

S0324 Reporting Forced Migration

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Course Description

REPORTING FORCED MIGRATION

We examine and report on forced migrations as the result of wars and military conflicts. Russia's invasion of Ukraine pushed the human toll to above 100 million. The grim milestone comes after forced displacement accelerated from deadly conflicts in Afghanistan and Syria.

This flow of humanity has now eclipsed WW2 forced migration. We will look at some of the consequences and responses in firsthand reporting.

Berlin is on the front lines of this human movement especially after 2015 when Germany opened the borders to hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees, later offering a place to Afghans, Yazidis, Iraqis, and Ukrainians. These communities struggle to resettle, learn to speak German, and find jobs.

The staggering numbers are a result, in part, of the international response to conflict. We live in an era known as the age of impunity when it is rare for war criminals to face accountability, ask anyone from Syrian, Yemen, or Afghanistan. However, in the next decade there could be a race between accountability in impunity.

Germany is a leader in mounting war crime trials under "universal jurisdiction," convicting Syrian war criminals of crimes against humanity and German courts have so far convicted two ISIS members of genocide for crimes against Yazidis in Iraq. There are Ukrainian cases in the works. Berlin is a uniquely appropriate place from which to observe and report on this legal evolution.

In this course, we will visit court rooms, communal kitchens, and companies that offer apprenticeships for newcomers. This course combines immigration policy analysis and the fundamentals of fact-based journalism and narrative reporting. Students are expected to do original reporting that

includes interviews with local sources. Writing assignments will allow the class to recognize different forms of journalism, from news writing, features, to profile writing, and deeply reported long form journalism.

Requirements

You will be writing every week. Your grades will depend on class participation, writing a weekly blog, as well as researching and writing a long-form assignment.

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Assessment

#1st – News writing assignment due Class #4 – Feb. 15th, 2024

#2nd – News analysis – Due March 14, 2024

3rd – Profile – due April 11th

Assignments

Every student will write three articles of 750-1000 words in the first half of the semester.

1. News story (500-750). Due Feb. 20th 2024

2. Analytical essay or report on refugee resettlement (750-1000)
3. Profile of a refugee/ Asylum seeker or a report from a “language café” (1,000)
- 4. The final project between 2000, 2500 words**

*FINAL PROJECT – 40%

*3 SHORTEER WRITING ASSIGNMENTS – 30% - news/analytical/profile

*CLASS PARTICIPATION – 30%

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors’ office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Grade Breakdown

*FINAL PROJECT – 40%

*2 SHORTEER WRITING ASSIGNMENTS – 30% - news/analytical/profile

*CLASS PARTICIPATION – 30%

Schedule

<https://berlin.bard.edu/academics/courses/>
<https://berlin.bard.edu/for-students/academic-calendars/>

Grades Submission

Week #1 – Why Journalism Matters Jan.30 – Feb. 1st

Class - Tuesday

I will outline the responsibilities of class. We will discuss journalism: Where do you get your news? What are the five “W’s”? Do you know how to write a lede? A nut graph? Do you know what a ‘source’ is?

The craft of Journalism: We will discuss the basics of news writing, including the obligation to interview all sides and the reporter’s search for impartial fact-finding. We will also talk about sources – building a list of experts. How to follow the best immigration reporters on twitter.

Outline the responsibilities of class; the assignments, and the structure of the course.

Reading assignments:

1. https://www.cjr.org/special_report/trumped-up-press-versus-president-ed-note.php
2. https://www.cjr.org/special_report/ag-sulzberger-new-york-times-journalisms-essential-value-objectivity-independence.php?te=1&nl=the-morning&emc=edit_nn_20230515
3. **John McPhee: Draft No. 4: On the Writing Process; page 49 - 62 “Okay, then, what is a lead?”**

Class Thursday:

William Zinsser – On Writing Well. Read the chapters of the “Sample”

https://www.amazon.com/Writing-Well-30th-Anniversary-Nonfiction-ebook/dp/B0090RVGW0/ref=tmm_kin_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=&asin=B0090RVGW0&revisionId=97aa113a&format=1&depth=1

Focus on a migrant community.

In-class interview/writing assignment – interview student for profile due following week. Profile needs at least two sources – can be friends, coach, relatives, professors. Due in week #2 non-graded)

Week #2. The War Came to US: Ukraine. Feb. 6th - Feb. 8th

Class Tuesday: February 24, 2020, Russian troops invade Ukraine. An exodus begins. 8.2 million refugees flee west, 5.9 are internally displaced. The Russian invasion sparks a refugee crisis.

Reading assignments: write a 500-word blog on the readings. (this counts as class participation)

1. Here's background:
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60767454>
3. <https://www.scribd.com/document/684728255/Transcript-Ep-93-Follow-the-Apps>
4. <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/89-exclusive-ukraine-says-joint-mission-with-u-s/id1225077306?i=1000631571848>
5. <https://www.pulitzer.org/news/statement-walter-duranty>
6. <https://www.nytc.com/company/prizes-awards/new-york-times-statement-about-1932-pulitzer-prize-awarded-to-walter-duranty/>

Class Thursday: Ukraine is a war zone and a crime scene – the national court, the International Criminal Court, and an international war crime tribunal.

1. Why is the crime of rape so difficult to prosecute?
<https://www.npr.org/transcripts/1110667115>
2. <https://www.capradio.org/news/npr/story?storyid=1111933475>
3. <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/768/the-other-front-lines>
4. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/persons-of-interest/a-russian-journalists-pained-love-for-her-country>

Workshop assignment #1 student profiles – we will examine ledes and sources.

First graded assignment: Write a news story – with a lead and a nut graph. 500-1000 words.

**Week #3. The Great Migrations: Afghanistan – The crisis news cycle.
Feb. 13th Feb 15th**

Class Tuesday: The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021 spurred an exodus from the capital, Kabul as the Taliban reasserted their rule.

Reading Assignments: write a 500 word blog on the readings.

Azmat Khan won a Pulitzer for this two-part series.

1. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/12/18/us/airstrikes-pentagon-records-civilian-deaths.html>
2. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/19/magazine/victims-airstrikes-middle-east-civilians.html>

The human toll – the August exodus – and bowling!

3. <https://kitchensisters.org/podcast/bowling-with-taban/#:~:text=Especially%20when%20we%20read%20that,community%20at%20Bowling%20with%20Grace.>
4. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/09/13/the-other-afghan-women>Links to an external site.

Class Thursday: In Germany, more than 40 thousand Afghans have asked for asylum, and now, many are turned away to make room for Ukrainians.

First graded assignment due.

1. <https://newlinesmag.com/past-newsletters/letter-from-kabul-the-brutal-business-of-a-border-crossing/>
2. <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/editors-take/2023/12/21/why-im-hopeful-afghanistan>
3. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/04/20/germany-refugee-policy-afghanistan-ukraine/>

We will workshop ledes in class

Week #4. The Syrians came by boat. Feb. 20 – Feb. 22

Class Tuesday: Journalist as witness – The Syrian crisis produced one of the largest refugee exoduses in history. (until Ukraine)

In recent years, five countries have contributed the most refugees: Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar, and Somalia and now we must include Ukraine.

Journalists have documented the migrant trek, sometimes walking alongside refugees for days and weeks. We will talk about tragedy and narrative.

Discussion: How to cover a mass of people who are desperate to cross a border to safety. What does it mean to be a witness in journalism? This question goes to the heart of journalism. We also examine the plight of the Yazidis of Iraq. Many are now resettled in Canada and in Germany.

Reading assignment: Write a 500 word blog on the readings. Due before class.

**Dunya Mikhail “The Beekeeper: Rescuing the Stolen Women of Iraq”
Chpt. 1-7**

<https://princeton.ares.atlas-sys.com/aresauth/ares.dll?SessionID=F012055846S&Action=10&Type=10&Value=1287414>

1. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/07/yazidi-victims-islamic-state-heal-wounds-grow-independent-germany>
2. **Patrick Kingsley**, *The New Odyssey: The Story of Europe’s Refugee Crisis*

Prologue, chpt. 1,2,3,4

<https://princeton.ares.atlas-sys.com/aresauth/ares.dll?SessionID=F012055846S&Action=10&Type=10&Value=1287415>

3. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/a-reporter-at-large/the-secret-life-and-anonymous-death-of-the-most-prolific-war-crimes-investigator-in-history>

Class Thursday:

In 2015, when more than 1 million asylum seekers entered Europe—sometimes 10,000 a day, overwhelmed governments quickly declared

a crisis. And yet the Syrians—along with the Iraqis and Afghans who made the journey in rubber dinghies, were just another visible tidal flow of human beings. While humans have migrated for thousands of years, in modern times, these movements have consequences. We look at Europe's welcome, the push back, and ultimately, a legal movement that offered a small slice of accountability.

1. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/25/magazine/germany-trial-syria.html>
2. Ben Taub:
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/09/20/how-a-syrian-war-criminal-and-double-agent-disappeared-in-europe>

Class #5 The Age of Impunity – The Age of Accountability. Feb. 27th – Feb. 29

For more than a decade, the defenders of democracy have sustained heavy losses. One sign of decline, war strategies that flout the rule of law and the norms of war – From Yemen, to Syria to Ukraine, war strategies now include intentionally bombing hospitals, ambulances and schools, minorities targeted by genocidal politics, dissidents jailed, tortured and often murdered. Welcome to the age of impunity. The hallmarks are a retreat from the rule of law and accountability.

We will also consider the pushback: One example, universal jurisdiction is a legal principal that allows Germany and other European nations to address the gravest crimes, including crimes against humanity, genocide, and state-sponsored torture.

We are going to Berlin as Western capitals back Ukraine's bid to open war crime trials, but there is no international consensus on the appropriate court.

Class Tuesday:

Four days after Russian troops crossing into Ukraine, lawyer and author, Phillippe Sands wrote this guest editorial.

Reading assignment – write a 500 word blog – due before class

We begin with the crime of Aggression.

<https://on.ft.com/46hpoaf>

<https://www.newstatesman.com/podcasts/world-review-podcast/2023/05/putin-on-trial-philippe-sands>

This podcast updates the effort (sorry for the awful commercials – be patient)

<https://www.newstatesman.com/podcasts/world-review-podcast/2023/05/putin-on-trial-philippe-sands>

1. This Radiolab podcast gives a good overview of an earlier US case; how innovative lawyers used this 1800's law that addresses piracy to punish a torturer who shows up in the US.
2. <https://radiolab.org/episodes/radiolab-enemy-mankind>

Class Thursday: In Germany, national courts are a site for war crimes trials. Is the “Nuremburg model” still relevant?

1. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/1/13/koblenz-trial-one-year-on-it-should-have-been-in-damascus>

<https://revealnews.org/podcast/my-neighbor-the-suspected-war-criminal/>

#2nd graded assignment – write a news analysis – 1,000 words. Due in Class #7

Week #6 The rise Open-Source Intelligence March 5th – March 7th

Class Tuesday

The rise of Open-Source Investigations -OSINT -means war crime investigations are now in “real time.” OSINT makes public what is already public, by shifting through satellite data, social media posts, phone video, government handouts, official statements, and interviews to filter what is known.

OSINT played a role in investigating the Syrian conflict as citizen journalists documented the violence. The practice has expanded exponentially in Ukraine.

<https://defence-blog.com/osint-experts-cut-the-fog-of-war-in-ukraine/>

The US State Department has tapped OSINT partners in a new US program.

State Department’s Crisis Observatory

<https://statemag.state.gov/2022/10/1022feat06/>

<https://www.npr.org/2023/02/14/1156500561/russia-ukraine-children-deportation-possible-war-crime-report>

<https://therecord.media/digital-clues-and-the-stories-ukraines-mass-graves-have-to-tell>

for class – a 500 word blog post

Class Thursday

Bellingcat is the best known OSINT group – coming to prominence in Syria and then in Russian investigations.

The NYT, the Washington Post, and the BBC have set up special newsroom “open-source” units.

1. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/katiejennings/2022/03/21/the-world-watched-russia-bomb-ukraines-hospitals-what-happens-next/?sh=3bd8bb157638>

2. <https://time.com/6166781/ukraine-crowdsourcing-war-crimes/>
3. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-05-19/crime-search>
4. Documentary: Bellingcat: Truth in a Post-Truth World
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1q5aASEX4sM39knmkrk9LFnwEcQ-ldBpj/view>
4. Al Jazeera: The Listening Post
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HepkszJztTM&feature=youtu.be>
5. <https://therecord.media/digital-clues-and-the-stories-ukraines-mass-graves-have-to-tell>

Week #7. Social Media: the worst and the best- March 12- March 14

Class Tuesday

The latest social media platforms can be a boon for journalists but there is also an 'arms race' for access, legal or otherwise, to private data. This week's readings focus on information: miss and diss. Reports of malicious meddling on-line is rampant in the Israel-Palestine crisis – but it is not new.

Here are the readings and a listening for this week; please write a 500 word blog and turn in at 5:00 pm before class

1. <https://theintercept.com/2023/10/19/upday-news-gaza-israel-axel-springer/>

2. <https://www.nytimes.com/article/israel-attacks-video-disinformation.html>
2. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2023/10/14/propaganda-misinformation-israel-hamas-war-social-media/>
4. <https://www.npr.org/2019/09/26/763545811/how-the-u-s-hacked-isis>

Class Thursday

More sleuthing from the Citizen's lab.

1. <https://citizenlab.ca/2020/01/toronto-star-how-these-toronto-sleuths-are-exposing-the-worlds-digital-spies-while-risking-their-own-lives/>
2. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/04/25/how-democracies-spy-on-their-citizens>

#2 assignment due – we will workshop in class.

Week #8. Finding a character:

The writing assignments in class are designed to show different aspects of news writing. The final project is long form journalism that requires characters and structure to hold the reader's attention. We will read examples of stories and examine the structure that makes them work – and the characters that make the story.

Class Tuesday

Character driven stories:

1. Peter Hessler, "What the Garbage Man Knows"

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/10/13/tales-trash>

2. Deborah Amos: "Dancing for Their Lives"

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2010/03/09/dancing-for-their-lives-2/>

Class Thursday: Pulitzer – Feature Writing

June 6, 2022

Anger and heartbreak on Bus No. 15

January 30, 2022

The moral calculations of a billionaire

October 2, 2022

An American education

November 20, 2022

Fixing the broken lovelies

500 word blog – Why was this a winner?

#3rd graded assignment. Write a profile of an asylum seeker – or spend an evening in a "language" café and profile the migrants learning German Due in class #10

Week #9. The Age of Embedding: Living the story. April 2 - April 4th

Vietnam was an early version of journalist embeds. In 1991, the Gulf war was a more extreme version of the practice. Embeds can also be a way of thinking about any kind reporting. One example is Matthieu Aikins's work. His method required following his subject for many months and miles.

The NYT called it a love story.

Class Tuesday:

The New York Times called it a love story:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/15/books/review/the-naked-dont-fear-the-water-matthieu-aikins.html>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/14/opinion/refugees-migrants-afghanistan.html>

<https://theintercept.com/2022/02/13/matthieu-aikins-book-refugee-war/>

Class Thursday:

Readings: “The Naked Don’t Fear The Water”. Part 1 and 2

****Blog: 500 words – what are the elements that make this account a prize winner.**

****500 words on your pitch for your final project.**

Week #10. How to survive your final project: April 9th April 11th

Final project lede and nut graph is due. We will discuss tips on how to get thru working long form.

Class Tuesday:

Draft #4 John McPhee: On the Writing Process – “Frame of Reference” page 115-126

James Stewart: Follow the Story: How to Write successful non-fiction – Chpt. 7 Structure

Class Thursday:

Workshop on #3 assignment -

Week #11 My Kingdom for a Structure. April 16 – April 18

We will workshop the ledes, nut graph, and explanatory paragraphs in class.

Class Tuesday:

Readings:

Readings about structure:

1. <https://transom.org/2013/my-kingdom-for-some-structure/>
2. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/01/14/structure>

Class Thursday:

Workshop your pitch for the final project

Week #12. Disinformation and Fake News in a Post-Truth World

We will examine and discuss the prevalence of misinformation in politics and political rhetoric. We will explore how language and conspiracy theories inform public opinion.

Class Tuesday:

https://globalchange.umich.edu/globalchange1/current/lectures/king/fake_news/fake_news.html

Important research from Oxford University on how social media manipulation by political is now a problem on an industrial scale.

<https://demtech.oii.ox.ac.uk/research/posts/industrialized-disinformation/>

An excellent pod cast made by the BBC about the attack on the Capitol building on

January 6th 2021.

<https://open.spotify.com/show/670jCXDhKlKCOfepFpiYsG>

Truthers: Tiffany Dover is Dead –
how individuals can become a weapon in the global information war.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/truthers-podcast>

Class Thursday:

https://www.cjr.org/60th/how-do-you-know-amy-davidson-sorkin.php?a=cjr-60th-sidebar-highlighter&utm_source=cjr-org&utm_medium=referral

Find examples of fake news for mis/dis information from the coverage of Israel/Palestine. Bring examples to class – and why you believe this to be fake news.

** lede and nutgraph of your final project due before class

Week #13. Fake news goes viral.

Class Tuesday:

We will focus on how quickly misinformation and disinformation has spread. And the focus will be on language and what emerged just days after Hamas attacked communities in southern Israel on October 7. The links below will help us shape the discussion.

1. <https://thehill.com/policy/technology/4252928-eu-probes-x-disinformation-israel-gaza/>
2. <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2023/10/decapitated-babies-claim-intent-dehumanization.html>

3. https://www.nytimes.com/article/israel-attacks-video-disinformation.html?unlocked_article_code=1.IE0.h7oZ.JZ383v7xPNyB&hpgrp=c-abar&smid=url-share

Class Thursday: More case studies.

1. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/thomas-rid-on-active-measures-and-digital-disinformation/>
2. <https://www.npr.org/2023/08/04/1191990325/ex-biden-officials-lawsuit-against-fox-echoes-case-that-led-to-big-settlement>
3. https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2023/03/social-media-algorithms-twitter-meta-rss-reader/673282/?gift=Qep0VzwAUVPqnAslikry4POK8t0xoq96ZD-zCgCr6Y0&utm_source=copy-link&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=share

First 1000 words of your final project

Week #14

Class Tuesday:

Workshop your final project

If you get all the way to the end, I owe you a cup of coffee.