)
- [UNT Care Team \[EXT LINK\]](#)
- [UNT Psychiatric Services \[EXT LINK\]](#)
- [Individual Counseling \[EXT LINK\]](#)

Additional Student Support Services:

- [Registrar \[EXT LINK\]](#)
- [Financial Aid \[EXT LINK\]](#)
- [Student Legal Services \[EXT LINK\]](#)
- [Career Center \[EXT LINK\]](#)
- [UNT Food Pantry \[EXT LINK\]](#)
- [Academic Resource Center \[EXT LINK\]](#)
- [Academic Success Center \[EXT LINK\]](#)
- [UNT Libraries \[EXT LINK\]](#)
- [Writing Lab \[EXT LINK\]](#)