

Refuge Without Refuge

Displacement, Gender Violence, and the Politics of

Belonging

A Comparative Study of Sudanese Refugees in France and

Syrian Refugees in Turkey

Co-Led Seminar Syllabus

Fall 2026

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**Title: Refuge Without Refuge: Displacement, Gender Violence, and the Politics of
Belonging *A Comparative Study of Sudanese Refugees in France and Syrian Refugees in
Turkey***

Seminar Description

This seminar opens with a core question at the heart of contemporary debates about displacement: what becomes of “protection” when its legal form fails to secure safety, dignity, or a sense of belonging in practice? Through the experiences of Sudanese refugees in France and Syrian refugees in Turkey, the seminar examines the persistent gap between the formal architecture of asylum and the lived realities it is meant to address. Despite differences between the two political contexts, both groups face a similar contradiction: legal protection is formally granted yet remains tenuous, delayed, or inaccessible in everyday life. Throughout the seminar, this tension is captured in the notion of refuge without refuge.

Rather than treating asylum systems or humanitarian programs as neutral administrative mechanisms, the course approaches them as moral and political fields that shape how displaced people are categorized, evaluated, and compelled to navigate their lives. These institutions influence not only material conditions but also how refugees understand themselves and how they are understood by others.

The seminar draws on sociology, anthropology, and social work, employing Pierre Bourdieu’s concepts: capital, field, habitus, and symbolic violence, and Javier Auyero’s sociology of waiting as analytical tools for interpreting everyday life under displacement. These frameworks help illuminate the effects of legal uncertainty, bureaucratic delay, gender-based and symbolic violence, transnational family obligations, and the strategies people develop to endure and adapt within precarious environments.

Empirical material includes French asylum decisions (OFPRA/CNDA) and community-based research with Syrian refugees in Turkey. The seminar is intended for researchers, students, humanitarian practitioners, and social-service professionals seeking a deeper understanding of the lived dimensions of displacement. No prior training in sociology is required; what matters is a willingness to engage critically with the complex relationship between protection, power, and belonging.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the seminar, participants will be able to apply sociological frameworks to analyze the social dynamics of forced displacement, identifying how an individual's background, resources, and environment interact to shape their survival strategies.

Participants will be able to:

- Apply Bourdieu’s sociology of practice to forced displacement.
- Analyze asylum systems in France and Turkey as fields that structure refugee agency and life chances.
- Examine gender-based and symbolic violence in displacement contexts.
- Compare refugee experiences across two geopolitical settings.

- Critically assess humanitarian governance and its moral economy.
- Integrate sociological and social-work perspectives into research and practice.

Target Audience

This seminar is designed for graduate students, early-career researchers, humanitarian practitioners, social-service professionals, and individuals working in migration, asylum, gender-based violence, or humanitarian governance. It is particularly relevant for participants seeking to understand the lived dimensions of displacement through sociological and comparative frameworks. No prior training in sociology is required; the seminar welcomes participants from interdisciplinary backgrounds, including anthropology, political science, social work, law, and public policy.

Teaching Methods

The seminar employs a combination of short lectures, guided discussions, comparative case-study analysis, and close reading of ethnographic and policy materials. Sessions emphasize collaborative learning through small-group discussions, weekly reflection responses, and student-led analytical contributions. Multimedia materials, including documentary excerpts, testimonies, and visual ethnography, can deepen engagement with the lived realities of displacement. The pedagogical approach prioritizes critical thinking, reflexivity, and ethical engagement with sensitive topics such as violence, trauma, and bureaucratic power.

Contents

WEEK 1: What Does “Refuge Without Refuge” Mean?

Theme: Introducing the conceptual terrain and the comparative framework.

Topics

- Global displacement trends
- The gap between legal protection and lived safety
- Sudanese refugees in France / Syrian refugees in Turkey
- Ethics and positionality in displacement research

Discussion Questions

- What does legal protection fail to capture about refugee life?
 - How do the Sudan/France and Syria/Turkey cases illuminate each other?
 - What responsibilities do researchers carry when working with displaced communities?
- Required Readings:**

1. Zetter, R. (2007). [More Labels, Fewer Refugees](#). *Journal of Refugee Studies*. (20 pages: pp. 172-191)

Optional Readings:

1. UNHCR (2026). [Global Trends 2025](#). (3 pages: 3-5).

WEEK 2: Capital, Field, Habitus: A Bourdieusian Framework

Theme: Using Bourdieu to understand displacement and refugee mobility.

Topics

- Forms of capital and refugee mobility
- Asylum as a social field
- Habitus disruption and hysteresis
- Symbolic violence in humanitarian and bureaucratic settings
- Migration inequality and mobility opportunities

Discussion Questions

- How does capital shape who reaches Europe and who remains in neighboring states? - How does symbolic violence operate within asylum institutions?
- How do social networks affect migration opportunities?

Required Readings

1. Bourdieu. (1986). [The Forms of Capital](#). (12 pages: pp 242-254)
2. Schapendonk. (2020). [Navigating the Migration Industry](#). (3 pages: pp. 3-5)

WEEK 3: Gender, Violence, and Displacement

Theme: Gendered experiences of displacement and violence.

Topics

- Gendered habitus and intersectionality
- Structural violence and symbolic power
- Violence before, during, and after displacement
- Gender-based violence in migration contexts
- Symbolic violence and invisibility of GBV
- Ethical challenges in GBV research

Discussion Questions

- How does displacement restructure gender relations?
- How does symbolic violence make GBV appear “natural”?
- How do migration systems produce vulnerability?

Required Readings

1. Tastsoglou & Freedman.(2025).[Gender-based and intersectional violence in migration and refugee contexts: A contextual global approach](#). (12 pages: pp 925-926, and 928-939)
2. UN Women (2020). [Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies](#). (3 Pages: pp 7-10)

WEEK 4: Syrian Refugees in Turkey: Precarity and Everyday Life

Theme: Field analysis of Turkey’s Temporary Protection regime.

Topics

- Temporary Protection and its limits
- Act No. 6458 and migration governance
- Informal labor and urban precarity
- Humanitarian governance in Turkey
- Host-community tensions and social integration

Discussion Questions

- What does “permanent temporariness” mean for Syrian refugees?
- How does capital explain differential integration outcomes?
- How does the Turkish case differ from European asylum systems?

Required Readings

1. Erdoğan, M. (2024). [Syrians Barometer 2023: Key Findings](#). [Executive Summary] (10 pages: pp. 17- 26)
2. Şahin-Mencütek et al. (2023). [Syrian Refugees in Turkey: Between Reception and Integration](#). (10 pages: pp. 37–42 and 52–55).

WEEK 5: GBV Among Syrian Refugees in Turkey

Theme: Violence, Survival, Constrained Agency, and Social Work Responses Topics

- Early marriage, domestic violence, and social control
- Symbolic violence and constrained choices
- Survival and resistance practices
- Barriers to accessing GBV services
- Ethical dilemmas in social-work practice

Discussion Questions

- Why might harmful practices be perceived as “choices”?
- How do practitioners balance cultural sensitivity and protection?

Required Readings

1. Cankurtaran & Albayrak (2019). [From Syria to Turkey: being a woman](#). (8 pages: pp. 9–17)
2. Hassan & Cankurtaran. (2022). [Barriers to Reporting Intimate Partner Violence \(IPV\) By Syrian Women Refugees: A Case Study of Syrian Women Refugees in Turkey](#)” (10 pages: pp 395-400)

WEEK 6: Sudanese Displacement Before and After 2023

Theme: Instability, Conflict, and Multiple Displacement.

Topics

- Sudan’s long history of instability.
- April 2023 war and displacement routes
- Capital loss and mobility strategies
- Urban precarity in neighboring countries.
- Diaspora networks as alternative fields.

Discussion Questions

- Why do some Sudanese reach Europe while others remain in the region?
- How does repeated displacement reshape habitus?
- Why do some displaced Sudanese choose destinations such as France?

Required Readings

1. UNHCR (2026). [Sudan Situation Update](#). (5 pages: pp 1-5)
2. Assal (2023). [War in Sudan 15 April 2023: Background, Analysis and Scenarios](#). (8 pages: pp 9-11, pp 24-32).

WEEK 7: The Architecture of Waiting: Bureaucracy, Time, and Power

Theme: Waiting as a political and bureaucratic technology.

Topics

- Bureaucratic domination and uncertainty
- Administrative complexity as structural violence
- Documents as instruments of suspension
- Gendered burdens of waiting

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- Time, precarity, and everyday life

Discussion Questions

- How does waiting teach refugees their “place” in the social order?
- How does bureaucratic time affect men and women differently?

Required Readings

1. Tefera & Gamlen (2025). [Theorizing Experiential Time in Refugee Migration: Speed and Duration](#) (4 pages: pp. 989–993).
2. Terzioğlu, A. (2023). [Syrians' Experiences of Waiting and Temporality in Turkey: Gendered Reconceptualization of Time, Space, and Refugee Identity](#). (10 pages: pp. 83–92). **Optional Readings**
3. Auyero, J. (2012). [Patients of the State](#). [Intro] (5 pages: pp:1-5)

WEEK 8: The French Asylum System: Moral Economy and Bureaucratic Citizenship Theme:

French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA), National Court of Asylum (CNDA), and the politics of compassion.

Topics

- OFPRA/CNDA structure and jurisprudence.
- Compassion vs suspicion.
- Hysteresis and interview performance.
- Sudanese community networks in France.

Discussion Questions

- How is the “legitimate refugee” constructed in France?
- How do Sudanese refugees navigate bureaucratic citizenship?
- How do asylum systems produce inequality?

Required Readings

1. Bilal, H. (2026). Between Protection and Legal Ambiguity: Sudanese Refugees in Strasbourg and the Transformation of Belonging, Legality, and State Response after the 2023 War. (Not publicly available online) (20 pages: PP 1-20).

Optional Reading

2. Fassin, D. (2013). [The Precarious Truth of Asylum](#). (5 pages: 47-51).

WEEK 9: Humanitarianism, Care, and the Politics of Aid

Theme: Humanitarian governance as a field of power.

Topics

- NGOs, states, and international organizations.
- Humanitarian capital and the performance of vulnerability.
- Care/control paradox.
- Comparative humanitarian governance
- Refugees and the performance of suffering

Discussion Questions

- How does humanitarianism reproduce inequality?
- Why does vulnerability become a form of symbolic capital?

Required Readings

1. De Lauri, A. (2016). [Introduction. In A. De Lauri \(Ed.\), *The Politics of Humanitarianism: Power, Ideology and Aid*](#). (12 pages: pp. 1–12).

WEEK 10: Agency, Integration, and Towards Refugee Justice

Theme: Beyond victimhood: agency, belonging, and refugee-led knowledge.

Topics

- Agency beyond victimhood.
- Integration as multi-capital accumulation.
- Race, class, religion, and geopolitics.
- Situated knowledge and refugee-led scholarship.

Discussion Questions

- How does the Bourdieusian framework help us rethink integration?
- What does meaningful protection look like beyond legal categories?

Required Readings

1. Ager, A. & Strang, A. (2008). [Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework](#) (16 pages: pp. 196-185).

Optional Readings

2. Rajaram, P.K. (2002). [Humanitarianism and Representations of the Refugee Journal of Refugee Studies](#). (15 pages: 248-263)

* Each session is preceded by a selection of required readings, where each title serves as a direct link to the material for immediate access.

