Course Description

The main purpose of this research seminar is to study in-depth the sociology of international labor migration. We will examine the manifold effects of low-end temporary labor migration in both labor-receiving and labor-sending states. The study of low-end labor migration matters to development for the following reasons. First, international labor migration is considered a core economic strategy to reduce poverty and improve incomes in developing countries. Second, due to the unequal economic process of globalization, growing numbers of workers from developing countries – of whom more than half are female – are incorporated into global labor markets as cheap and disposable low-end laborers. Third, the current pattern of low-end labor migration reflects macro and micro social issues in developing countries. Therefore, the study of low-end labor migration provides a useful lens to analyze the socio-economic changes occurring in developing countries.
The seminar themes are divided into three main categories. In the first part, we will analyze the macro structure of the labor migration system, including the role of labor-receiving states, labor-export policies of labor-sending states, and rights and protection of migrant workers. In the second part, we will analyze various social implications of labor migration, such as migrant networks, remittances, gender, transnational households, and reproductive rights of migrants. In the third part, we will pay attention to the emerging issues and concerns related to legality and justice. These include construction of illegality, statelessness, human trafficking, and social activism. Throughout the course, I will show two documentaries related to low-end labor migration to Canada.

Thus, our goals are to obtain an analytical grasp of the global division of labor, immigration policies and ethical dilemmas in labor-receiving countries, the socio-economic system of labor-sending countries, the lives of low-end migrant workers and their families, and legal precariousness and vulnerability of migrants. At the end of the course, students should have a solid understanding of the macro-micro processes in the making of the low-end labor migration system.

Course Requirements

1. Participation
Students are expected to come to class having done the required readings beforehand in order to contribute to class discussion. Readings will average 100-130 pages per week. In order for this seminar to be successful, all students are expected to make thoughtful contributions to the discussion.

2. Précis (reading notes, choose 6 themes out of the 11 weekly themes)
In order to stimulate class participation, students are required to prepare a total of six précis (short reading notes) out of the 11 weekly themes. You will choose any six weekly topics between week 3 (January 19) and week 13 (April
Each précis examines one article or one book chapter from the weekly readings. The précis should clarify the main argument of the article and then provide your reflections (including a critique) on the article. The length will be about 1 double-spaced page.

Please note that you are not allowed to select the same week for your group presentation as well as for your analytical paper. Each précis must be submitted via MyCourses [“Assignments”] by 17:00 on Thursday prior to the seminar meeting. This exercise is intended to ensure that you pro-actively do the readings and are ready to engage them in the seminar.

3. Group presentation
Students must do an oral presentation by working in a group comprised of 3-4 people. Each group is assigned to a specific week to discuss the given theme. The key goal of this group exercise is to provide policy recommendations relevant to the weekly theme. This exercise is intended to provide a foundation for thoughtful seminar discussion. Through the group presentation, students are expected to proactively contribute to the output as well as to class discussion by engaging with the key issues/problems in an analytical and thoughtful manner. We will begin this exercise from the fifth week of the semester (February 2).

Here are the components of the group presentation. Each group must incorporate assigned readings as well as outside sources in the analysis of the issues.

a) **Introduction**: Identify key development issues relevant to the weekly theme. Demonstrate why the issues matter to the broader development framework and why these issues are largely neglected.

b) **Backgrounds**: Discuss the main structural background related to the issues. You should provide actual examples of the structural problems from the assigned readings. You have to also clarify why and how the
structural context affects labor migration.

c) **Policy recommendations**: Frame your policy recommendations in a clear manner in response to the structural issues. Your policy recommendations should specify a stakeholder to whom you would like to address the issues. The potential stakeholders are labor-receiving states, labor-sending states, or international development agencies.

d) **Conclusion**: Provide analytical questions in class

e) **Time duration**: Not to exceed 30 minutes.

Note:

- **Class engagement**: Think a creative way to interact with your audience. You could pose questions or offer a stimulating in-class exercise during the presentation.

- **Division of labor**: In order to ensure equal group participation, you have to make clear the division of labor among the group members. Each member should play a clear role in the group presentation. Please specify each role during the presentation.

- **Submit your group presentation slides**: Please submit your group presentation slides by 17:00 the day before the seminar via MyCourses.

- You are highly encouraged to meet with me during office hours to discuss the group presentation.

**Evaluation**: Each group presentation will be evaluated through three different methods, namely confidential peer evaluation, confidential class evaluation, and evaluation by the instructor. Therefore, students are expected to participate in the evaluation process.

  1) Confidential peer evaluation: you have to evaluate your other group members for their overall contributions to the group exercise. Please submit your peer evaluation after your presentation.

  2) Confidential class evaluation: you have to provide your
comments on weekly group presentations throughout the semester. Please submit your comments via MyCourses during or after the seminar.

4. Short analytical paper
-Students must write 1 short analytical paper (4-5 pages, double-spaced pages) based on the assigned readings. The paper is intended to provide an analysis or critique of the reading(s) of a specific week. The goal of this exercise is to think critically on the theme of the week and then to write an article that provides a distinct argument on the readings. The paper should advance one central argument regarding the ideas from the readings. The paper should not provide a scattered analysis of the different readings, but instead a coherent focused argument that covers the theme of the week.
-Although some minimal summary of the readings is necessary, the paper should avoid spending significant space summarizing the readings. This is an exercise in analysis and critique.
-You can choose any week in which to write the paper, but it must not coincide with the week in which you are doing the group presentation. These exercises are separate.
-Submit the paper by 15:00 via MyCourses on the Thursday before the seminar meeting for which you are writing the paper. Note that you must write your paper prior to the seminar meeting, not after the seminar. In other words, you must come to the seminar ready to discuss your paper.

5. Research paper
-The research paper should be a minimum of 15 double-spaced pages and a maximum of 20 double-spaced pages. Students can choose any topic related to international labor migration but the argument should engage with international development.
-The goal of the research paper is to employ key concepts discussed in the seminar and to develop one’s own research ideas. The paper should focus on one central argument and examine it through empirical cases.
-Please submit a title of your paper and an abstract by Friday, March 31 via
MyCourses.
- Research papers are due by 17:00 on Friday, April 28 via MyCourses.
- Further details on the research paper will be given in class.

**Grade Distribution**

1. *Seminar participation*: 15%
2. *Weekly précis*: 10% (6 précises)
3. *Group project*: 20%
4. *Analytical paper*: 15%
5. *Research paper*: 40%

**Books to Purchase**
The required books have been ordered at Paragraphe Bookstore on 2220 McGill College Avenue. They are also available on online shops (for example, amazon.ca) often at lower prices for used copies. Copies of the three required books will be placed on reserve in the Humanities and Social Sciences library as well.


All the assigned articles other than the three required books will be placed on MyCourses. **NOTE: There is no coursepack available for this research seminar.**

**Plagiarism**

*McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information)*
Policy on Languages

*In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.*

General Information

If you have a hearing, visual and mobility impairment, please contact the instructor immediately (in advance of any evaluations or other class requirements).

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This course syllabus is subject to change in case of unforeseen circumstances.

Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part I. Macro Picture</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 1 (January 5)</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2 (January 12)</td>
<td>Labor Mobility and Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3 (January 19)</td>
<td>Immigration Policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4 (January 26)</td>
<td>Labor Export Strategies (Labor-Sending Countries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part II. Social Implications</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5 (February 2)</td>
<td>Migrant Networks and Middlemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6 (February 9)</td>
<td>Remittances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7 (February 16)</td>
<td>Gender and Transnational Households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8 (February 23)</td>
<td>Reproductive Rights of Migrant Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part III. Legality and Justice</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 9 (March 9)</td>
<td>Construction of Illegality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 10 (March 16)</td>
<td>Statelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Human Trafficking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Social Activism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part 1. Macro Picture: Issues and Actors**

**WEEK 1 (January 5)**

*Introduction*

**Readings:**

**WEEK 2 (January 12)**

*Labor Mobility and Human Rights*

**Film screening:**

**Readings**


**WEEK 3 (January 19)**

*Immigration Policies in Labor-Receiving Countries*
Readings:


Optional:


**WEEK 4 (January 26)**
Labor Export Strategies in Labor-Sending Countries

Readings:


**Part II. Social Implications**
WEEK 5 (February 2)
Migrant Networks and Middlemen

Readings:


Optional:

WEEK 6 (February 9)
Remittances

Readings:
Sana, Mariano. “Buying Membership in the Transnational Community:


Optional:


**WEEK 7 (February 16)**  
**Gender and Transnational Households**

**Readings:**

Dreby, Joanna and Lindsay Stutz. “Making Something of Sacrifice: Gender,


**Film screening:** “When Strangers Re-Unite” by Marie Boti and Florchita Bautista. National Film Board of Canada. 1999.

**Optional:**

**WEEK 8 (February 23)**
Reproductive Rights

**Readings:**
Constable, Nicole. *Born Out of Place: Migrant Mothers and the Politics of International Labor*. Berkeley: University of California (2014), pp. 1-22 (Chapter 1) and pp. 121-154 (Chapter 5) [MyCourses].


Constable, Nicole. “The Commodification of Intimacy: Marriage, Sex, and


**Part III. Legality and Illegality**

**WEEK 9 (March 9)**

*Construction of Illegality*

**Readings:**


WEEK 10 (March 16)
Statelessness

Guest Speaker: Dr. Tien-Shi Chen, Waseda University (Japan)

Readings:


WEEK 11 (March 23)
Human Trafficking

Readings:

International Labour Office. Profits and Poverty: The Economics of Forced


Optional:

WEEK 12 (March 30)
Migrant Activism

Guest Speaker: Eugénie Depatie-Pelletier, Faculty of Law, Université de Montréal

Readings:
Optional:

**WEEK 13 (April 6)**
**Conclusion: Migrant Vulnerability and Agency**

**Readings:**