FENCES, REFUGEE BOATS, AND ‘NEW BORDERLANDS’: MAKING SENSE OF EUROPE’S (RE)EMERGING BORDERS

Teaching aid & Course syllabus
Acknowledgements

This draft syllabus is intended as a teaching aid that conveys the research framework and key findings of a three-year long (2019–2022) research project entitled “BordEUr: New European Borderlands.” BordEUr is a collaborative research project of nine universities that documents and assesses the proliferation of new borders in the aftermath of the EU’s recent crises, with a special emphasis on the so-called migration crisis. The project analyzes the symbolic role of borders in ontological narratives (those of both the EU and its member states), as well as the bordering policies that these narratives enable. You can read more about the project on the project website at www.bordeur-project.com.

Project partners: Central European University, Goce Delchev University in Shtip, Middle East Technical University, the South-East European Research Centre, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, the University of Bologna, the University of National and World Economy in Sofia, the University of Sheffield, and Universität Wien.

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Course Overview

This course is a comparative examination of borders/borderlands that have (re-)emerged in and around the European Union in the wake of the 2015 so-called migrant crisis. Beyond a general introduction to bordering studies, the European Union’s bordering practices, and the securitization and dramatization of borders, the course examines specific cases to uncover the relationships between borders, security, rightwing populism, Europeanization, and migration.

The course is intended for the Masters level, and requires no previous training in any specific discipline. As a product of the BordEUr project, the course relies on the eponymous open-access online publication ‘Fences, Refugee Boats, and the New Borderlands: Making Sense of the European Union’s Emerging Internal and External Borders’, edited by Andras Szalai, Owen Parker, Sonia Lucarelli, and Alexandra Prodromidou. The publication is accessible on the project’s website: www.bordeur-project.com

Course format

In this reading seminar, students are expected to form their own opinions about the texts, and share those through active class participation. For each week, one or two mandatory texts are assigned. Seminar discussion will be structured around a short presentation of one of the recommended texts, in which a student will summarize and evaluate the reading, while linking it to the mandatory text(s). Seminar discussion therefore depends on serious preparation: it is crucial that students do all of the reading required and come into the seminar prepared to take part in the discussion. It is also essential that presenters offer a clear overview of their text, and provide questions for discussion.

Guiding Questions

- How can we make sense of contemporary attitudes toward European borders in light of the longer history of immigration policy and enforcement in the EU?
- How does the EU position itself as a global actor that establishes borders?
- How do bordering practices and discourses clash in the EU, and its member states?
- What are the political and social implications of bordering and migration policy in the EU’s “new borderlands”?
- How have European asylum regimes changed since the 2015 “migrant crisis”? Who gets in, who is kept out and how do these policies shape understandings of race, gender, and class?
- What has been the role of EU member states in the process of re-bordering?
Learning Outcomes

In this course students will develop skills in critical analysis and research on bordering and migration policy, with a special focus on the European Union and its environment. As such, the course’s assignments are designed to achieve the following learning goals:

- Acquire knowledge of core concepts and theories of bordering and migration in Europe
- Encourage students to interrogate the historical roots of simplified explanations, stereotypes and naturalizations in political discourses on European borders.
- Promote students’ ability to analyze power dynamics from the micro-level to the macro-level and connect theory with contemporary issues and practices.
- Engage with issues of bordering, migration, and securitization on multiple levels: European/international, state, and local.
- Express in writing a critical position and well-structured logical argument, sustained by relevant evidence.
- Experiment with new ideas, and critically interrogate prejudices and inherited world views.

Assessment

Apart from class presentations and active participation in seminar debates, mid-semester position papers, and end of term papers are suggested for assessment.

Core reading

Weekly schedule

Week 1: Course introduction

Mandatory readings:


Week 2: Borders and Bordering Studies

Mandatory readings:

- Johnson et al, "Interventions on rethinking 'the border' in border studies," Political Geography (2011)

Recommended readings:


Week 3: Bordering, Human Security and Immigration

Mandatory readings:

Recommended readings:


Week 4: The European Union as a Border-Making Actor, and its Neighborhood

Mandatory readings:


Recommended readings:

Week 6: The European Border Regime

Mandatory readings:


Recommended readings:

- *The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum in Light of the United Nations Global Compact on Refugees, 1.*

**Week 7: The Migration-Bordering-Security Nexus**

**Mandatory readings:**


**Recommended readings:**


**Week 8: Austria, borders, and asylum policy**

**Mandatory readings:**

Recommended readings:


Week 9: Turkey and the Western Balkans as new borderlands

Mandatory readings:


Recommended readings:

16, 1–22.


*Week 10: Greece and Bulgaria – Schengen vs. Non-Schengen borders*

**Mandatory readings:**

Recommended readings:


Week 11: Brexit and immigration

Mandatory reading:


Recommended readings:


**Week 12: Hungary and dramatized borders**

**Mandatory reading:**


**Recommended readings:**


**Week 13: Cities, resilience and immigration: Barcelona as a case study**

**Mandatory reading:**


**Recommended readings:**


*Week 14: Conclusions: The EU and its New Borderlands*